

De-leavening Choices II

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I'll jump right into the title today because this is an old sermon that I pulled out of the archives and did a re-write. It is entitled:

De-leavening Choices II

I was going to call it "Deleavening Choices Redux", meaning "brought back". It's easier to understand "II". I gave this sermon 10, 11 or 12 years ago—something in that time frame. It's been my experience that I've never done or said anything that I couldn't improve upon—that's just the way I operate. I know that all the other speakers we have, don't have that problem. They whip out a sermon and it goes, it's in the books and perfect. You don't have to re-edit anything. I'm just not wired that way.

I consider myself of average intelligence. My dad was pretty smart. He might not have had much of an education, but he was smart in a lot of ways. He was a very clever man who came up with a lot of things. I know his dad, my grandfather, was really smart. According to family history—I can't verify any of it—he was quite wealthy and a successful businessman in the mining industry, but lost it all during the depression. I have a son who is really smart, but as near as I can figure, those smart genes jumped a generation. We were talking to Jerri earlier and showed her a picture of our son and she said how handsome he was. I figure that gene skipped a generation also.

All kidding aside, I've kind of operated that way most of my life. I always recognize that I need to do a lot of editing in my life, not only with what I've done. We had an Elder who used to say "*Each and every day was a do over.*" What he meant by that was he had a chance each and every morning to do something better than he did the day before. That's a pretty good philosophy to operate on. I retired after 25 years as an instructor at a nuclear power plant. We had a substantial training staff but I had 25 to 30 classes that I was responsible for in the mechanical training department. It was our policy after class for our students to give us feedback. Of course, we got good and bad feedback. I always tried to respect my students and hopefully they reciprocated that respect with me. The point I'm making is, my practice of taking that constructive feedback to edit or improve my lesson plan when I put it back on the shelf so that next time that I pulled it off and gave the class it would be improved. The point being, that's the way I do sermons too. If I said something before and I can improve it and give it again and someone will get some nuggets of something out of it, I'm fine with that. Hence the "De-leavening II — the second go around". Actually, it's pretty heavily edited. You wouldn't even recognize it if you compared it with the other one.

Obviously, I'm going to be talking about choices. We have all kinds of choices in our lives. I don't know about you, but every time I open my garage door and pull out onto the street and go somewhere, wherever I'm going I have to make a lot of choices.

Those are incidental choices; turn right, turn left, and hopefully drive defensively so somebody doesn't kill me on the road. We know the graveyards are full of people who made bad decisions—bad choices. Blow through a stop sign or whatever. I know a man who got T-boned in an intersection and it wasn't his fault—somebody else blew through the stop sign or the light—and he ruptured 8 vertebrae. I can only imagine the pain that poor man lived with. Just about a block from us, a 65-year-old woman blew through a stop sign and got killed. We make a lot of other incidental choices.

We might make a choice if we are going to have a chocolate or vanilla milkshake. Vanilla used to be my favorite one—I haven't had one in years. Maybe the best choice is to not have one at all. Daily choices affect our lives in so many ways. Sometimes we make good choices, sometimes we make bad ones. Sometimes we wish we would have thought it through better. You can relate to that when you have buyer's remorse. Maybe you buy something and didn't really need it but wanted it and then ask why you spent money on that. Hopefully we don't look back on our lives and see a whole back trail of bad choices. We don't want a whole list of regrets that have affected our lives and maybe even give us problems these days. We probably make 1000 choices a day that affect our lives.

I also used to get those words mixed up—affect and effect. One is a verb and one is a noun. I use affect, because that is a verb—an action on our part. That's what I'm going to talk about today. There are some things that should be obvious to all of us sitting here. There are choices that can affect us and affect our eternal life and those are the important ones. We don't want choices we make now to impact our future.

One of the reasons that I have spoken a couple of times about choices is that you can find that thread throughout the Bible. If you look at that and study it from that approach. We have scriptures that say if we make bad choices, we are not going to be in God's Kingdom. If we are fornicators or idolaters, we have scriptures that say those choices are not going to get us into God's Kingdom—that's for sure. Especially this time of year, when we have been observing these days and looking at our lives and the picture of sin that we are supposed to be getting out of our lives. The point I'm making here is that sometimes we just need to take stock of the choices that we do make. That's what the title is about.

