

KEEPING THE FEASTS PART 2

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 8 November 2020

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

In our session today, we will consider the final two 'leavens' that Paul mentioned in his letter to the Corinthians.

We will then talk about how we are to rid our lives and houses of leaven, both individually and in relation to those who come into our houses.

We will begin by reminding ourselves of the four leavens that we considered in our last session.

These were the leaven of factionalism, the leaven of congregationalism, the leaven of religious sophistication and the leaven of religious tradition.

The fifth leaven which Paul raised with the Corinthian Christians was the leaven of malice and wickedness.

The leaven of malice and wickedness

'Therefore 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.' 1Co 5:8.

Malice is not a word that we use particularly frequently. So, what did Paul mean by 'the leaven of malice and wickedness'?

He used it as a summary for all evil behaviours that *violate fellowship in the body of Christ*. These are the works of the flesh, which are the inevitable consequence of living by the other law.

The effect of the other law upon us

So, unless we have the other law removed from us, this will be the principle of life by which we live. Paul described all of the activities motivated by, or arising from, a life lived by the other law as 'malice and wickedness'.

Another way of saying it is that malice and wickedness is *sin*. If this leaven is not removed from our lives, therefore, we will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This might be a bit confronting to some people, but Paul was absolutely clear on this point. He said, 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?' 1Co 6:9.

He could hardly be more clear than this, could he?

The effect of deception

'Do not be deceived.'

Now, 'deception' brings to our understanding and remembrance the interaction of Satan with Eve, where he offered her another way.

She was deceived, and was deluded into believing that she could have life through her pursuit of good and avoidance of evil. She then fed this deception to Adam. Consequently, this desire became another law within mankind.

Paul warned us not to live by such a desire.

'Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.'

There is clearly no moving on this point; Paul made himself very clear.

'And such were some of you.'

The point is not *if* you are that; rather, you *are* already condemned. Unless you are delivered from this way of living, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

How do we inherit the kingdom of heaven?

How, then, do we inherit it?

'For such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.' 1Co 6:9-11.

These 'leavenous' attitudes and behaviours, which Paul summarised as 'malice and wickedness', are brought to our awareness through the ministry of the word of truth, which is a light; and by the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Defining malice and wickedness

We will consider the term 'malice' more closely, particularly its relationship to wickedness.

Malice is a vicious character trait that marks a person's endeavours to *preserve their own life at the expense of others*.

Interestingly, the Bible commentators, Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, described *malice* as 'the evil

habit of mind'. I think that is a very helpful explanation of malice.

So then, *malice* is defined as 'the evil habit of mind'.

They then said that *wickedness* is 'the evil habit of mind outworking in word and deed'.

Reiterating these points, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown described malice as 'an evil habit of mind, or way of viewing and thinking about life'; and wickedness as 'the words and deeds that arise from that evil habit of mind'. We see that they both go together.

These are helpful definitions, and connect with what we have been teaching regarding the basis of our *conversation*, which is the word; and our *conduct*, which Jamieson, Fausset and Brown describe as 'deeds'.

The conversation and conduct, then, is wickedness arising from an evil habit of mind – it is malice.

Having the mind of Christ

We can then contrast malice, which we understand is an evil habit of mind, with 'having the mind of Christ'.

So, what is the opposite of malice? It is not just 'goodness'. The opposite of malice is 'to have the same mind as Christ'.

'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.' Php 2:5.

Another way of understanding this is the reality that any mind other than the mind of Christ is malice. It is not that there are some unsaved people who don't have malice.

Malice refers to *any* mind which is *not* the mind of Christ. And a person with that mindset will seek to save their life at the expense of another. It is simply a fundamental principle of life in the flesh.

We are not to have that mind. We are to have the same mind as Christ Jesus.

A mind that does not seek to save itself

And what does this mind 'look like'? 'Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant [that literally means 'a slave'], and coming in the likeness of men.

'And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross.' Php 2:6-8.

So, malice is the desire to save our own life, and to take life from another for that purpose.

The mind of Christ, by contrast, is one that lays down His life to reveal the Father, through obedience; even obedience to death on the cross.

Being delivered from malice

If, therefore, we have the same mind as Christ, we are being delivered from malice.

Through what means is this? It is through *fellowship in His crucifixion*.

'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:20.

This is the opposite of malice.

This mind gives rise to a particular set of works called 'righteousness'. They are the works of our sonship.

The mind of Christ can be ours only if, by the mercies of God, we present ourselves each day for fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

The removal of the other law from our heart

In this fellowship, the other law is being removed from our heart by the circumcision of Christ, and we are being transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Then we do not have a mind that is described as 'malicious', which is an evil habit of mind.

Rather, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings we are being transformed, or changed, from this wicked condition, or this wicked *expression*, through the renewing of our mind.

