

Freedom And Unleavened Bread

Slavery and Sin

John W. Ritenbaugh

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I don't know whether you are familiar with the PTL Club, but PTL stand for "Praise The Lord." It was the organization founded by Jim Bakker. Unfortunately, Mr. Bakker, because of some conduct on his part, ended up in jail. He's still in jail and he's trying to be paroled and get out of there and apparently go back to his work of ministry.

I only saw this program one time in my entire life, I believe. I might have seen small portions of it here and there at other times when the television set happened to be on, but one time I did sit there and watch it for a considerable period of time. I came away wondering if there was any program any more misleading involving religion available to deceive the public.

They made Christianity sound like a constant unending stream of miracles, healings, blessings and visions. Almost, one might say, a lark, in which doubts, fears, and discouragements were at an absolute minimum, because whenever they needed anything, it seemed as though all they had to do was ask God and somehow or another God jumped to supply whatever it was that they needed.

To me, it was an unrealistic genie in the bottle approach. It made Christianity seem like so much magic.

I don't want to give the impression that God will not supply our needs, because He certainly will. He says to us that, "*He will supply all of our needs according to His riches and glory by Jesus Christ,*" but their presentation was so unbalanced that it almost completely obscured another major portion of God's purpose, and that is the building of character through experiences, beginning with conversion. They made it seem as though God's only purpose was to somehow get us saved. That was the big issue.

It's presentations like this that enable me to understand why men of education, of science, of industry, and of government reject such things as so much emotional foolishness that bears little connection at all to the real world—the world of earthquakes, economic upheavals, ghettos, disease, and yes, sometimes even slavery.

In the Old Testament, Joseph was sold into an Egyptian slavery and that was a reality of his day. God recorded how he got there and what happened as a result of him being there. Believe me, to Joseph, slavery was a part of his real world.

Now how did he get there? He got there because of sin—certainly part of the sin was his own. Maybe it was a flippant and superior attitude toward his brothers. His father Jacob was part of the problem too, because he committed the sin of respect of persons, because he favored his son Joseph above all the other brothers. What about the other brothers? Was there anger, irritation, bitterness, envy and hatred? Did they sin in selling their own brother into slavery? Did they sin in faking his death and then deceiving their own father?

After Joseph got to Egypt, God gave him favor. Certainly, Joseph lived a life that had two sides to it. He experienced the depth of despair of being in prison and then rising, you might say, amongst the inmates of his bondage there until he was a leader even in prison—a trustee, we might say. Then he got out of prison, and by a miraculous intervention on God's behalf, He made Joseph to be second in command of all of Egypt.

But Joseph died and a Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph and in the meantime, over a period of about 215 years, the Israelites grew into a nation of a couple of million people. The Egyptians, fearing the loss of political and economic control of the country, sinned: They put the Israelites into slavery.

The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt as a result of sins—the sins of their forefathers and the sins of their Egyptian hosts. That's part of the real world. That's the kind of thing that God reports on.

In a broader sense, the Bible shows that all of mankind is in slavery as a result of sin that began with Adam and Eve and continues to this day. What

has resulted from living this way—I mean the way of sin—is this world with its warring societies and its depraved systems. The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread deal with how one can escape this bondage and how one can remain free after escaping that bondage.

I want you to consider this because that escape—or that getting free, or, to be more specific, that redemption—is almost totally engineered and carried out by God. Passover deals with that aspect.

If you think back to Israel's bondage in Egypt, the slaves did almost nothing to get themselves free. That is a reality. There is almost nothing a slave can do, because slavery is typified by a loss, and maybe sometimes even a total lack, of control over your circumstances. Somebody else regiments **every** part of your life. You have to answer to a master who tells you where to sleep, when to get up, what food to eat, where you're going to work, how long you're going to work, how hard you're going to work, when you're going to get off, who your wife is going to be, what's going to happen to your children. **EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE** is dominated and controlled by somebody else.

When you apply this again to getting free spiritually, how much is there in that analogy that the slave does to actually get free? The Israelites did very little except for making a few preparations to leave. They slew the lamb, put the blood on the doorposts and on the lintels, and after God passed over and killed the firstborn, they walked away.