I used the word de-leaven which is not really a word—I couldn't find it in the dictionary—but if you use “de” as a prefix, it just means something actionable on our part. Depart, deescalate, defend, etc. I actually only have three points. As I mentioned earlier, I'm trying to contain everything in three points. I have to tease Rick a little; he might have three points but he has 12 sub-points. These three points are not a single thing we haven't heard before. It isn't a “how-to” of *How to make right choices*. That's a different topic—making decisions. We've all played with decision trees, the pro's and con's before we make a decision—it's not like that at all. The things I'm going to try and address are the conscious choices we make as Christians.

1. How we use our time.

Sometimes we get up in the morning and we just hit the floor and we are running. We just use up the day and before we know it, it's gone. Everybody has been there. I think Marie and I can attest to that. The older we become, the faster time seems to go by; it seems it's getting away from us. We loved to sit in the morning—our little dog is gone now—but Marie and I would sit in the office where we have a nice big window looking south and we look at each other and say, "Today is Monday, tomorrow is Friday right?" That's how fast it goes by. When it talks about using your time effectively, we used to hear all the time that you have to study and pray at least an hour a day. We were told that years ago. That was exact—one hour—the minimum. If you didn't do that, you would never be in God's Kingdom. Looking back, that was a terrible thing to say to spiritual babes. They had us praying by the clock. We had this idea in our heads that God was sitting up there with a clipboard and a stop watch and watching every moment of our day to see what we did—scrutinizing everything we did. Frankly, that's not a minister's job to do that. It's not a minister's job to interfere with a prayer life unless we are asked for some help. It's a minister's job to preach and teach what is in God's Word; not his own ideas and interpretations. To lead by example, that's the job of ministers. Not to be a policeman of the way we conduct our lives. Notwithstanding, if we need help or counseling with something—we can certainly do that. I think we've all been there too. We have questions. We had some questions just before services today. That's fine, we want to answer those things.

We do have scriptures that indicate we should make wise choices and we should make priorities time-wise in our Christian Walk. It is important how we use our time. Paul actually talked about this at the church at Ephesus. He wrote to them about redeeming the time. One thing I'll always appreciate about Paul's letters, more often than not he is dealing with the issues and problems in the church. There are some predictive statements that he makes, but his point isn't prophecy. We know folks and that's all they want to hear. They just want to hear about prophecy and don't care about all this Christian living stuff. That's not important. I think that's a little backwards. It's sad to hear Paul having to confront folks in different churches, for example the Corinthian church. But when you think about that, we learn from other people's mistakes. It's kind of like when I brought up 1 Corinthians 11 in the context of the Passover the other night—when I was giving the Passover service—how the Corinthians were keeping the Passover unworthily. If they hadn't been doing that, we wouldn't have the knowledge that we have today about keeping the Passover in a worthy manner. That's what it talks about in 1 Corinthians 11.

Ephesians 5:1 *Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.*

2) Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. (NKJV)

Telling them and us to live a different way than we did before because, as it goes on, he catalogues the way we used to live, the way we used to conduct ourselves.

3) Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people.

4) Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. (NKJV)

A different frame of mind.

5) You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. (NKJV)

Like I mentioned previously, that's a pretty strong statement. All of those behaviors will keep us out of God's Kingdom. No equivocation here.

6) Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. (NKJV)

That's what the world's religions do. Don't worry about sinning, you've already been saved. I'll never forget years ago, there was a gentleman here locally who lived in Kennewick and was prominent politically in the community—city council, maybe mayor at one time—he got interested in the program and sent for church literature. Being a hard charger, he understood that he should be baptized. If he was going to be Christian he needed to be baptized. So he went to a local church that specialized in that and got himself baptized. When he came up out of the water, he asked the ministers (a couple of them dunked him) what do I do now? They said nothing—you don't have to do anything, just go ahead and do what you want and live your life. He knew that was wrong and he eventually came into the church. I'll never forget that story.

7) Don't participate in the things these people do. (NKJV)

We have the scriptures that say we are a chosen people and Christ said to be perfect, which means not to be perfect-perfect but that's the standard we have to shoot for. God's standards are up here and ours are down here and we are reaching for that all the time. Back in Leviticus—just a reference scripture—from the Literal Translation.

Leviticus 19:1 *And Yehovah spoke to Moses saying,*

2) Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and you shall say to them, you are holy for I am holy, Yehovah your God. (LITV – Green's Literal Translation)

We can find New Testament scriptures that tell us the same thing—the same principle. The point is, God's desire for His people never changes. The bar is high. Continuing in Ephesians 5:8.