Proving the will of God by fulfilling the works of our sonship

It means that we no longer have that mind. Our mind is the mind of Christ.

In this *fellowship*, instead of being driven by an evil habit of mind, our conversation and conduct involves *proving the will of God*. This means that we are fulfilling the works of sonship that belong to our name in Christ. This is godliness, as opposed to wickedness.

So, malice gives rise to wickedness. This refers to every work that is other than the work which the Father has prepared for us to do; and we can do no other work than sin if we continue to live by another law.

If, however, we are established in the love of God, which is the fellowship of His offering, the work that we are doing is according to the will of God. It is the righteous work of our sonship in which the will of God being fulfilled. This is called 'godliness'.

The leaven of knowledge

The sixth leaven that Paul referred to is the leaven is 'knowledge'. This is the knowledge that comes from worthless, religious doctrines.

Paul said, 'Now concerning things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. [Immediately, he has connected idolatry with a form of knowledge.] Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.' 1Co 8:1.

Knowledge that puffs up

So, idolatry is connected to a certain type of knowledge. This knowledge is leaven, because it brings about the action of 'puffing up'. The expression of this knowledge is the opposite of, or the alternative to, living by *love which edifies*.

'And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.' 1Co 8:2.

This person trusts in their own knowledge; they are the source of something.

Paul explained that it is not just the thoughts in our head that puff up; it's the *way* that we *express* this knowledge that demonstrates that we are puffed up.

Knowing God and being known by Him

Clearly, there is a way that we should *know*.

'But if anyone loves God, this one is *known by Him*.' 1Co 8:3.

Paul contrasted this 'knowledge that puffs up' with 'love that edifies'. And love that edifies is loving God and being known by Him.

This is the *knowledge* that we need to seek. It is *to be known by Him*.

The pursuit of the knowledge of good and evil

The basis of all leaven is the other law, which was established within the heart of natural mankind

when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The point, then, is that the knowledge that Paul referred to is not specifically the knowledge of good and evil.

The pursuit of the knowledge of good and evil *gave rise to all leaven*.

In this passage, Paul associated a particular *form* of knowledge – of course, based from the knowledge of good and evil – with the food, or meat, that was sacrificed to idols.

A form of knowledge associated with the food offered to idols

In this regard, Paul was specifically referring to the worthless doctrines or theologies that are taught in the church.

'But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; a wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.' Jer 10:8.

Paul said that there is a form of knowledge which is related specifically to idolatry. This knowledge refers to worthless doctrines. They are deemed to be worthless because they do not result in the *treasure of Christ's life*.

Promoting such knowledge as an expression of our validity

Some people presume that the accumulation of this knowledge – a body of theological principle and knowledge – 'qualifies' them. For some people, it is a literal qualification; for others, it gives them a right to minister in the church.

This knowledge doesn't refer only to theological principles. It can be based on an experience or presumed capacity which they believe qualifies them to function in the church.

They consider that, because of their knowledge or gift, they do not need to receive from those through whom Christ ministers as part of the presbytery.

Such an attitude should act as a warning to all with regard to ministry. As soon as we take some form of knowledge, or its expression, and use it as the basis for our validity and function in the fellowship of the body of Christ, we have become puffed up.

Unwillingness to receive from another

Essentially, there isn't any problem with either aspect of knowledge or gift.

Rather, it is where we *presume* that this knowledge or gift excuses us from the necessity to receive from another.

We can see that this is where a person becomes arrogant, or puffed up, or proud. They cannot receive from another.

Because of their knowledge or gift or experience, they are unable to receive from those through whom Christ ministers. On this basis, they measure themselves as being equal to the word and to those who bring it.

This knowledge is based in comparison, and gives rise to envy, along with the other forms of leaven which we talked about last session.

The eventual sticking point becomes that they are unable to receive from another.

Ministering from this basis belongs to 'the synagogue of Satan'. This notion of presuming to minister on the basis of one's own theological capital, or experience, is not of Christ.

What did Christ say? He said, 'I have come to *reveal the Father*. I speak nothing except what I've heard from the Father.' He was completely *given* to the action of revealing Another.

The synagogue of Satan

In contrast, this other leaven of knowledge that puffs up is all about revealing 'what I have to give to you'.

This is precisely how Satan operated. He glorified himself. Jesus identified those who operate by this principle as belonging to 'the synagogue of Satan' within the church. Rev 2:9. Rev 3:9.

Paul spoke about the connection between knowledge puffing up and the demonic principle by which they operate.

'But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.' 2Co 11:12.

Boasting speaks of being puffed up.

Paul's ministry in the weakness of Christ

In his statement, Paul said, 'I'm going to continue to minister in the weakness of Christ.

'I came to you in weakness and trembling, with hopeless speech, because I didn't want the ministry of my own capacity to overwhelm you.'

