

Diligent deleavening before Passover

But are we as diligent in removing leaven in our hearts?



Philip Shields

March 2018

www.LightontheRock.org

Summary: Yes, put out the physical leaven before Passover. But are we AS diligent in searching out the SPIRITUAL leaven in our hearts? I refer to the more serious leaven of hidden sins, secret sins, bad habits that don't glorify God and areas of our lives where we need to change? Is a FAST in order to help us do a deep spiritual cleansing and spiritual deleavening? In what areas of our lives do we need to make changes? Where do we need overcoming to take place? Remember to BE ready for Passover, examine ourselves and take the Passover joyfully in a worthy manner. This sermon will help you do that.

** ****

(Note: much more is said on the audio than what are in these notes so I recommend you hear the audio with the printed notes.)

If you're like us, as we get nearer the Passover, you've been seeking out the leavened products around your home and putting them in a pile to be sure they're all used up or discarded before Passover. Older breads might even just be trashed. Don't forget when your trash pickup is. So we're trying to get the large garbage amounts ready for the last public garbage pickup day.

And you're being sure to remember the toaster and vacuum cleaner bags, and checking where the grandkids (or you) might have stored some "emergency food" in your car or who knows where. And we carefully review all food labels to be sure we got it all. Even some forms of very thin breads and crackers and Grape Nuts can have leaven! So we check.

It's easy to feel good about physical accomplishments we can see and measure. We can start to feel like we've done our pre-Passover preparation – and yet still miss the main event!

So we remember this: leaven is just a picture of something far more sinister - - sin.

As I was helping vacuum the back rooms, and looking around diligently, the Holy Spirit put a thought in my mind that went something like this:

“But Philip, are you AS diligent as this in FINDING, removing and overcoming sin in your life? Yes, your sins have been forgiven in the blood of the Lamb, but now by HIS might you are to stop the old way of life and live the new – the new unleavened life of sincerity and truth. What people see is what you should be inside and out. No airs, no pretenses, no lies, no ongoing ways of life of sin, which the leaven pictures. So, Philip, ARE you as diligent in searching out your camouflaged sins that you put up with, or think are well hidden, but you – and God – know are weaknesses of yours?”

As we discover that box of leavened goods hiding behind some other packages, think – “what sins do I know I have that I’m sort of hiding and not dealing with as I should?”

In Psalm 90:8, attributed to Moses, God is said to be very aware of our secret sins. There’s no hiding from the One for whom it all matters.

Psalm 19:12-13– Here David asks Yah to cleanse him from secret or hidden faults. He goes on to ask for help keeping away from presumptuous sins as he also asked for power to overcome them.

In Psalm 139:23-24, David invites his God to search him out and know his heart – and to reveal any wicked way in his life. He wants to be LED “in the way everlasting”.

Maybe we need to FAST this week, to wake up spiritually!

You see, physical deleavening is not that hard. But spiritually deleavening is not something we even truly can do by ourselves. GOD has to do it. He does it through us – and we say, we “CAN DO all things THROUGH Christ who strengthens us” (**Philippians 4:13**). He’s the one with the spot remover and wrinkle remover (Ephesians 5).

HE is my Savior. I don’t save myself. Even the favorite verse of do-it-yourselfers (Philippians 2:12) about working out your own salvation with fear and trembling, goes ON to say in verse 13, “For it is GOD who works in you, both to will and to do, for HIS good pleasure.”

GOD is the one who gives us the true desire to be rid of sin (“the will”) and ability to overcome. Don't get me wrong. We MUST overcome, but we do it through Christ and using HIS faith, and faith in HIM and HIS righteousness.

Remember we put the old leaven out (our old self) and replace it with the true unleavened bread, picturing Christ our Savior. We invite him into our lives and partake of him, taking him inside us. HE now is our life and our Bread. He is our Passover. He is our pure no-sin unleavened bread.

The hard work we need to be devoting to this is to spend TIME and effort in **prayer, seeking Him, focusing upon his life** and example and holiness – and Paul says in **2 Cor. 3:18**. He says that as we do this, we are being transformed into his image from glory to glory, done by His Spirit, not by our own work.

Remember we are saved totally by grace, NOT by our own works, lest we should boast (Ephesians 2:6-9), but are saved FOR good works, verse 10. Also Romans 4:1-4. Our good works don't save us but do determine our reward. We must not confuse rewards with salvation. Many of my fellow ministers and believers do confuse the two all the time.

Salvation is a free gift. If you have to do works to be saved, then it's no longer a free gift, but a wage we earned (Romans 4:2-4).

But we do earn our future function and rewards in the kingdom of God. Eternal life is not something we earn. THAT is the gift. But what we DO for eternity – that is what we earn. So it's very, very important that we be producing, growing, and putting sin and sinful habits out of our lives by Christ's power.

Salvation is a GIFT of God. We've earned death by our sins, but the free gift of God is eternal life, salvation (Romans 6:23) – IN Messiah Yeshua our Lord, it goes on to say (Christ and Messiah both mean “Anointed” in Greek and Hebrew).

