

BOOK OF GALATIANS
THE WARNING AGAINST LEAVEN
GALATIANS 5:7-10

Introduction

In speaking about this matter of *running well* and being *hindered* from *running well* that we have already taken a look at, Paul interjects the phrase found in *verse 9* that he uses with this Church and with the Corinthian Church.
“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

What does he mean by that and why is he using that here?

I. WHAT IS LEAVEN?

Leaven is ***yeast***. Which is actually a **powerful fungus** that when mixed with a lump of dough, it causes it to rise when making bread. It is also used to ferment liquids into alcohol. And those who have ever had a ***yeast*** infection of some sort know that it can also cause painful infections.

But principally ***leaven***, as referred to here, was used in much the same way that ***yeast*** is today. It made bread rise before baking.

Many of you ladies may be familiar with the use of a ***“starter”*** in the process of baking bread. This ***“starter”*** is used for inducing this fermentation process into the next round of bread baking.

For people living in the New Testament age the only method of reproducing ***yeast*** was to save a small piece of the unbaked dough, which would later be used to start fermentation in the next batch of bread.

II. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT LEAVEN?

The first mention of ***leaven*** in the Scriptures is found in the book of ***Exodus 12:15, 19 and 13:7*** when the first Passover was instituted.

Because a small piece of ***leaven*** was able to cause a relatively large amount of dough to rise, **the term *leaven* was often used figuratively to represent any kind of influence, although in Scripture the word is used almost universally to represent evil.**

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Throughout the Bible, ***leaven*** is a **symbol of evil**. You will find in the Old Testament that not only was it to be removed from the Jewish homes during Passover (***Exodus 12-13***), but it was excluded from the sacrifices (***Exodus 34:25***), with the exception of the loaves used at the ***Feast of Pentecost in Leviticus 23:15-21***.

Exodus 34:25 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.

Understand that in ***Leviticus 23:15-21***, they didn't know it because it was a mystery, but the leavened loaves symbolize Jews and Gentiles in the Church, (and unfortunately there is sin in the Church as Jesus pointed out in his messages to the seven Churches in Asia!)
(Revelation 2-3)

Let's give some examples of leaven and what it represents:

A. Jesus' Parable In *Matthew 13:33* Deals With The *Leaven Of False Doctrine!*

Notice that this parable is given along with other parables **dealing with false doctrine and false living.**

1. The Parable Of The Tares Of The Field.

In ***verse 24-30***, Jesus gave the ***Parable of the Tares of the Field***.

In ***verse 36***, His disciples asked Him to explain this parable.

In ***verse 37-43***, Jesus explains this Parable.

(It is important to note that *tares* look just like *wheat* until harvest time!)

That was the problem with the Judaizers in Galatians! They appeared to be ***“brethren”***, but they were ***“false brethren!”***

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2. **The Parable Of The Mustard Seed.**

In *verse 31-32*, the mustard seed illustrates **the false outward expansion of the kingdom!**

(The birds of the air lodging in the branches.)

Represents what we might call “*Christendom*” or all that goes by the name “*Christianity*,” much of which are false!)

Again, this was the problem with the Judaizers!

They appeared to be “*Christian*”, but **they denied the sufficiency of Christ!**

3. **The Parable of the Leaven.**

In *verse 33*, the hidden leaven illustrates the development of both *false doctrine* and *false living (i.e. hypocrisy)*.

**B. Jesus’ Warning To His Disciples In *Matthew 16:6-12* Regarding The *Leaven Of The Pharisees And Saducees*.
Vs. 12 tells us that Jesus was referring to their *false doctrine!***

C. Jesus’ Warning To His Disciples In *Luke 12:1* Regarding The *Leaven Of The Pharisees*.
Luke 12:1 *In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

D. Paul’s Warning To The Corinthian Church In *1 Corinthians 5!* (*1 Corinthians 4:18-19; 5:1-8*).
***Sin and False Doctrine* are both like *leaven (yeast)*:
They quietly grow, they corrupt, and they “puff up”!**

The Corinthians Church was slowly becoming disabled by this *SIN* that they had allowed to continue in their midst!