'I'm going to continue to do that; to minister through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, so that my ministry of weakness will undermine these ones who seek to be equal to us in terms of authority in the church.'

This was the method by which he overcame.

He did not come to the ones who presumed to speak this way with an intention to 'cut them down'. That would be a case of the flesh taking action against the flesh.

Rather, he said, 'I'm going to continue to be portrayed as crucified with Christ among you. And, by ministering in that weakness, it will undermine these who seek to be equal to us, in terms of authority and grace in the church.'

'For such are false prophets, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.' 2Co 11:13-14.

A form of idolatry

These apostles were puffed up, or boasting, on the basis of their knowledge, thinking that their body of knowledge made them commensurate with an ascension-gifted messenger who operated through weakness in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

We can see that this approach is completely deceived. It was based in the working of Satan.

It is a leaven which, when fed to others through this mode of ministry, is idolatry.

This form of knowledge, be it theological or experiential, is sensual.

So, a person ministering by this form of knowledge ministers on the basis of a body of knowledge or a qualification that is commensurate with that body of knowledge. Or their ministry may be based on a set of their experiences which they believe gives them the right to minister to others.

An appeal to the senses, not to the spirit

Additionally, they presume to effect a response through some sort of sensual activity. This means that they are appealing to the senses of those who hearing it, not appealing to their spirit.

This form of knowledge is either theological or experiential. It is not *relational*.

It causes those who possess it to become puffed up, so that they are unable to meet, or to be met by, others in sincerity and truth.

Why can they not meet in sincerity and truth when they are puffed up?

It is because their identity is being found in what they *know and can do*.

Their identity is not known by their *name*, which they receive by hearing the gospel of sonship.

Their sense of self and worth is found by what they do, and by what they know; and through the 'position' that they presumably hold in the church.

Because of their 'knowledge', they are unable to receive the word from others with ascension gift grace, who lay down the word, in fellowship, by offering.

Two opposite approaches to ministry

The desire of a member of the presbytery who does have ascension gift grace from Christ is to minister in the same mode as Paul, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering, in weakness. As they minister, they are laying down *by offering the word*.

On the other hand, if a person believes that they have a right to speak, or an entitlement, on the basis of their body of knowledge, gift or capacity, they are unable to receive what is being laid down to them, mainly because they don't actually think that they need to.

The outcome of not receiving the word in a fellowship

The outcome is that they will tend to vet the word; to make some judgement about its veracity. They might even encourage the one who has laid it down, in some sort of parochial-style engagement.

The issue is not whether they agree with it or not. The issue is that they are *unable to reveal the word* or to *reveal another*.

Because of their reliance on this form of knowledge, they are unable to receive the word from those who laid down the word to them in a fellowship of offering.

On the other hand, for the one who lives by the knowledge of Christ, the action of *love* that edifies is to reveal the one laying down the word.

Inability to multiply the word

Those who live according to this fleshly mode of knowledge are unable to reveal the one who laid down the word, nor to *multiply the word* according to their sanctification. This is a remarkable principle.

It may be true that the person who is operating by this leaven *does* have a name to express the word.

Because they don't do it by the mode of offering, however, the word that they proclaim edifies no-one. This is because they are revealing no-one but themselves.

This is where we have to be clear on our understanding of the culture of offering, both in the presbytery, and in the church, so that, as we participate, we do not focus on revealing ourselves.

Rather, we are able to reveal what has been laid down to us, and to multiply it according to our sanctification. This is how the grace of God multiplies within the whole body.

A worthless form of knowledge

This other knowledge, clearly, is not the knowledge that we are to have. The messengers of Christ, and indeed all of us, are to forsake this form of knowledge. We literally have to put it off.

We have to consider that knowledge and that basis for ministering in the church, and in our houses, as being worthless.

Instead of it being a value-system by which we derive some sense of value, we have to consider it for what it is.

Paul said that he considered all of his training and knowledge, accumulated through years of zealous ministry, presumably on behalf of Christ, to be refuse.

Worse than that, he described it as 'dung'. He said that it was foul! He counted it all as loss, in order to obtain *a different knowledge*.

So, there is a knowledge that puffs up, which has to go from our lives. We have to get rid of it in order to obtain the knowledge of Christ, which is found in fellowship with Him as part of His body.

'The knowledge of Christ' means to *know Christ and to be known by Him*.

Depart from Me, I never knew you

Remember, there will be a whole group of people who come before Jesus on the Day of Judgement, who will say, 'Didn't we do all these things in Your name?'

That 'doing' is the knowledge that puffs up.

And Jesus said to them, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you.'

Did they perform a lot of activities in His name? Yes, they did. Were these actually successful? Apparently. In the end, however, it wasn't according to who they were supposed to be. They hadn't obtained the knowledge that mattered.