But to those who overcome, who produce, who change, who use the Spirit to grow and develop – some will get 2 cities, some 5 cities, some 10 cities, right? You know the parable of the pounds and talents (Luke 19 and Matthew 25:14-29).

Perhaps we can even say that some will be allowed to be the BRIDE of the Messiah, while others will be attendants to the bride of Christ, or guests at the wedding -- depending on what we do with God's spirit. Being the Bride is a function; not salvation itself, and so that is why I suspect it is not a given that everyone in the first resurrection will be "the Bride of Christ". Perhaps I'm wrong. We'll see.

But do a FAST before Passover. When was the last time you fasted? On the day of Atonement? Then you're way overdue! Ask our God to search you, to wake you up, to help you be rid of the bad spiritual leaven of hypocrisy, malice, hate, lack of forgiveness for others, bad sinful habits, laziness, sex sins, alcohol sins, gossip, lust, vanity, greed, covetousness, being dissatisfied, lack of faith, worry is a huge sin we must get rid of – and on and on.

SO I got to thinking: "Am I AS diligent with the real SPIRITUAL meaning of all this deleavening, with rooting out my bad habits, wrong ways of living, weak areas of my life, hypocrisies, careless sins -- yes SINS -- I have allowed to be like leaven that I let stay on the shelf?"

As we search for leaven, are we searching our hearts for areas that are clearly still spiritually leavened?

- **Are our marriages what they should be? Our marriages picture Christ and the Church**, Paul says in **Eph 5:32**, BUT read from verses 25-33. Eph 5:32 – "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."
- **Do we seek FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33) - or do we just try to fit prayer and study in when we can? Does our God just get our leftovers of the day** or do we PUT him into first place in our lives? Is putting God first – ahead of a few more minutes of sleep, or having more breakfast, or whatever it is. Maybe we need to cut out TV and Facebook more.
- **Gossip. Talking about others in negative ways.** How is this huge, huge box of leaven doing lately? Convert your tongue to start talking more about ideas, concepts and spiritual things – and NOT so much about people and what they said or did.
- **How are we at forgiving others who have offended us mightily?** Hmm. That one's tough. Maybe we'll get to that one later... and leave it "on the shelf" for now. But we dare not! God forgives those who forgive others. Mercy is shown to the merciful. **Matthew 5:7** –

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy”. Some say Yeshua was implying “only they” will obtain mercy. Our Father’s throne is called The Mercy Seat. He wants his children to think this way too.

Some have caused me great harm. I have to kneel and ask God to bless them. “Bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and PRAY for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, THAT you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for HE makes the sun rise on the evil AND the good... for if you just love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even tax collectors do the same? ” **Matthew 5:44-48.**

QUIT WATCHING violent “action films” that don’t promote mercy and forgiveness. They are full of hate, anger, violence, murder, torture, and everything that is not our Father’s Way. QUIT WATCHING TV so much. Garbage in, garbage out. Think on positive things, good things, things that are noble, lovely, pure, things that have virtue, are just, praiseworthy – **Phil. 4:8. Goodness in, goodness out.**

- **Alcohol-related sins and lack of control. Food-related sins and lack of control.** How are those pretty leavens doing in your life?
- **Sexual lust, wayward thoughts and wrong passions. Sexual addictions of many types.** Yes, those are in the *ekklesia* too. Gotta reach up high on the shelf for those sinful leavened doozies and get control – and trash them before they trash us.
- **Rough language** when someone does your wrong or cuts in front of you – almost causing an accident. How do you respond? As a child of God, or are you “potty mouth” for a few minutes? More leaven to throw out. Don’t justify yourself. Just get rid of it. It’s not of the Father.
- **How about the “little” sins in your life?** Don’t forget **Goliath** was once much smaller; a baby. Little sins are still sins, and like Goliath, grow bigger and become a thorn to the Israel of God. Or you don’t think your hot temper is all that bad. It is. Man’s wrath does not produce the righteousness of God (**James 1:20**).

Or that you don't obey the laws of the land when you don't feel like it. That's leaven too. We're supposed to obey the laws. Read Romans 13.

What sins – spiritual leaven – are you calling “just a little thing” and hanging on to?

Our penchant to exaggerate, tell “white lies”. It’s still a lie. Or we get careless with our words, and they’re not always “seasoned with grace”, as scripture says our speech should be.

Toilet words for human waste should not come out of our mouths. Nor should the F-bomb EVER be heard from a child of God. There are many profane words. We have to give account for every word that comes out of our mouths. We certainly should never be taking God’s name in vain. Never as an expletive. Never used carelessly. And when we fail with our tongue, we must repent and root out that old leaven of sin – never letting it back in.

Let God’s household – you and I – be known for our gracious words, our kind and positive interactions with everyone. Anything less is just so much leaven that we need to get rid of.

Ephesians 4:29 says “Let NO corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is GOOD for necessary edification (building someone up), that it may impart GRACE (favor, acceptance, forgiveness) to the hearers.”

We’re done with potty mouth.