Ephesians 5:8 *For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!*

9) *For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.* (NKJV)

It reminds me of a scripture in Isaiah—again a reference scripture—the context is God’s vengeance on a godless people. Where are we at today? From the NIV.

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.* (NIV)

Everything is turned around. You have to be totally blind or don’t have any connection with the outside world at all—look at the things playing out in our society. Look at these protesters. Are we insane? Calling terrorist organizations good? Calling good evil? What kind of generation are we spawning here? It scares me to death. Continuing in Ephesians 5:10.

Ephesians 5:10 *Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.*

11) *Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them.* (NKJV)

Expose them with your life—with the way you live—and picture what these people are doing in our society.

12) *It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.* (NKJV)

You have to think—this is the same old story—the leaders of these protests are being paid to incite these campus riots. It’s our policy to stay apolitical, it doesn’t mean you don’t get frustrated.

13) *But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them ...* (NKJV)

That’s coming—like Gordon mentioned in the sermonette.

14) *for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, “Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”* (NKJV)

My wife likes part of that verse—she catches me sleeping in front of the TV. I’m an avid reader but I can’t sit and read a book anymore, I fall asleep just about every time. I think my wife and I have early stages of old-timers’ disease.

15) *So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise.*
16) *Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.* (NKJV)

That’s talking about time. The New King James for Ephesians 5:16 says, *redeeming the time because of the days of evil.* Same in Colossians 4:5, *walk in wisdom towards those*

who are outside, redeeming the time. Some commentators pretty much get this right, viewing redeeming the time as a powerful metaphor because that's what it is. Paul thought, he desperately thought and was sure that God's plan was going to play out in their life time. So, to him, it was very important. He was actually saying—you can see it in some of the letters that he produced to the churches—*time is valuable*. The Amplified Bible for Ephesians 5:16 says, *buying up each opportunity*. If we think about that, if we don't prioritize, we don't have any plans in our lives, our tendency is to just burn it up. In a sense we'll squander it. I used to have a poem that I had taped to my bathroom mirror so I would see it in the morning—I lost this poem somewhere. You may like this, it says,

*I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day.
I had so much accomplished that I didn't even have time to pray.
Problems tumbled about me and heavier came each task.
Why doesn't God help me, I wondered.
He answered, you didn't ask.
So, I wanted to have joy and beauty but the day toiled on bland and bleak.
I wonder why God didn't show me,
He said, you didn't seek.
I tried to come into God's presence, I used all the keys at the lock,
God gently and lovingly chided, but you didn't knock.
I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day.
I had too much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.*

That's a pretty good poem for us. Here's another one. The younger folks won't recognize this but some of the older folks may.

*We call on Him whenever storm clouds gather.
We call on Him to light our darkest day.
Why must it be that only when we are lonely
And hopes are dim, we call on Him?*

*Why don't we call on Him before we lose our way,
to count our blessings and thank Him while we may?*

*We call on Him when no one else will answer.
We ask of Him a reason to go on.
When our cup of joy becomes a cup of sorrow,
Filled to the brim, we call on Him.*

*Why don't we call on Him before we lose our way,
to count our blessings and thank Him while we may?"*

Anybody recognize that? It's an Elvis Presley gospel song. Let's continue in Ephesians 5:17.

17) Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. (NKJV)

One of the things He wants us to do is use our time reasonably wisely.

18) Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit ... (NKJV)

Who hasn't ruined their life with addiction?

19) singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.

20) And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Clearly what Paul—the implication that he's trying to get across to the Ephesians here and to us—is to make correct choices. Simple point when you think about it.

2. Neglecting Salvation.

The sin of neglect—we're familiar with the scripture in Hebrews, if want to turn there. Hebrews 1. If you're like me, you have probably noticed a connection between redeeming the time—and I believe it's Paul writing this—and what he addresses in Hebrews. Almost like he's continuing a thread, comparing the time we have with neglecting or misusing the time we have and thereby losing salvation.

Hebrews 1:1 *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, [That's God the Father]*

2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. (NIV)

Then he goes through in chapter 2, giving a whole string of Old Testament prophecies, bringing the context down to the New Testament church. You might have one of the Bible's that gives chapter headings, this one says:

Warning Against Neglecting Salvation.

So I hope we see in Hebrews 2:1-3 from the New King James how this ties in with the first point.