This knowledge is Jesus, and Him knowing them.

They had developed for themselves a theology based in good works and activities 'on behalf of Christ.

Knowing Christ in His brethren

So, the knowledge of Christ is first to be known by Him, and then to know ourselves, in Him, through offering. This is *the culture of first love*.

And to truly know Him means to know our brethren in Christ, because Christ is His body.

So, to know Him is to completely *consider one another*, and to *know the name of one another* in order that we may be able to 'stir up love and good works'. This literally means to be able to 'pour out' on another so that they are revealed.

This is, then, the answer to the leaven called 'knowledge'.

Ridding our houses of leaven

We will now look more specifically at how we rid leaven from our houses.

I'm sure that we are all keen for this to occur, and understand that we are to do this work throughout the course of our lives as these leavens come to our attention.

The word comes as a light to search our hearts

We are made aware of the leavens that we need to remove from our lives and households *through the light of the word*.

The word comes, and it is a light. It brings illumination to us regarding the attitudes and behaviours in our lives that cause us to be *disconnected from fellowship*.

And, when we see them, those who have established a foundation of repentance and faith towards God turn immediately in repentance.

This means that we let go of the things that we formerly held on to; we turn to the truth; which is in Christ; and we demonstrate faith through obedience.

For this process to happen, we must allow the Lord to *search our hearts*. So, when the word comes, it does so as a goad to pierce our heart. Our hearts are laid bare before Him, and His eyes search our heart. His eyes are like flames of fire.

Not drawing back in shame

We have to *allow* the Lord to do that, rather than drawing back in shame. The reality is that it will be confronting when the Lord brings the leaven to our attention.

We need to accept that what He is revealing with His eyes is *true*.

Our sense of righteousness about ourselves is not the truth. It's a deception; a delusion.

For this process to occur, we must allow the Lord to search our hearts and, in the light of the word that we are hearing [we are allowing our hearts to be exposed by His word as He searches our hearts with His eyes], we are to go and search our own houses to rid them of these attitudes and behaviours.

A dual process at work in removing leaven

Two processes are in play here.

We have to allow our hearts to be *exposed by the word*, as Christ comes, with eyes as a flame of fire.

Then, the initiative of faith, in the light of that word, is *to examine ourselves*.

So, in the light of the word that we are hearing, we also must apply ourselves to *searching for leaven in our houses*.

The parable of the lost coin

These two points of process were illustrated by Jesus through the parable of the lost coin.

'Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

'And when she has found it, *she calls all her friends and neighbours together* [this sounds like not forsaking our gathering together in a house to house

fellowship], saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' ' Luk 15:8-9.

In hearing this account, we could all be thinking, 'What does a lost coin have to do with getting rid of leaven?'

By this parable, Jesus drew our attention to the most fundamental implication of leaven in our lives and houses.

When I began to speak about leaven, I said that leaven is all the attitudes and behaviours that *cause our disconnection from fellowship*.

Jesus referred to the implication of leaven in our lives and houses and churches - it is *disconnection from the headship of Christ*.

How do we know this?

The significance of the ten-coin garland

Most Bible commentators agree that the lost coin that Jesus spoke of was called a 'drachma'. This was a valuable silver coin, often worn in a ten-piece garland by a married woman. There were ten coins, and they were connected together in a headpiece which was worn on her head.

This ten-piece silver garland was the seal of her submission to her husband, her head. It was worn on her head, marking her head as being covered because she was submitted to her husband.

The loss of the coin obviously meant that that seal was broken.

The ten coins were joined together so that they could be worn as a headpiece. If one of them was lost, the coins could no longer form the headpiece on her head.

This would indicate that she had lost the mark of her submission to her head. There is a disconnection here which is represented by the lost coin.

Disconnection from the headship of Christ

Through the parable, the loss of the coin represents a disconnection from the headship of Christ.

When we are disconnected from the headship of Christ - in the case of a woman, who she has her head uncovered because she doesn't submit to her husband; or in the case of a man, who has his head covered because he is receiving his reflection, or word of direction, from his wife, and not from his

Head, Christ - whatever the *disconnection from the headship of Christ*, it is marked by the loss of this coin.

Another word or culture rises up

Disconnection from the headship of Christ allows another word or culture to rise up and to permeate the conversation and conduct of our lives and houses.

Think of the example of Eve. When she wasn't referencing her work, and the word that she was receiving from Yahweh through her husband, what was the outcome?

She received another word from Satan into her household. She was disconnected from her head, and another word became the orientation for her conversation and conduct.

When Adam turned his head away from Christ and received the word of his wife as the source of wisdom and capacity for him to do his work, he was living by another word, disconnected from the headship of Christ.

