

39. The Book of Galatians 5:7-9 (Topical)

Liberty For Life-Part 10

“Beware of Leaven”

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(11-17-24)

Find this weeks’ sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

Galatians 5:7–9 (NKJV)

⁷ You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you. ⁹ **A little leaven leavens the whole lump.**

Today we’re going to be finishing up a series we’ve entitled **“Beware of Leaven.”** Physical leaven is dough that yeast has permeated through resulting in fermentation and causing the dough to rise. A piece of this fermented dough (known as a ‘starter piece’) was always kept for the next day’s baking.

In the Bible, leaven is often used as a type of sin or evil—the reason being is because it spreads like sin; it eats away like sin (fermentation is a form of digestion); and puffs up like sin.

In the pages of the New Testament, leaven is used spiritually for a number of things that can **corrupt our relationship with the Lord and with others.**

Biblically speaking spiritual leaven can be—**A. Hypocrisy; B. Legalism; C. False doctrine**

And the final form *Spiritual Leaven* can take is:

D. Evil and Immorality

1 Corinthians 5:6 (NKJV)

⁶Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

What led to Paul saying this was a situation in Corinth where a man was living with his own stepmother—and the church was not dealing with it. In fact, ***not only were they not dealing with the sin in their midst—they were glorying (boasting) in how spiritually superior they were because God had bestowed upon them so many spiritual gifts!***

>>> But it also could have been that by not dealing with this sin it made them feel *tolerant and non-judgmental*—also feeding into their spiritual pride!

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

REFLECTION: Can you think of situations or events where you have seen and/or experienced sin, evil and prideful boasting at local churches or other "Christian" institutions?

The image here is that of the Feast of Passover which pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who shed His blood to redeem us from the bondage of sin and death. But then Paul also mentions another feast that came right after the Feast of Passover—the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God commanded His people that on the first day of this feast they were to completely purge their houses of all leaven.

>>> When God commanded His people to rid their houses of leaven in Exodus 12:15, they understood this principle.

They understood that if leaven spoke of sin – then that which was unleavened spoke of holiness and purity.

➤ *What is the significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to us as Christians?*

Well, if Passover speaks of **redemption**—then the Feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of **sanctification**.

The word "**sanctification**" literally means "**to be set apart**" to God as His covenant people—it's also the Hebrew root that the word '**holy**' comes from.

Here's the background—

The children of Israel were enslaved down in Egypt and through the blood of the Passover lamb God delivered (redeemed) them from the bondage of Egypt and brought them to the base of Mt. Sinai. **The first thing God said to Israel after He brought them out of the bondage of Egypt was—"Be holy for I am holy."**

In other words, "*How you lived when you were slaves down in Egypt was one thing but now that I have redeemed you out of Egypt, I want you to live a new kind of life.*"

➤ *What kind of life? An **unleavened life** because you now belong to Me as My covenant people!*

>>> This applies to New Testament believers as well.<<<

Once a person has **been redeemed by the blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ**, they have been redeemed out of the world system of which Egypt is a type—and God says to them, "**Be holy as I am holy.**"

In other words, "*How you lived when you were slaves of Satan living in the world (his kingdom) was one thing, but now you belong to Me. Now you are children of God and members of the Kingdom of God. And as such you are to live a new kind of life—what kind of life?—an **unleavened life.***"

REFLECTION: What does it mean to you to be Holy as Jesus is Holy?

But listen, for God to physically take the children of Israel out of Egypt was easy—to take Egypt out of them—would take much more time! Just like God taking us out of the world at the moment of salvation was instantaneous—but taking the world out of us—not as easy.

As someone has said, **“salvation is the miracle of a moment, sanctification is the work of a lifetime.”**

God gives the grace for us to be sanctified—but we must have the will and the love and commitment to God every day to make it all possible. Something else that’s very important to understand—an important principle that the Holy Spirit is trying to communicate to us through these two back-to-back feasts.

He wants us to understand that there was no gap of time between these two feasts—Passover which spoke of **redemption** (salvation) took place on the 14th of Nisan (pronounce—“*NYE-san*”) and starting *immediately* the next day began the Feast of Unleavened Bread which spoke of **sanctification**.

The spiritual lesson The Lord wanted to teach His people through these two feasts backing up to each other with no gap of time between them was obvious—the moment you get saved you are to immediately begin living a new life for God—a sanctified, unleavened (holy) life.