You get the point. Don’t be so focused on the physical - - that you don’t take time for the spiritual focus that comes with a FAST before Passover. I strongly, strongly suggest we all devote a day before Passover to just FAST. Seek God with all your heart in extra prayer and meditation, yes, even as you go about finishing up the deleavening.

And put more time on the spiritual deleavening even than the physical.

God wants us to get the POINT of this exercise! **After all, in Exodus 12:13, it sounds like God expected them to be able to deleaven in just one day.** I really don’t think He intended 3 weeks of deleavening that I hear about today.

Perhaps we’re putting too much focus on the physical deleavening – and not enough time on what the physical pointed to: giving up our sins. Turning them over to the blood of Christ. With God’s spirit, being an overcomer.

And yes, no matter how bad your sins have been, you can turn them over to your Redeemer, upon whom were placed all the iniquities of mankind – at

least those who are willing to GIVE THEM UP to him and accept him as Savior and call out to him for salvation and eternal life.

1 John 1: 7 says the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

Read Isaiah 53 slowly. God laid upon HIM all our iniquities.

Let's read Paul's – God's – admonition in Ephesians 4 and 5. I will read from the CJB just to ring a few fresh bells...

Ephesians 4:15-5:20

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in every respect grow up into him who is the head, the Messiah. 16 Under HIS control, the whole body is being fitted and held together by the support of every joint, with each part working to fulfill its function; this is how the body grows and builds itself up in love.

17 Therefore I say this — indeed, in union with the Lord I insist on it: do not live any longer as the pagans live, with their sterile ways of thinking.

18 Their intelligence has been shrouded in darkness, and they are estranged from the life of God, because of the ignorance in them, which in turn comes from resisting God's will.

19 They have lost all feeling, so they have abandoned themselves to sensuality, practicing any kind of impurity and always greedy for more. 20 But this is not the lesson you learned from the Messiah!

21 If you really listened to him and were instructed about him, then you learned that since what is in Yeshua is truth,

22 then, so far as your former way of life is concerned, **you must strip off your old nature, because your old nature is thoroughly rotted by its deceptive desires;**

23 and you must let your spirits and minds keep being renewed,
24 and clothe yourselves with the new nature created to be godly, which expresses itself in the righteousness and holiness
that flow from the truth.

25 Therefore, stripping off falsehood, let everyone speak truth with his neighbor, because we are intimately related to each other as parts of a body.

26 Be angry, but don't sin — don't let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger; 27 otherwise you leave room for the Adversary.

28 The thief must stop stealing; instead, he should make an honest living by his own efforts. This way he will be able to share with those in need.

29 Let no harmful language come from your mouth, only good words that are helpful in meeting the need, words that will benefit those who hear them.

30 Don't cause grief to God's Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) for he has stamped you as his property until the day of final redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness.

32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted; and forgive each other, just as in the Messiah God has also forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 5: 1-20

So imitate God, as his dear children; 2 and live a life of love, just as also the Messiah loved us, indeed, on our behalf gave himself up as an offering, as a slaughtered sacrifice to God with a pleasing fragrance.

3 Among you there should not even be mentioned sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or greed; these are utterly inappropriate for God's holy people.

4 Also out of place are obscenity and stupid talk or coarse language; instead, you should be giving thanks.

5 For of this you can be sure: every sexually immoral, impure or greedy person — that is, every idol-worshipper — has no share in the Kingdom of the Messiah and of God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty talk; for it is because of these things that God's judgment is coming on those who disobey him. 7 So don't become partners with them!

8 For you used to be darkness; but now, united with the Lord, you are light. LIVE LIKE children of light, 9 for the fruit of the light is in every kind of goodness, rightness and truth — 10 try to determine what will please the Lord.

11 Have nothing to do with the deeds produced by darkness, but instead expose them, 12 for it is shameful even to speak of the things these people do in secret. 13 But everything exposed to the light is revealed clearly for what it is, 14 since anything revealed is a light. This is why it says,

“Get up, sleeper! Arise from the dead, and the Messiah will shine on you!”

15 Therefore, pay careful attention to how you conduct your life — live wisely, not unwisely.

16 Use your time well, for these are evil days. 17 So don't be foolish, but try to understand what the will of the Lord is.

18 Don't get drunk with wine, because it makes you lose control. Instead, keep on being filled with the Spirit — 19 sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to each other; sing to the Lord and make music in your heart to him; 20 always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

So we see Paul – though he preaches much on grace and what God does – is also very vocal about using God's spirit to make real changes in our lives; to put SIN OUT forever. In this season we acknowledge there is a temporary pleasure in sin. But as we see Yeshua more and more clearly, we become more eager to root out all the spiritual leaven in our lives and give them up.

Then we sit down with fresh matzah at the Passover – and take in our Redeemer, who IS the Bread of life, the manna from heaven. He is our Life.

So put out the old leaven, especially the truly important leaven of SIN and the OLD way – and now live for Christ our Passover, who has been sacrificed for us and raised from the dead to stand before God Most High on our behalf.

Have a meaningful pre-Passover and Passover time. ***And I do hope you FAST – soon, and rededicate yourself to our God and Father.***

Closing PRAYER.