Disconnection from Christ allows leaven to enter our houses

It is disconnection from the headship of Christ that allows leaven into our houses and causes leaven to permeate our lives.

This was true for Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and it continues to be true for us today. Where we are not being reformed in our culture to the order of headship, leaven will be present among us.

This is true for whole churches; it is true for whole households; and it is true for individuals.

A symbol of the connection to Christ's priesthood

A proverb which King Solomon recorded highlights this connection between a silver garland, or a silver coin, and the quality of a person's speech.

'The tongue of the righteous is choice silver.' Pro 10:20.

So the woman lost a silver coin, which means that she was disconnected from her head, which means that her *speech* was from 'another' word.

If she has her head properly covered - or if it represents the connection of headship of a man to Christ, where he has his Head uncovered, so that

his face is looking at Christ, and not his wife - then the words that come from their mouths are 'choice silver'.

This means that they are part of the *priestly* activity of ones who are joined to Christ's own priesthood.

Connection to the order of headship, marked by the silver garland, will be demonstrated through the speech of that one, in that house, who is called righteous, or godly, or unleavened and sincere and true.

'The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is worth little.'

To 'have the mind of Christ', then, is to be connected to His headship. This gives rise to righteousness - to choice silver.

If, however, our habit of mind is malice, it will give rise to a heart of wickedness.

And, what comes out of the heart? It is the words that the mouth speaks.

'The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.'

This is *not* the wisdom that comes from above.

The ability to speak in sincerity and truth

This highlights the connection between that silver coin and the ability to speak in sincerity and truth, where 'we become the bread' to another, bringing edification to them.

The loss of the coin, therefore, is the loss of the ability to 'feed many' as the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, because of one's disconnection from the headship of Christ.

If we are disconnected from the headship of Christ, it means that our conversation and conduct is completely leavened.

The way of recovery

Now, the means of *recovery* to right relationship with Christ, as a church, as households, as individuals, and as married couples, is to first sweep out the leaven, in the light of a candle, or lamp.

That's what Jesus said, isn't it?

'For what woman [that could be the woman who is the bride of Christ or it could be a woman in a

Christian household], having ten silver coins, does not light a lamp?'

This will allow the word, firstly, to *expose our heart*; and then to be used to *search the house*.

You would think this means 'light a lamp and look in the house to find the coin', but there's a step *before* looking for the coin, isn't there?

We have to *sweep it out*. And we sweep it out in the light of the lamp.

'Sweeping it out' is *sweeping leaven* out of the house.

Sweeping out the leaven in the light is the means of recovery to the order of headship

The means of recovery to right relationship with Christ, as a church, as households, as married couples and as individuals is to first sweep out the leaven, in the light of a candle, or a lamp.

This is the light of Christ's eyes, which are as a flame of fire searching our hearts. He comes to us in this way through the word proclaimed from messengers in His hand.

In response to this word, we are to turn in repentance to our Head, Christ.

Then we must *apply* ourselves, in the light of this word, to sweeping out the attitudes and behaviours that His eyes reveal in us, in our marriages, in our families and in the church.

When we are restored to right relational order, which is the order of headship, our desire will be for *fellowship* with others.

If we are connected to the Head because we have 'found the coin', and right relational order is being restored, the words from our lips are like 'choice silver'. It is no longer 'the heart of the wicked that is worth little'; rather, it is 'choice silver'. That person will desire *fellowship and communion with others* in the name of Christ.

Connected to the name of Christ because we have the seal of His name on our head

We are actually *connected* to the name of Christ because we have the seal of His name on our head.

That's why, when we do meet, house to house, with our neighbours and friends, Christ is in the midst of us, and we are having communion with one another.

I am very thankful for this understanding, so that we can be delivered of these tendencies within us

that are 'leavenous'. And we can be fully restored to the order of life by *offering*, through which we can then be a blessing one to another.

I love the way that Jesus said, 'She calls her friends and neighbours.' This is one who seeks fellowship and relationship, saying, 'Rejoice with me.'

The communion is a celebration, isn't it? 'Rejoice with me for I have found the piece which I have lost.'

Isn't that the testimony of Jesus?

The person who is able to minister this testimony has found recovery in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

There is also a leaven that can take hold through those who come into our homes

This has been referring to us, individually and as households and churches, removing leaven from *us*.

However, what about leaven when it comes into our houses *with* someone else?

Your family might be committed to the word and committed to fellowship, because you have a testimony of being restored to the headship of Christ, and you are rejoicing.

You say, 'Come over to my house', and someone comes, who is not of the same culture as your home.

How do we interface with this so that their leaven doesn't permeate the whole body?

Leaven is not only what is already within our heart and houses, which needs to be swept out through the offerings and sufferings of Christ. Leaven can also take hold in our houses through the influence of those whom we allow in our houses.