Hebrews 2:1 *We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*

2) For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,

3) *how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.* (NKJV)

I have a commentary in my bible software that I like, it's **The Preacher's Commentary**. I don't know if anybody else uses that. It's more of a commentary for the layman. I'm not sure what the dating is on this commentary, but he always gives some interesting insights into these first three verses. I can't improve on how he puts this so I'm just going to quote what he says. He's going to comment on that term and that first verse, about *drifting away* and look at it in three parts.

The first comment comes at the end of the first sentence "lest we drift away".

The Greek verb used here as several pictorial and allegorical implications. One is slipping away like evaporation. Give insufficient heed with one's mind, to the gospel [We could say the way we should be living.] or it will simply vanish into the air."

The process is, it's just like sin. It's not dramatic, it's not sudden. It's insidious and quiet. The shock comes when we turn to use faith in a time of need and find that it has evaporated with neglect."

[Then he goes on with another meaning for *leaking*; the Greek means "to flow by"].

"Leaking" is not unlike the first. The implication is not so much one of neglect as a faulty container. Truth leaks out of a mind that is sloppy and its lack of discipline or unclear because of insufficient mental activity towards understanding. Good ideas fail to mature and so leak out and are lost forever. [It drifts away]

Third meaning. Used in a New King James text is far more pictorial. The word describes the fate of a boat that has slipped its moorings during the night and has disappeared. The owner comes to the dock fully expecting to see his boat and finds nothing. The post or cleat to which it was tied is still there but the area is deserted, it's quiet. As far as the eye can see, you can't find the boat. It simply has drifted away in a flowing tide. [The intent of the Greek means to "flow by"] Because it's mooring lines have been carelessly tied.

All of these images speak powerfully to us today.

In the first instance, evaporation describes vividly the insidious loss of faith because of our preoccupation with [this hits home] many stimuli in a society abundant with distraction. Business and multiple involvements can readily dissipate the Christian's commitment until under difficult circumstances we turn to our faith and find it's too weak to be functional. Our disuse of faith due to

distraction and conflicting commitments of modern life causes our faith to evaporate and be far less than necessary in times of demand.

The image of leaking can be likened to today's soft minded relativism. [That just means you make up your own mind what is right and wrong] Yielding to the popularity of new moral fads and philosophies of convenience causes imperceptible cracks in our vessels of spiritual clarity. I am all in favor of warm relationships but much of the resolve of the human relation movement with its emphasis on what feels good [we've seen that everywhere] has undercut discipline and toughness of mind and will of the placid Christians who are incapable of standing tall in a high wind.

[Then he goes on with something in our history]

I am appalled at the soft doctrine of many church members and leaders who have winked at human sin. [De-emphasizing the atoning death of Christ; of course, he has some denominational bias because of his beliefs] The carelessness portrayed in the image of a boat that has slipped its mooring is so terribly costly. The price of carefulness may at times seem burdensome and the resources scant [sometimes it's hard to do and keep going; we all falter and stumble at times] but the mature Christian disciple recognizing the long-range results of letting down [neglecting] digs deep to find the resources for reaching the objective at hand. Maturity is seeing the future results of present action and doing what is necessary to make it right, whether that means taking time or expending the extra energy."

So I hope we see in Hebrews 2:1-3 from the New King James how this ties in with the first point.

Hebrews 2:1 *We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*

2) For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,

3) how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. (NKJV)

There's a little more but I'll cut it off there. I think he makes the point fairly succinctly. Sometimes we just don't make the best choices spiritually. I think at times—and I think everyone can relate to this—we have slipped our moorings. We get the idea "I can always catch up later." If you Google making choices, you're going to get a lot of hits. I'll use a few of those. One that is straight to the point says, "we can try to avoid making choices by doing nothing but even that is a decision". I remember a funny story about that. With my quirky sense of humor, I have to throw something in. We subscribed to the local paper until they priced themselves right out of business. It got way too expensive

for us. I think most of their subscribers left. We don't see any paper delivery anymore in our neighborhood at all. One of my favorite sections of the local paper were the comics. A couple of my favorites were Dilbert and Garfield. I really like Garfield. I probably still have this in my file—I clipped it out of the paper—it goes along with the choice of doing nothing. You have to keep in mind when I talk about Garfield and comics, I've studied these things in great depth. Garfield's owner is John in the cartoon strip. One thing you have to recognize right away about John and his cat is they have no life whatsoever. Jim Davis, who is the creator of this strip, draws humor and depicts it through the cat. If you understand these things, you get where he's going here. In the cartoon, it's just three panels, the first panel John is looking down at Garfield—lying on his back like he usually is, or kicked back in an armchair and watching some crazy thing on TV—and he says, "We should do something." Garfield, still laying on his back, says, "Yes we should." Then John says to him in the last panel, "Did I mention we should be doing something?" Garfield says, "That's doing something, that counts for doing something." The point is, we can't excuse ourselves by doing nothing. Through neglect, through just being careless with our time, it can slip away. Time will do that.

