

Parable of the Leaven

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- [0 : 0 0] Now, seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn to the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 13. The Gospel according to Matthew and chapter 13.
- And we'll read verse 33. Another parable spake ye unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.
- Now this morning we looked at the parable of the mustard seed. And we believe really that that parable of the mustard seed and this parable of the leaven that they tie up together.
- Because the parable of the mustard seed speaks of the outward spread of the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God.
- The outward spread of the Gospel. The outward spread of the Word. And the second parable, which we shall look at this evening, the parable of the leaven, speaks of the inward spread of the Word.
- [1 : 3 1] Now as the first parable, that of the mustard seed, came from the agricultural world, the world of farming, this second parable, the parable of leaven, comes from the kitchen and the daily routine of making bread.
- And so we read, Another parable spake ye unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.
- This woman was making a very large amount of bread. Three measures is about 50 pounds of flour, that is just short of 23 kilograms, which was enough to feed 150 people.
- And the woman adds to her dough a lump of leaven that was left over from an old batch of bread. And like the parable of the mustard seed, this parable begins with something that seems insignificant.
- She just adds this lump of leaven, but the effect of this bit of leaven was great. So that we read here that the whole mass became leavened.
- [2 : 5 8] Now, there are a number of places in the Bible where leaven is regarded as having a negative connotation.
- You will recall that at the time of Passover, the Israelites were told to sweep the leaven out of their homes.
- In Exodus 12, we read, Even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses. The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians, he said to them, Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?
- And so he warns them, Purge out there for the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened, for even Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us.
- There, as well as in Exodus 12, we see how the purging away, or the putting away of leaven, was connected with the Passover.

[4 : 13] We can say that what Paul does here in Corinthians is that he warns that even a little leaven of sin is all it takes to corrupt the whole loaf of bread, for he goes on to speak there of the leaven of malice and the leaven of wickedness.

But Paul does far more than that. As he takes us back to the original Passover feast, when the Israelites left Egypt, by his reference to Christ, as our Passover being sacrificed for us, as he takes us back to the original Passover feast, when the Israelites left Egypt, the house of bondage, were told that they were not to take leavened bread.

They were to eat for seven days unleavened bread. And after seven days, they could make leavened bread. So we ask then, why were they commanded only to take unleavened bread?

Why were they commanded that, as they left Egypt, they would only eat unleavened bread for seven days? Well, if they had made leavened bread, where did the leaven come from?

It would have come from Egypt. So that means that the unleavened bread became symbolic of their disconnection with Egypt.

[6 : 00] For now Israel was a new people. They had left the house of bondage. They had left the slavery of Egypt.

They were now a new people. They had disconnected themselves with all that Egypt represented. So Paul applies this to the people of Corinth.

And he says to them, as believers, we are to purge out that which connects us to the old life. Because we are now a new creation or a new creature in Jesus Christ, who is our Passover, who was sacrificed for us.

So he says, we are not to take any of the old leaven with us. Just as it was true of the Israelites, as they kept the Passover and as they left the land of Egypt and took no leaven with them.

That also applies to us in the New Testament. As believers, we are not to take any of the old leaven with us.

[7 : 18] We are to disconnect ourselves completely with the old way of life. I suppose that we could say that Paul sums it all up for us in Romans chapter 6 and 8 where he says, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lust thereof.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die. But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

In the Gospel of Luke and chapter 12, Jesus says to his disciples, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

And again, on another occasion, he told his disciples, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And the disciples on that occasion reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

[8 : 45] But Jesus responded to them and he said to them, How is it that ye do not understand that I speak it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

Then the disciples understood how he had told them to be aware of the, not be aware of the leaven of bread, but of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

In other words, to be aware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And again, in Galatians chapter 5, Paul warns where he speaks of legalism.

And he says, Regarding legalism, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. And because of these negative connotations, as it were, that are attached to leaven, some people think that the same image is brought before us here and that Jesus here is speaking of how, what seems to us a little sin how it can corrupt the whole church.

But, I don't accept that Jesus is here speaking in such a negative way when he takes up that the kingdom of heaven is like a lump of leaven.