People may come into our houses and speak a different word from the word of present truth that is ministered by the Spirit through the presbytery. Their conversation and conduct is of another word and culture.

If we entertain this conversation in the self-confident presumption of being able to save them, we will succumb to their influence.

We have to be established in the weakness of Christ, because Paul said, in relation to those who came among the Corinthians, causing this leaven to be established among them, 'We are too weak for that.'

Not even the apostle Paul, who established the entire Gentile church, said, 'I am sufficient in myself to deal with that.'

Knowing by the Spirit how to interface with those who are not of the same spirit of faith

We have to be careful to know, by the Spirit, how to interface with ones who come into our house, but are not of the same spirit of faith *that comes by hearing the word from Christ, through His presbytery*.

The writers of the New Testament warned of these influences in our house to house meals, and almost every writer had a statement about this influence, particularly in individual houses.

It's amazing that we've missed that understanding. We sometimes think about this influence when we gather for church.

However, Paul, Peter, Jude and James all wrote about the influence of these ones coming into *individual households*, and gave instruction on how to interface with them.

'Dear Galatians, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ.' Gal 1:6.

How do we 'come into the grace of Christ'?

It is by the faith that we receive by hearing the word. Faith grants us an introduction into grace, in which we stand, and do the works of godliness, which is our sonship.

The word from another spirit causes us to turn from the mind of Christ

He said, 'You *turned away* from that word, and from that grace, in which you would otherwise fulfil righteousness.'

They had turned away from the mind of Christ. They had turned to malice, and then walked and conversed in wickedness.

'I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ to a *different gospel*.'

The key is to receive the gospel of sonship and to resist any other word - because any other word is not from Christ. It's another influence; another spirit.

'Which is not another; but there are some who trouble you.' They come into our houses, and we immediately feel their troubling effect.

It can be hard to 'get your mouth around it', but you will know by the end of the night with someone if you have been edified. Alternatively, you may have thought, 'I don't know what that quite was?'

Have you ever had that experience?

'But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.'

Those who come into our houses with an alternative gospel

Then he said the most amazing thing.

'But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preaches any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.' Gal 1:8.

'As we have said before, so I now say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.'

The apostle Peter also referred to ones who come into our houses with an alternative gospel.

He said, 'But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they do not understand.' 2Pe 2:12.

They have a whole body of knowledge, but it is not based in the knowledge of Christ.

They don't understand the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and the work that it is to do in our life, because they are not joined to it.

They trust in their own understanding, and they want people to join their own understanding in order to give validity to it.

They complain about the fellowship of Christ's offering; they complain about the doctrine of sonship – they actually don't even understand it. They have no illumination.

'And they will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.'

We need to be aware so that we do not partake of spotted, idolatrous meals

'They are spots and blemishes [Jude noted that they are 'spots and blemishes on your *love feasts*.']

They come into your house with alternative words which are leavenous, and bring 'spots' to them. We need to be aware of this so that we do not partake of spotted, idolatrous meals.

'They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.'

Do you see that he was referring to eating and drinking, house to house? He was not referring to being in 'church'. He was discussing what happens on Friday night when you have a meal with your friends.

What do they have? Instead of having eyes that are illuminated, 'they have eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls'.

If you don't have an ear to hear this, and you are weak in faith, you are 'fair game' for them – 'unstable souls'.

Your protection is in the *truth*.

Trained in covetous practices, pretending to be of the truth

'They have a heart that is *trained* in covetous practices.'

This is an absolutely classic term – '*trained* in covetous practices'. That means that they have been *practising*, doesn't it? If they've been trained in it, they've learned it, and they are the exemplars of covetous practices.

Another way of describing covetous practices is that, in order to draw people to their alternative fellowship, they *pretend* to be like those who are of the truth.

Paul referred to this when he made the point, 'But what I do, I'll continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded as we are'.

These ones are pretending to be like that, but can't, because they are not living by offering.

Like Balaam, their conduct is to reveal themselves and does not reveal another

'They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.'

We don't have time to develop the principle of Balaam, but you'll remember that Balaam could prophesy, but that he did it for personal gain, and he was abhorred by the Lord.

We have to be clear on this. They might not be saying something necessarily wrong, but their

conduct does not reveal another. It's the revealing of themselves, so it's not love for edification.

Paul gave instruction to withdraw from those whose conversation and conduct is leavenous

Paul directed Timothy, his son in the faith, to *withdraw* himself from those whose conversation and conduct was leavened in this manner.

That sounds a little rude, doesn't it? He said, 'Withdraw from these ones.' If we are inclined to religious sophistication, that will be offensive to us, because we think, 'Shouldn't we be embracing these ones, and trying to encourage them?'

Paul said, 'You will do damage to your own soul.' This is amazing, because Timothy himself was an apostle. Paul said, 'Do not even engage that conversation, Timothy.'