Not very much, was it? God did virtually everything. But in order for Israel to do that, God had to devastate a proud and powerful nation. Finally, He had to kill their firstborn. Even after the Israelites got free, in that first seven day period, especially on the seventh day, God actually had to block the Israelites from going back and block the Egyptians from coming forward. He had to be a rear guard for the Israelites so they could get out.

This is, we might say—if we are comparing what happened to Israel in a physical manner with what we experience spiritually—what happened to us spiritually is the beginning of God's grace toward us. It's certainly not the end of God's grace, because all of salvation is by grace. All along the way God is giving His gifts to enable us to remain free.

There are things that we must learn from grace and whether what we learn comes from God's grace to us directly, or the kind of grace He has given to others, it matters not. We better learn something from God's grace! The Days of Unleavened Bread have very much to do with this.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

I've used this scripture a couple of times recently, but is so important to our understanding. If there is anything this verse teaches us, it is that grace is not the entire story, especially after we leave Egypt. Our portion of the responsibility for salvation begins to become larger after we leave Egypt. It will never be in balance with what God does. God is always going to be doing way more providing salvation for us than we do, but our part enlarges, and that's the way it is in life too, as well.

As we grow—as we mature; as we step from childhood to adulthood—we begin to take more and more of the responsibility for making the right choices and doing the right things and contributing to the well-being of society. Less and less belongs to Mom and Dad as we become independent of their strings. God follows that same pattern. He's always there to help; He's always there to provide; but He requires that we begin to take a larger and larger portion of the load.

The realization of grace and what it accomplishes for us puts us under obligation to respond to God in the way that these verses show. It says there that "grace teaches us"—or "grace trains us" would be a bit more specific interpretation or translation of that. What obligation does it put us under? It puts us under obligation to no longer LIVE the way we did in bondage.

In bondage, somebody or something was dominating our life as our master. You can begin to see that the obligation is to move away from dependence

toward independence. In order for us to be spiritually independent, we have to be able to show God that we can handle ourselves independently of Him.

What grace does, as we can see from these verses, is it makes ethical demands on us. It makes ethical demands that are consistent with its nature. Since it's the grace of God, the nature of this grace is God's. We are then put under obligation to change or to produce ethical things that are consistent with God. So why is grace given? So a change can take place.

We're going to be going through training, and that training is toward a certain end. Anybody who is trained for something does it for a specific reason. If you are taking lessons and training on the piano, it is to become accomplished on the piano. That is your aim; that is your goal; that is the end toward which you are undergoing the training. You have the instructor; you have the instrument; and you have to provide the practice in order to meet that goal. You have to provide money so you are able to pay the instructor. You have to provide time—you have to set it apart. All these things are part of the training that is aimed toward a certain end.

It's the same principle in other areas. A person goes to school to learn to be an engineer. A person trains in computer areas in order to become an expert in the computer field. A person trains in athletics to become skilled at doing their thing in athletics.

Grace trains us toward a certain end. Of course, we understand that certain end is the Kingdom of God. The training is going to be consistent with the goal that is in mind. We also saw that the training is going to be consistent with the nature of God because it is God's grace that is training us toward that end.

There is purpose connected to what we are going through. Things are not taking place haphazardly. I kid you not. That has to be part of your thinking. If you are God's child, things are not taking place haphazardly. He is not the kind of parent such as we have out in society who just allows their kids to grow up like a bad weed. God is intimately involved in the rearing of His children and He is training us toward a certain end.

We live in this Western world where Christianity is the major religion, and I think it would be interesting to review something that was in the *Chicago Tribune*. This is a clipping dated March 29, 1984, but I don't think that the information is out-of-date. I think that we would find that the information is very much up-to-date—maybe the figures (the statistics) might be off a little bit, but I think it's the principle that is being expressed here that is right on target.

It comes from an interview of George Gallop and a review of a talk that he gave to a Southern Baptist Seminar—they held a seminar for Southern Baptist leaders. It was held in Arlington, Virginia, and I think that Mr. Gallop's (the Gallop Poll man) remarks are very interesting.