Notice in Leviticus 23:6 that God commanded that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be a 7-day feast.

REFLECTION: How might you describe your "sanctification" process?

In the Bible, 7 is the number of completeness—and so in that regard God is telling us that our new life for Jesus is to be a **completely** sanctified and unleavened life **not limited to Sunday but all week long!**

The most important thing we need to concern ourselves with as we wait for the coming of the Lord **is living a life of sanctification and obedience to God**—this is His will for us who are His people—

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7-8 (NKJV)

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God...⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” (Galatians 5:9)

Any immorality or evil of any kind that enters a church and isn't dealt with will spread through the congregation (like leaven through dough or like cancer through the body) and corrupt the whole church.

REFLECTION: Why is it so important to live a life and sanctification and obedience to God?

Hypocrisy—Legalism—False doctrine—Evil and immorality (including things like gossip, greed, materialism, drunkenness, pornography...etc.)—all of these are considered *spiritual leaven* because they will permeate through our lives and our churches and corrupt all the good that God wants to do in and through us.

In essence they do the very thing Paul warned us against in Ephesians 4:27—**they give ‘place to the devil.’**

The word “**place**” comes from a Greek word that means “*to be occupied or filled by any person or thing as in a space or room*”—**the space or room is our hearts.**

When we give place to sin of any kind in our hearts—we are giving the devil an opportunity, a foothold and a beachhead from which to spread out into other areas of our lives corrupting and destroying our relationship with God and others—just like leaven spreads and corrupts.

This is the insidious nature of spiritual leaven—its ability to start small but grow and spread until it corrupts everything good that comes from God.

The antidote is to keep our hearts pure by staying in the Word and keeping close to Jesus—giving Him a constant place in our hearts! This will lead to pure motives and healthy spiritual living for God.

Galatians 5:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ **I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.**

Paul believed that the Galatians would ultimately reject the teaching of the Judaizers. His confidence was in the Lord—which may mean that the Lord had given assurance to Paul on this matter. But, as for the false teachers? **Paul committed their punishment to God.**

REFLECTION: How can/do you keep your hearts pure for Jesus?

It's a serious sin to introduce false doctrine into a church, especially when it corrupts the way of salvation.

2 Peter 2:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

Galatians 5:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ **And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.**

From what Paul says here, **it's obvious that the Judaizers had lied about him** by telling the Galatian churches that—*“Paul agrees with our message!”*

But Paul pointed out the obvious fallacy of this by simply saying:

“If I preach that circumcision is essential for salvation—then why am I still being persecuted by the Jews? If that were true, then the offense of the cross would cease, and I would no longer be persecuted by them.”

How could anyone accuse Paul of preaching circumcision? Probably because he took Timothy and had him circumcised before taking him into the region of Galatia (**Acts 16:1-3**).

But Paul didn't have Timothy circumcised so Timothy could be saved (he was already saved)—he did it so Timothy would have greater acceptance among unsaved Jews to evangelize them. You see, Timothy's mother was a Jew, but his father was a Gentile who, it seems, wouldn't let Timothy's mother circumcise him when he was a baby...

But listen—the **Legalist can't handle the preaching of the cross as the only way of salvation.** It's offensive to them because **it removes their ability to boast in their religious works as a basis for earning their salvation and heaven.** In other words, the **“offense of the cross”** (to the Jews or any other religious person)—is the preaching of the true gospel!

REFLECTION: Have you ever had your testimony about your salvation to be incorrectly or intentionally falsely shared with others?

**The cross is the only way people are saved
(both Jews and Gentiles)
apart from the Law and circumcision.**

1 Corinthians 1:23–25 (NKJV)

²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Jesus dying on the cross was God's way of saying to the human race, "You can't save yourself. My Son needed to die in your place, or you have absolutely no hope of salvation at all."

When we trust in legalism (religion), we believe that we can (at least in part) save ourselves—which takes away the **"offense of the cross"**—but it is not the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:12 (NKJV)

¹² I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

One author said this about Paul's statement here—

"Speaking out of deep concern for the gospel of the grace of God, Paul uttered a strong expression. He wished that the Judaizers, who were so enthusiastic about circumcision, would go all the way and castrate themselves, as did the pagan priests of Paul's day."