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And back in our text in Galatians, the Galatian Church was slowly becoming corrupted and disabled by *FALSE DOCTRINE* that they had allowed to creep into the Church!

Here is the point: A small amount of *SIN* or *FALSE DOCTRINE* can corrupt the thinking and behavior of a large group of people in the Church.

III. SO, WHAT IS THE LEAVEN LEVEL THAT WE ARE COMFORTABLE WITH TOLERATING IN OUR PERSONAL LIFE AND IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH?

Let’s look at two lessons we can learn about how sin and false doctrine slowly hinders us and takes us out of the running of our race.

A. We Must Understand *Leaven’s* Origin. (*Galatians 5:7-8*)

Paul points away from God as the source of the Judaizers teaching.

SIN and *FALSE DOCTRINE* do NOT come from God!

His point was that this teaching of these Judaizers had nothing to do with God’s will and purpose for their lives!

Anytime *SIN* or *FALSE DOCTRINE* are present, we need to realize that God didn’t have anything to do with it!

The Judiazer’s message was about works of the *LAW*, not about God’s work of *GRACE* through Christ.

There are many folks who have gotten off course because of this flawed message.

God didn’t call them or us by the *LAW* or into the *LAW!*

God called us by His *GRACE* into His *GRACE!*

Any message that says God’s *GRACE* is insufficient for our salvation, we can immediately know that it is not from God.

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B. We Must Understand Leaven's Results! (Galatians 5:9-10)

1. The first result is that leaven spreads! (Vs 9)

We've seen how leaven (yeast) is usually used in Scripture to illustrate the penetrating and corrupting influence of **evil/sin** and **false doctrine**.

When **sin** or **false doctrine** are allowed a foothold in a Church, it can corrupt the whole body! (*e.g. cancer*)

Sin can start with one or two, but very quickly can spread through the entire body of a church.

2. The second result is that leaven ends in judgment! (Vs 10)

The real believer will get back on the track!
Paul says in so many words there, "*God will deal judgment on the trouble maker.*"

The Judaizers's were telling the Galatians that God was going to come down hard on them if they didn't obey Mosaic Law, get circumcised, practice ceremonial rites/cleansing.

Paul says, "*No, it's the trouble making Judaizers who are going to be judged by God because they're not teaching about God's grace.*"

Leaven needs to be dealt with by the Church and then God will ultimately deal with the perpetrators!

Illustration:

There was an atheist farmer often ridiculed people who believed in God. He wrote the following letter to the editor of a local newspaper:

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"I plowed on Sunday, planted on Sunday, cultivated on Sunday, and hauled my crops on Sunday; but I never went to church on Sunday. Yet, I harvested more bushels per acre than anyone else, even those who are God-fearing and never miss a service."

*The editor printed the man's letter and then added this remark: "God doesn't always settle His accounts in October."
The editor was right.*

Conclusion

The Galatian Church was slowly becoming disabled by a small amount of **false doctrine** in its midst. A small amount of **sin** or **false doctrine** can corrupt the thinking of a large group of people in the Church.

What kind of leaven have you allowed in your personal life?

Some of you may be tolerating sin and holding on to wrong doctrine in your personal life. If you don't deal with those things they will harm your life!

What kind of leaven have you allowed in your family life?

Some of you may be tolerating things in the home that God's Word is against! If you don't deal with those things they will harm your family's lives!

When leaven comes in the form of sin or false doctrine in the Church, will you be on board with dealing with it or tolerating it?

One of my favorite cartoon strips is "**Frank and Earnest**." One time in one of those cartoons, Frank was in the courtroom standing before the judge who says to him, "*It's 'guilty' or 'not guilty.'* You can't plead '*I gotta be me.*'"

That may be humorous because it touches a reality in our culture which places the need for self-expression above the need for morality, integrity and honor.

Jesus warned his followers to beware of the "**wicked and adulterous generation**" in which they lived. Our days are worse than the days in which He spoke. These are **apostate** times. Are you tolerating or bewareing?