They are puffed up but do not know Christ or how to make offering

He said, 'If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words [sound doctrine], even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness [referring to sonship], he is proud [puffed up, or boastful], knowing nothing.' 1Ti 6:3-5.

We see the contradiction here. They think that they know everything, but they know nothing that matters. They don't know Christ; Christ does not know them. And they do not know how to make offering in His body.

'He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes, with arguments over words, which come from envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions [That's cynicism, isn't it?], useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds [an 'evil habit of mind'; malice.]

'Of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.'

So, when you're having dinner on a Friday night and you are in good faith, sincere and true, seeking to converse in grace, and you find ones who are 'obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy and strife and reviling and evil suspicions and useless wranglings', you know that they have another culture.

Paul said to Timothy, 'Get away from that.' This does not mean that we are to be sceptical of every

person who comes into our house to have communion with us in the name of Christ. That would be an horrendous way to live in the body of Christ, making us on edge – to invite someone over and be thinking, 'They could be a sneaky, leavenous, ravenous wolf.'

Jesus instructs us in how to engage in communion through love

That is not the way to engage in communion, because that is not *love*. 'Love hopes all things, believes all things.'

How do we do *that*, but not entertain that leavenous culture? Jesus gave us a very helpful set of instructions.

So, we are not sceptical of every person who comes into our houses to have communion with us in Christ's name.

Neither does it mean that the moment that we hear a person speak something that is contrary or cynical, we say, 'All right, dinner's over, see you later' or 'We're never going to talk to that person again'.

Not withdrawing or presuming

We do not withdraw from them and never talk to them again. We do not immediately presume that they are a wolf in sheep's clothing.

I'm saying, 'Don't do that.' That is not love being expressed in a love feast, or communion, together.

In fact, this one who may be cynical or speaking something other than what we are hearing as a body as it is proclaimed from Christ, to the presbytery, to us, may simply be *weak in faith*.

They may be completely ignorant and weak in faith; or they might be immature because of carnality.

We spoke last week about Paul saying, 'Where you say, "I am of this one, and I am of this one", are you not just a little baby? You're a babe in Christ.'

We do not simply 'cut off' babes in Christ. We who are mature should be able to *entreat* these ones so that they are able to grow up.

Our response to hearing an expression of leaven from a brother

In the light of what we're understanding about the communion, in the wisdom from above, Jesus gave very straightforward instructions.

‘Moreover if your brother sins against you.’ Mat 18:15. The element, ‘against you’, was added in later manuscripts; it really should be ‘moreover if your brother sins’.

When others come into your house and begin to converse, and it’s other than the culture that you know in the Spirit and are being established in, you know that they are sinning. It’s the expression of leaven.

‘If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.’ This doesn’t need to be discussed with various other people. It is, simply, a conversation between you and this person.

We’ll talk about what it will ‘look like’ and will consider a scenario where this occurs.

‘If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you’ve gained a brother.

‘But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses *every word may be established.*’

The ground of *fellowship* is not compromised.

‘And if he refuses to hear them, go and tell it to the *church*. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.’

Let’s see how this relates to us on a Friday night when we ask a family over to commune with us in the name of the Lord, and these alternative conversations arise. How should we respond?

Taking Jesus’ instruction, He said, ‘Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.’ We can do that at the table that night.

When these alternative conversations arise, we should *respond in love, with the truth.*

Equipped with the ability to respond in love with the truth

Our heart is for the inclusion of this one, but it is not to encompass their ideas and their views; it is to respond with the actual *truth*.

We *know* what the truth is, because we are of the Spirit, and He is the Spirit of truth. He will give us what to say in that moment.

We are *equipped* for this. We are equipped for this ability to respond in love with the truth, by

receiving the word proclaimed from the presbytery by those with ascension gift grace.

I had not understood this before now. We had probably leant on understanding the ascension gift graces in the connection to their work and ministry. However, in this passage, Paul specifically addressed the ability to deal with those who are contrary.

‘And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.’ Eph 4:11.

This is the word of grace being laid down *by offering*.

Then all those who receive it in offering are receiving grace and capacity for their ministry as members of the body of Christ, as the bread and cup to one another. We’ve made that point several times.

Not only equipped for our work, but also no longer susceptible to trickery

‘Til we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.’ Eph 4:13-14.

If we receive the word of grace that is ministered by the presbytery, through these ascension gift graces, it’s not only that we are equipped for our work of ministry as a member of the body of Christ; it also means that we are no longer susceptible to this trickery. We are not like little babies.

That would be carnality - being tossed to and fro by ‘every wind of doctrine that breezes into our house’.

Rather, we are fully *equipped to speak to it* - not on behalf of, or as a conduit to, the presbytery, but because that word is in our mouth and in our heart *as our culture*.