We have a lot of pretty serious scriptures about time. When you think about the parable of the 10 virgins, it teaches us and in other places, that we can run out of time. What I'm trying to get across is that we should take de-leavening our choices seriously. Take stock of them once in a while. We are in the final days of unleavened bread. We are going to leave it all behind and go on. If we de-leaven that choice of neglect—stop neglecting—what we should be doing, when we all do that and know what we should be doing, it's the sin of neglect and an easy one to slip into.

3. How we make choices in trials.

You probably don't think about this one too much. We all have trials and we'll continue to do so in this life. I don't know anyone who gets through scot-free. We made a conscious choice to follow Christ. We were told at baptism that it's not easy for anyone. Far too often we have a carnal reaction whenever we get hit with a trial. One of the first thoughts is, why is this happening to me; woe is me. We have a scripture that Christ taught us, in the beatitudes to love our enemies. We think that's a tough scripture. There's an even tougher one in James 1:2. Some trials are really severe. It's a very hard scripture to hang onto. From the NIV.

James 1:2 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds ... (NIV)*

That covers just about everything. If you've ever looked that up—*pure joy*—in the Greek it just means 'all or wholly (not holy) or complete, thoroughly'. The point is, it's not a fake kind of joy. It's not like saying, this trial really hurts but I guess I'm supposed to be joyful so I'll just pretend I'm happy about it. The word trial just means testing or put to the proof. I often say that the life we live now is primarily a proving ground. They used to say it's training ground, but it's a proving ground. God tests our faith every time. That's a

component of every trial we go through—our faith. Are we going to give up, or what are we going to do? That's a choice we make.

I like the context of James 1:3-4 from the Amplified; it gives it a little bit more. It pretty much says the same thing but adds emphasis.

3) Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity, and inner peace].

4) And let endurance have its perfect result and do a thorough work, so that you may be perfect and completely developed [in your faith], lacking in nothing.
(AMP)

The point is, it might be hard—the trial might be hard—but we always learn something. Maybe it's just something we learn about ourselves. I've done that. I remember one time I suffered for months with a couple of ruptured discs in my back and I learned a lot about myself. What I mainly learned, that when that was over, I turned right back to being Jack. It just means you have to go on and keep going—learn from it and go on. 1 Peter fits right in here. It fits perfectly with what James said. Again, I'll be using the Amplified.

1 Peter 1:6 *[You should] be exceedingly glad on this account, though now for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptations,*

7) So that [the genuineness] of your faith may be tested, [your faith] which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire. [This proving of your faith is intended] to redound to [your] praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) is revealed.
(AMP)

God is always testing our faith. It's a component of His Holy Spirit. He says that in Galatians 5, one of the fruits of the Spirit. When you think about it, God tests all of those fruits in our lives, one way or another. Talking about this a little before services with someone, when we think "Why is this happening to me?"—that's a doubt factor that is creeping into the carnal mind. I mentioned to someone before services, Satan just loves that, when a person starts doubting God. You start questioning everything and having all kinds of problems. He has used that since Adam and Eve. He uses it because it's effective with human beings; little seeds of doubt. Let's go back to James 1. This is from the New King James. A little different slant. I'll reread verse 3 and 4.

James 1:3 *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

4) But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (NKJV)

Again, that is the whole reason He allows trials.

5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (NKJV)

That's the only true source of what we need to deal with trials. Unfortunately, what do we do? We lean to our own understanding of things and quite often that turns out to be a bad choice.

6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (NKJV)

That's a loaded verse. What that is really telling us is that you can't have doubt and faith in the same picture. It doesn't work. It's like that law of physics—you can't have two objects occupy the same space. It doesn't work. The same thing here. Driven and tossed by the wind that we read before, that the commentator mentioned, *unmoored spiritually, tossed to and fro*. I spent four years on a U.S. destroyer, I know what back and forth, tossed to and fro means. I've seen a lot of that when you spend weeks at sea. It seems like that can also mean there are ups and downs in our spiritual lives and there is. Sometimes we aren't on top. It doesn't mean God has left us. Maybe it's time to take stock of ourselves.