[10 : 09] But that he is speaking rather in anapositive way. Jesus can hardly be saying that the kingdom of heaven spreads the corruption of sin. but he is using the image in a positive way, saying that the kingdom of heaven will grow just the same way that leaven causes the bread to grow or to rise.

As it is true that the kingdom of heaven will grow outwardly, so it is also true to say that the kingdom of heaven will grow inwardly.

Both the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven are growth parables. The one speaks of growth outwardly as we saw this morning and this one speaks of growth inwardly.

The kingdom of heaven will have that extensive transforming influence just like leaven. Just because in one place maybe in the Bible leaven may be symbolic of sin and evil it does not necessarily follow that it has to be the same in all places.

In 1 Peter 5 where the devil is compared to a lion where Peter warns us he says be sober be vigilant because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeing whom he may devour and there we have taken before us this roaring lion which speaks of evil and yet in the book of Revelation Jesus is compared to a lion of the tribe of Judah so what it means in one place doesn't necessarily follow that it carries the same symbolic meaning in another place in the book of Revelation Satan is named as that old serpent called the devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world and yet in the gospel Jesus told the disciples behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves so there we have the fact before us that it doesn't follow that since in some places in the

[12 : 46] Bible leaven may be symbolic of sin and evil that it must be the same in all places but may I suggest something may I say that maybe what leaven really is symbolic of in the Bible is not necessarily of sin and evil may I suggest that it would be bringing before us the spreading of moral influence whether good or evil it is a symbol of that which permeates Jesus speaks of the leaven of the doctrine of the Pharisees the teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and he calls it leaven he says beware of the leaven of the

Pharisees which is hypocrisy and I think what Jesus is bringing before us there is that the hypocrisy of the Pharisees affected or influenced them the way that leaven affects the bread it permeated everything that they did hypocrisy permeated everything that they did the same with Paul which we have already quoted when he warns us that the old leaven can have such an influence upon us so he tells us to purge it out because we are now a new creation in Jesus Christ and because of that we are not allowed to permeate our lives with the old leaven we mustn't influence our present life with stuff from the past it shows us how dangerous it is to play around with the leaven of sin because of its pervading and penetrating nature it soon influences the whole just like leaven a small bit of leaven soon permeates the whole so we have the leaven of hypocrisy the leaven of malice the leaven of wickedness and in

Galatians he speaks of the leaven of legalism which can affect us in the same way that leaven affects the bread we can allow all these things to permeate everything we do and we are always in danger of that for example the leaven of legalism to permeate everything that we do however in our parable it speaks of the kingdom of heaven to be like leaven and it carries really the image that we have just spoken of of its pervading and penetrating nature Jesus uses this image to illustrate the growth of the kingdom the growth of the kingdom of heaven in the individual heart as he did with the previous parable to show the growth of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of

God in the world and so he says the kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened it can be hidden it can be silent and mysterious and nevertheless it has all this transforming power which the point of the leaven and the measures of the flour is its transforming action that is true also with the gospel of the kingdom of heaven when it is received by faith it has this transforming power and it penetrates the whole person it permeates the whole the will the mind and the affections the whole person is transformed we are told that this happens in bread because in the leaven there are those living organisms that allows the leaven to grow all what a perfect image that is of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven which has life that allows this transformation the writer to the

Hebrew says for the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword pushing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart the word of God is quick and powerful it is a living word and when this word when it is received by faith it has this transforming power it penetrates the whole person it renews the will the mind and the affections the whole person is transformed you remember when Jesus stood at the grave of

[19 : 24] Lazarus we are told that he cried out Lazarus come forth and we read that he that was dead came forth and what this shows us is that there was this power with the word that with the word there was life we couldn't really separate the two when Jesus cried out Lazarus come forth in that word there was life and Lazarus was brought alive well so it is with the word of God there is life and with the word comes life the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven and we cannot separate the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God from the word the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened well the leaven of the kingdom can be hidden it is not always noticeable or detectable but once the leaven is mixed with the dough and although it may be hidden from you its permanent power can be seen in its effects on the rising bread and so it is also true regarding the kingdom of God which is here said to us to be like unto leaven it can be perhaps hidden maybe it is not always noticeable or detectable but its transforming power can be seen in the effects that it has on people's lives who knows but that the leaven of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven may have penetrated a heart amongst us and that secret mysterious and silent work may be going on in the soul when a sinner comes and kneels before