Speaking a testimony in love to edify another

We are simply *testifying to the truth*, fully equipped and ready with that, in love, able to edify another who is like a little child, who needs to be established on the ground of truth.

‘But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head - Christ.’ These conversations are happening; but we don’t need to become puffed up because we are speaking the truth.

We simply say, ‘Oh, that’s a bit different from what we’ve been finding in our house. We’ve heard the word, and we’ve made a change in the culture. For example, we are now teaching our children to honour older ones this way, and it’s bearing good fruit in our life. What you are saying seems a bit different from that.’

This is speaking the truth in love by someone who is fully equipped by the word that they have heard. To speak this way means to *testify* to the one who is doubting or cynical, according to the truth that we are receiving and walking in. We can encourage them to let go of their cynicism and strange doctrines, and to walk with us.

If they hear us, Jesus said, ‘We have gained a brother.’ That means that they were already *born of God*, and they simply need to grow up and put off their childhood immaturities.

‘Let go of that and join us in the way that we are walking.’ If they hear us, we’ve gained a brother, who is now of the same spirit of faith, and is joined to a conversation that is spiritual.

If they won’t hear, we invite another with the same spirit of faith to bear witness

However, if they won’t hear, the next time that they want to catch up with us, we can invite one of our friends in the faith - one who is of the same spirit of faith that we are - to join this meal.

If the cynical one is a ‘wolf’, they will be ‘chuffed’ about that, because they’ll be saying, ‘I’m getting two sheep for the price of one.’

If this conversation, again, is contrary to the sound doctrine and the word of present truth, our two households are able to testify together and to bear witness, as two or three in the name, to this brother, to this person, to exhort them in love to the truth.

So, by the word of two or three witnesses, the truth is established; the ground of fellowship is clear. Your household is no longer vulnerable, because you are exemplifying the very culture that they have an opportunity to now join.

If they receive the testimony of two or three witnesses, they can be restored to the fellowship that they are ignorantly assailing.

Not receiving two or three in the name

However, if they won’t receive two or three in the name, we are to ‘tell it to the church’.

That doesn’t mean that, on the next Sunday, we stand up and say, ‘Look, we had ‘Boris’ over to our house and he is speaking contrary words among us. Whatever you do, don’t have him in your house.’

That’s not what it means to ‘tell it to the church’.

What does it mean? ‘Telling to the church’ means raising it with the presbytery. The fellowship of the church is the fellowship of the presbytery. The word which the presbytery is proclaiming *joins* every person to that fellowship.

There are not two different ‘fellowships’. To tell it to the church is actually to speak to those who are to care for the flock - that is, the presbytery.

It is evident that this person is a wolf who is seeking to ‘devour sheep’. They are not willing to hear the truth. They can’t see that their behaviour and their words are contrary to sound doctrine. They are looking, they have an ‘appetite’, for others to join them. They are ‘wolfish’. This is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, who is seeking to devour sheep.

The presbytery may address the person as part of their work to care for the flock

Jesus set the presbytery over His ‘house’, and part of their work is to guard against the influence of wolfish congregants.

However, the presbytery does not go through everyone’s house, checking to see whether or not someone is a wolf. Rather, by gathering from house to house, it becomes clear, to those who are of the truth, who is of a wolfish nature. These two things can’t abide together, can they?

We go to the presbytery and say, ‘We’ve had this person in our house a few times. They are quite cynical, and their influence seems to be quite pervasive, engaging those who are vulnerable.’

The presbytery is then able to address the person - the one with the wolfish disposition - and to encourage them to find what they are looking for, elsewhere.

The presbytery does not come to 'slay' anyone. They simply say, 'If you are so discontent with the word that is being proclaimed here, and with the direction of the church that has been given by the presbytery because of the authority that Christ has given to them, then you are obviously not happy, and don't belong here. You need to find a place that accords with your view.'

This gives the person over to what they desire, which is their own view.

They may say, 'So feel free to go and find it somewhere else, but that's not the fellowship that we are guarding and maintaining here.'

The presbytery is able to address the person and to encourage them to find what they are looking for, elsewhere, as they are obviously discontent among the flock.

When it is clear what a person is, Jesus instructs to 'keep them out of your house'

Jesus said that, when it is clear what this person is, we are to treat them like a heathen and a tax collector. He said to the Jews, 'Keep them out of your house.'

That's exactly what Paul said to Timothy. 'Withdraw from them; don't engage them anymore. If you do, you place yourself at risk of becoming their 'dinner.'

We see that this leaven of religious sophistication can cause injury to ourselves.

We have covered those leavens - they're not all the leavens, of course; but they are certainly the six leavens that Paul identified in his letter.

We are to 'keep the feast' by ridding our houses of leaven, and then we are to *be* the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth to one another.