

STUDY NOTES ON THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN LEAVENING THE WHOLE LUMP: -

Matthew 13:33: - “Another parable spake he 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.”

Luke 13:20 & 21: - “And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

SOME GENERAL INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: -

- Let us first define what “LEAVEN” is: -

“LEAVEN” - n. lev'n. [L. *levo*, Eng. to lift.] 1. A mass of sour dough, which, mixed with a larger quantity of dough or paste, produces fermentation in it and renders it light. During the seven days of the passover, no leaven was permitted to be in the houses of the Jews. Exodus 12:15, 19. 2. Any thing which makes a general change in the mass. It generally means something which corrupts or depraves that with which it is mixed. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Matthew 16:6.” – Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary.

Among the Jewish people in Bible times, Leaven was sometimes regarded as a symbol of sin. At the time of the Annual Passover feast, and the accompanying Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Hebrew people were commanded to remove all Leaven from their houses; and they were not to eat or drink anything leavened. This would be a symbol of removing sin from their hearts.

Exodus 12:14 & 15: - “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.”

Jesus warned His disciples of the Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which He explains as representing their false teachings and hypocrisy.

Matthew 16:6, 11 & 12: - “Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. ... How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

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.”

The Apostle Paul describes malice and wickedness as Leaven, which he then contrasts with the Unleaven bread of sincerity and truth.

1st Corinthians 5:6 - 8: - “Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

In the passage from 1st Corinthians 5 which we have just read, Paul teaches a simple principle of how even a small amount of Leaven, can take over the entire Lump of dough. He repeated this teaching in his Letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 5:9: - “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

This illustrates a spiritual lesson from the natural world. A small amount of Leaven – a small amount of sin and wickedness, left to continue to abide within our characters, without the enabling grace of Christ transforming us, can eventually take over and corrupt our entire characters for evil.

That is why we have to lay the axe of the gospel sword [that is the Word of God – See Ephesians 6:17] at the root of known and habitual sin within our lives, so wickedness, and the seeds of sin, can be uprooted and eradicated from our characters, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and Christ’s free gift of enabling grace. That was one of the messages of exhortation given by John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:10: - “And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

With this Scriptural background concerning the symbolism of Leaven representing sin and wickedness, we can now turn our attention to examine: -

JESUS’ PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN TRANSFORMING THE LUMP OF DOUGH:-

- In our wonderful Saviour’s Parable, the symbol of Leaven is **NOT** representing sin or wickedness, for Jesus describes it as representing the Kingdom of Heaven. It must represent the life giving, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and Christ’s enabling grace working spiritual transformation within our lives.

Matthew 13:33: - “Another parable spake he 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.”

Luke 13:20 & 21: - “And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

- But one thing which we have already read from Paul’s writings concerning Leaven, still holds good in Jesus’ Parable. Leaven will eventually take over and transform the entire Lump of Dough. So also in the regenerating work and power of the Holy Spirit, and through Christ’s transforming grace. The Heavenly powers can, and will spiritually transform the entire person, who chooses to submit to wear the Yoke of being a disciple of Christ.

THE POWER OF GOD’S GRACE WORKING WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CHILD OF GOD, TO TRANSFORM THE CHARACTER IN THIS PRESENT WORLD: -

- Jesus taught the Pharisees, that the Kingdom of God, is within a person. This is a clear reference to the spiritual work of God’s grace working within a person.

Luke 17:20 & 21: - “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

NOTE JESUS’ WORDS: - “*The kingdom of God is within you.*”

What did the Apostle Paul teach concerning what is “our hope of glory”? It is having Christ dwelling within us by faith.

Colossians 1:25 - 27: - “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Ephesians 3:16 - 19: - “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Romans 14:17: - “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

- Jesus first recorded public message referred to the Kingdom of God being nigh at hand, and Jesus associated this Kingdom of God, with repentance and believing in the gospel.

Mark 1:14 & 15: - “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Luke 8:1: - “And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him.”

- One of the first truths concerning God’s saving grace which is essential to grasp, is the Biblical truth, that God does not give His grace to a proud person. Rather, God’s saving grace is given only to those who are humble and lowly in their own estimation.