Another said, *"Perhaps the resulting physical impotence pictured Paul's desire that they also be unable to produce new converts."*

Galatians 5:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh [don't become lax on sin because you are saved by grace!], but through love [God's love—agape] serve one another. ¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

As a former Pharisee, Paul was alluding to an issue that the Scribes and Pharisees had been debating for centuries—**which law was the greatest of them all?**

In fact, it came up in Jesus' ministry:

Matthew 22:35-36 (NKJV)

³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

These men had determined that the Law contained 613 commandments—which meant that the average Jew could never even *memorize* all of them let alone *obey* them! So, to make it easier, the

experts of the Law divided the commandments into “heavy” (important) and “light” (unimportant or trivial).

The rabbis then taught that if a person concerned themselves with the “important” (heavy) commandments—they didn’t really need to worry about the “trivial” ones (much like people reason today.)

The fallacy behind this approach is obvious: You need only break one law (‘heavy’ or ‘light’) to be guilty before God—even as James stated: “For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10)

But the question itself was a valid one and so Jesus answered it—

Matthew 22:37-38 (NKJV)

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.

Here Jesus quoted the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4)—the great Jewish statement of faith that was recited daily by every Jew.

>>> Once you love God the way Jesus commanded, the second greatest commandment will naturally flow out of that love—

Matthew 22:39 (NKJV)

³⁹ And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

It is impossible to really love God and not love others (1 John 4:20)—so Jesus also quoted Leviticus 19:18 and put it on the same level as the Shema.

REFLECTION: How would you explain the greatest law or commandment of all?

The Pharisee who asked the question countered with: “Who is my neighbor?”—which Jesus answered by giving the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). **In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught that anyone who has a need is our neighbor, and we love them by meeting their need.**

- Again, it is impossible to really love God and not to love others made in His image—at least as much as we love ourselves.

But then in the upper room the night before His crucifixion, Jesus took the second greatest commandment in the Law of God and elevated it above what they had been taught all their lives under the Old Covenant—

John 13:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

In the Old Testament, God had commanded His people to love others—“*as they loved themselves.*”

What makes *this* commandment new is that Jesus commanded His disciples to love each other—“As I have loved you.”

- How did Jesus love them, and for that matter how did Jesus love all of us? **By going to the cross and dying for us!**

That’s how He wants us to love one another—**by going to the cross and dying** (not literally but figuratively) for one another—that’s what’s *new* about His command to love under the New Covenant!

In the Old Covenant God commanded His people to love their neighbor “*as they loved themselves*”—under the New Covenant Jesus commands us to love people “*more than we love ourselves.*”

REFLECTION: What does it mean to you to love each other as Jesus loves you?

This is the love of the King manifested in His sons and daughters who are members of His Kingdom—which is why James calls it—“***the royal law.***” (James 2:8)

>>> The royal law is basically the law of the King and His Kingdom—a law that governs how the King’s kids are to live our lives under the New Covenant. For example, in the *Decalogue* (also known as the “Ten Commandments”)—the eighth commandment that God gave was “*You shalt not steal*”.

So, the Law could force them not to steal what belonged to another, but it couldn’t force them to share with others what belonged to them—the ‘royal law’ does both.

As Christians, we are not under the law of Moses—we are under an even greater law—“***the law of love.***”

Again, this is the law of God’s Kingdom which commands me to love others like Jesus loved me—***sacrificially*** (the Greek word for *love* here and in verse 34 of John 13 is “*agape*”).

Look, loving people as God commands with His *agape* love is impossible for us it is beyond our ability.

This is not a love I can generate or imitate—it is not in me to love like this because this is a supernatural love that only comes from God planted in us at the moment of salvation! (Romans 5:5)

Galatians 5:13–15 (NKJV)

¹³ For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

“Bite and devour one another”

Warren Wiersbe—

“The picture here is of wild animals attacking each other. This in itself is proof that law cannot force people to get along with each other. No matter how many rules or standards a church may adopt, they are no guarantee of spirituality. Unless the Holy Spirit of God is permitted to fill hearts with His love—selfishness and competition will reign. Both extremes in the Galatian churches — the legalists and the libertines—were actually destroying the fellowship.”

If you spend your time back-biting and ‘chewing’ each other up—your Christian Walk will ‘fossilize’.

- *“Yes, but how can I maintain this kind of love (the love of God) in my daily life—with my spouse, my kids, my family and friends—it’s so hard! How can I possibly do it?”*

That’s exactly the question Paul will answer in this next section.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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