God in prayer asking to receive Christ as saviour maybe the person themselves cannot understand it maybe they cannot understand this new burden desire that has penetrated their lives that has made them to feel so restless that has brought this urge unto them to call to God however small its beginnings and however secretly the work continues and it grows and it grows and grows just like the leaven in the dough it's what is going on hidden inside your heart by the leaven of the word that is most important the psalmist said thy word have I hidden mine heart that I might not sin against thee and this leaven you see it penetrates and it spreads it permeates everything it is not simply this part or that part it permeates the whole dough so is the gospel of the kingdom the word of God you see

God is not satisfied to have just a part or this part or that part of a person he wants the whole person so the leaven of the kingdom influences every part of life it permeates every part of life it permeates the mind the body the will the affections even its effects can be seen in our worship we come no longer just out of duty but we come to praise God for what he has done in Christ it's something that can be seen in the family in the workplace among friends in the community when the leaven of the word of

God the leaven of the kingdom when it penetrates it spreads it has that influence that it permeates the whole of the person so that the whole person is being renewed the whole person has been transformed transformed I ask you tonight do you know anything regarding the leaven of the word of God maybe you lament and feel discouraged because of your lack of spiritual progress well it is always a question whether we will ever be satisfied with our spiritual progress will we ever get to the place where we want to be spiritually or maybe tonight that you are struggling with a particular sin or maybe tonight you are evaluating yourself with the spiritual progress of others well do not be discouraged by present difficulties but believe that where the leaven of the kingdom has been received by faith that it grows and grows it permeates the whole it doesn't leave it doesn't leave one corner it doesn't leave any part and so when it penetrates into our hearts it affects the whole person affects the whole person the word says been confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of

Jesus Christ it is a work that is continually going on until that day when that work will be brought to a perfection the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened see this work that the Lord begins in the heart of a sinner by his grace is a work that he is bringing on it grows and grows until the day that it is all brought to perfection so the challenge for me and you tonight is to examine ourselves and to see if our life has been changed by the leaven of the word of God if the leaven of the word of God if it has penetrated our hearts if it has permeated our lives transformed our lives our wills our mind our affections our desires if the word of

[27 : 57] God has had any effect upon us how we got this inward growth that here the parable speaks of and this these parables have given to us to encourage us because as we already noted this morning the parables that go on before that of the mustard seed and of the leaven are parables that brings before us how evil and how sin and how the devil how the enemy works even as the seed fell by the wayside the fowls came and devoured them up the seed that fell in stony places it was scorched because when the sun rose it had no root it withered away some fell among thorns and the thorns sprung up and choked them persecutions difficulties hardships the pleasures of this world the pleasures of time and it was only that which fell into good ground that brought forth fruit four types of soil and only one brought forth good fruit a quarter of his toil with which he was rewarded and then in the second parable that which could seed but the enemy came and sowed tares and all these things can be so discouraging but here he gives us these two parables in order to encourage us in order to strengthen our faith he gives us that parable of the mustard seed which speaks of the outward growth of the kingdom of heaven the outward growth of the gospel and he brings us the parable of the leaven to remind us of the inward growth of the gospel he brings these to our mind in order to encourage us and in order to strengthen our faith in the midst of all difficulties and of all hardships and all persecutions whatever kind of persecution it can be whether it be quite open persecution or whether it be that silent persecution that goes on regarding the gospel where people try to trample the gospel under their feet people try in their own subtle ways to destroy the gospel but it cannot be destroyed it cannot be destroyed

Jesus told Peter upon this rock when I build my church on Jesus Christ he is building his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it the kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened well has there been any change in your own life by the leaven of the word of God it is and it calls and it must be a time of self examination a time where we have to search ourselves a time wherein we have to examine where we stand in the light of this parable of the leaven has our lives been changed has the word of

God penetrated our lives in such a way that our whole life has been transformed and the Lord bless our thoughts