James 4:6: - “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

1st Peter 5:5: - “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”

- The apostle Paul has testified to the Ephesian Christians that salvation is of grace and not of works, so as to preclude all human boasting.

Ephesians 2:5, 8 - 10: - “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

NOTE: - A careful reading of VS. 8 & 9 above, teaches us that the expression “*the gift of God*”, is referring to grace. There is no work that any sinner can do, that can earn or entitle them to obtain the grace of God. It is a completely free gift, that will in due time obtain salvation. Our salvation is not founded upon our own works. No, because God has ordained that when we turn to Christ in repentance, we become his workmanship, having been created [that is, recreated or born again] in Christ Jesus, walking in the good works which God has previously ordained for us.

- Paul gives us a thorough understanding of God's saving grace, as being a teaching power within the life of the believer. It is a teaching or enabling power for righteous living in this present world of sin.

Titus 2:11 – 15: - “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

NOTE: - God's saving grace is a teaching power for righteous living, in this present world.

- 1.] The grace of God leads us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.
- 2.] It gives us the power to live sober, righteous and godly lives in this present world.
- 3.] It teaches us to look for the Second Coming of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us.
- 4.] Through grace, Jesus will redeem us from ALL iniquity.
- 5.] Through grace, Jesus will purify unto Himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works; and,
- 6.] These things are to be spoken by the gospel labourer.

THE APOSTLE PAUL AND HIS MINISTRY OF GRACE: -

- The apostle Paul has written many things in his epistles concerning the saving grace of God. This should come as no surprise to us, because he testified concerning the gospel of God's saving grace.

Acts 20:24: - “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and **the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.**”

The apostle Paul received God's grace and his apostleship to make known the obedience of faith unto all nations.

Romans 1:5: - “By whom **we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith** among all nations, for his name.”

Paul exhorted believers that our words should be good to edify and minister grace to our hearers.

Ephesians 4:29: - “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, **that it may minister grace unto the hearers.**”

NOTE: - This verse reveals the truth, that Christians should **NOT** use foul language of any kind.

Our words are always to be with grace, particularly in relation to how we should answer to every person we meet.

Colossians 4:6: - “**Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt**, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Paul taught the elders of the Ephesian church, that God’s grace was able to edify them [that is, to build them up spiritually], and give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20:32: - “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and **to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.**”

We have been exhorted by the Apostle Paul to come boldly to the ***throne of grace***, through our Great High Priest Jesus Christ, so we may obtain mercy and grace to help us in times of need.

Hebrews 4:16: - “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Paul taught that we needed to have grace so we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 12:28: - “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, **let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.**”

Paul testified that it is a good thing to have our hearts established with God’s grace.

Hebrews 13:9: - “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. **For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace**; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”

- Jesus taught Nicodemus, that a person had to be born again – to be born of water – that refers to Christian or water baptism; and of the Spirit – that represents the transforming power of the Spirit of God, to be able to see the Kingdom of God - the Kingdom of God’s glory.

John 3:3 – 8: - “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

- God’s saving mercy is manifested to us, by the washing of regeneration – that is, the new birth; and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This will lead us to be justified by God’s grace, and to be heirs of the hope of eternal life. When we have believed in God, we are to be careful to maintain good works. This is a good and profitable teaching.

Titus 3:4 – 8: - “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal

life. *This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

- Our inward person is to be renewed daily by the Holy Spirit – day by day. It is NOT a one off experience as many Christians believe, but a continual process of renewal. We are to walk after the Spirit and NOT the flesh, if we are IN Christ. Thus we will have the righteousness of God’s Law fulfilled within us, if we are truly walking after the Spirit.

2nd Corinthians 4:15 & 16: - “For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.”

Romans 8:1 – 7: - “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

- We are to be saved by the Lord, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit [that is, our being made holy in character], and through a belief of the truth. God’s wants to sanctify us totally – body, soul and spirit. And remember, God is faithful who has called us, and who will do it, if we submit to His will.

2nd Thessalonians 2:13 & 14: - “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1st Thessalonians 5:23 & 24: - “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.”

Let us allow the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and the enabling grace of Christ, do their life giving, and transformative work within our lives, until they Leaven the whole lump of our characters.