*7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (NKJV)*

In other words, with doubt where it clouds, there's thinking and everything. When you think about that, that's a pretty big subject in the Bible. Suffice to say, doubt has its roots in fear and sin. The Bible has a good deal to say about that. We do have some control over the doubt that stems from fear and anxiety but we need God's help in doing that. We have scriptures that tell us that. If we don't deal with it as a kind of spiritual hostage state, maybe a paralysis. 1 Peter 5 tells us a little about that—how to deal with that. This is from the New Living Version. A very familiar section but let's notice the full context.

1 Peter 5:7 *Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.
8) Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. (NLT)*

That's true when you think about doubt. I read somewhere that doubts are like seeds, if we allow those emotions to germinate, they grow and cause all kinds of problems spiritually if we don't get past that.

9) Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. (NLT)

The Greek means "to be stable, steadfast"—as some translations will put that.

9 continued) ... Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.

10) In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

11) *All power to him forever! Amen. (NLT)*

That's where that power and strength comes from. God will allow or give us a trial to give us some time. It says in that one scripture, *after you have suffered for a little while*, in verse 10, that's what that is all about. Suffering through a trial can force us to take a pause in our life and look at the consequences of our choice. We may have done it to ourselves, or we may not. It gives us enough pause to cause changes in our lives. We have to trust God in that and that's where faith comes in. You can look at things like bad health and choices. Good health is a lot more clean and unclean meats and following physical dietary laws. But if we have a lack of exercise, a bad diet—it's going to become a health trial, there's no getting around it. Sometimes God just allows that. One thing to remember, God always has a purpose.

Another way we can look at that is, we have no Bible study, no prayer life, no interaction with God at all, and there's going to be dire consequences. It's going to lead to all kinds of problems in our lives. It's going to affect every part of our lives. Unsurprisingly, here are a couple of quotes on consequences.

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

We have a virtual portait—a gallery—of characters in the Bible that have made bad choices. When you think about David. He was a man after God's own heart and look at the bad choices he made—really bad ones. Impacted people's lives, involving murder and adultery.

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

Here's one from Eleanor Roosevelt I like. *"In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die."* That's very true for us.

"And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility."

We know as God's people, we own those consequences if we create those consequences. It's a lifelong process, overcoming sin. That's what we've been picturing. In fact, we will be judged on what? In the long run, our choices—good and bad. When you think about it, the reason that we all die is a result of sin, the consequences of sin from the very beginning. That never leaves us in our lives.

When we came into the church—reverting back—in the early '70's, learning about the Holy Days, we were presented with the idea of putting the leavening out of our homes. That's a foreign concept—no connection with sin in our minds at all. Unfortunately, at the time, there was an overemphasis on that evil substance, leaven. You had to get it out of every nook and cranny. We were taking our tables apart. We had leaves in our table, making sure everything was out of there. In fact, we had an elder in the local congregation who gave a de-leavening sermonette every year that became known as the crumby sermonette. Looking back on that, to our newbie minds, that was pretty

confusing to us. Leaven was good for all year except it was bad for a week. It took us a while to mature and get the full meaning and God's Word helped us to understand what it was talking about. Over in Matthew 13, a very simple parable—one of the shortest that Jesus ever gave. This is paraphrased from the New Living but it gets it perfectly.

Matthew 13:33 *Jesus also used this illustration: [He's showing us, He's explaining the concept] "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough." (NLT)*

You take that little parable along with Paul's reference of a little leaven leavens the whole lump, it becomes crystal clear. It's the property of leaven, that permeating action, that equates to how sin works in our lives. Not the physical substance itself, which we thought for years, as we focused on the stuff. It's the proclivity of that property that we need to understand. That's what God is telling us through the practice of deleavening. If Satan gets a foothold, even a small amount can destroy us fiercely. That's what I've been trying to get across in this message.

We read in 1 Peter 5—just to reference verse 8—it describes Satan as a devious being that knows a thousand ways to get us. His favorite strategy—maneuver—to sneak up on us from behind or a flanking maneuver to get to us. If you think about it, if we are making bad choices and opening that door, he comes right through the front door, if we do all of these things. The point is, that seemingly little sin starts to grow and fester in our spiritual lives.

Our friend James likes to say, as we go forward from today, let's remember the lessons of these days of unleavened bread and removing sin out of our lives and most importantly let's remember to involve the Father and His Son Christ—the Messiah, the Appointed One—in the choices we make so that we live a life that is pleasing to both of Them.