"It is," he said, "a profound and giant paradox that religion is showing clear signs of revival even as the country is ridden with rising crime rates and other problems regarded as antithetical to religious piety." [In other words, what is happening in society does not match what Christianity's tenets are.] "There is no doubt that religion is growing," Gallop told a national seminar of Southern Baptist leaders, "but we find that there is very little difference in ethical behavior between church goers and those who are not active religiously." [Isn't that interesting?]

"The levels of lying, cheating and stealing," he said, "are remarkably similar in both groups." A little later he said, "Eight of ten Americans consider themselves Christians (80%), yet only about half of the self-designated believers could identify who delivered the biblical Sermon on the Mount, and fewer still could recall as many as five of the Ten Commandments." [Grace is training them? It makes you wonder, doesn't it?]

"The churches urgently need to take advantage of the increased interest in religion to channel people from the church category to the deeply committed category," said Gallop, who noted that, "A mere 12% of Americans could be classified as strongly committed to spiritual faith."

Eighty percent of Americans say that they are religious, but only 12% of Americans say they are strongly committed. That's only 14% of the 80% that are strongly committed. Now listen to this: For polling purposes, a person who attended a worship service at least ONCE in the past six months was regarded as "churched." That's not a very high standard, is it?

Mr. Gallop goes on, "The Bible for many is inaccessible"—he does not mean that it is not available. Everywhere you go there are Bibles available. In the hotel here, there's a Bible in every room practically. It's available; it's accessible that way. What he is saying is that people don't understand it. He means, without saying it, that church leaders aren't doing their job. They aren't teaching their people. He concludes, "We revere the Bible, but we don't read it."

If this article is any indication, this Western world, which is certainly aware of the doctrine of grace, has not been affected by it in the way Titus 2:11-14 says that one should be. There is little difference between the ethical practice of those claiming church affiliation and those not. THAT OUGHT NOT to be, and I hope none of us are in that category, where the grace of God has had no influence on us in changing our ethical behavior.

Jesus Christ has broken the bond of ignorance and deception that held us in its grip as a slave. Now we are free to make choices that lead to God's kingdom. Before, we simply were not able. That's why we were a slave. We were being dominated by other influences. God, by His grace, enables us to live with the prudence that will keep us headed in the right direction and within His purpose. That's what Titus 2:11-14 is about.

Let's consider Israel again—Israel after the flesh. Is a man free because he is taken from one form of government to another? Were they free because they stepped across a boundary line marked by the Red Sea and into another country? It may have been, but it was only on the surface. I'm sure that it seemed so to them that they were free. But the report of the Bible shows otherwise.

We have the record of the Israelites by which we can learn that their freedom was only relative because moving or changing government hadn't changed the real *cause* of the problem—even though the change was from a corrupt,

oppressive and dictatorial government of men to the government of God. Just that change of governments didn't change a thing as far as real freedom is concerned.

The Israelites were turned loose, but they weren't free. They thought so. They thought they were free, but it soon became apparent that their ideas of freedom and God's and Moses' ideas of freedom were entirely different.

Numbers 11:1 Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.

Numbers 11:4-8 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.

Numbers 11:11 So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me?"

Drop down to verse 20. This is at the tail end of a prophecy that God gives that He is going to fulfill—that He's going to give them their heart's desire. It's not going to be one day that they eat meat, but for a whole month.

Numbers 11:20 But for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?"

To govern these free people was a tremendous burden for Moses because they weren't free of their slave mentality. They still thought like slaves. They kept rebelling to the extent that they YEARNED to go back to the bondage that they had YEARNED to come out of just a short time before.

What is interesting is that the problem on the surface here had to do with their diet. But that wasn't the real problem. The contrast, as God presents it, was between what was to them a plain and bland diet as compared to the rich and stimulating diet that they were accustomed to in Egypt. They wanted to be stimulated, but they didn't realize—because they were still thinking like slaves—that their tastes were entirely perverted, even their tastes in terms of food. What they were doing in despising the LORD WAS actually accusing Him—the One who made them—of not knowing any better what they needed to face the rigors of their life in the wilderness.

Right here is a major key to understanding what the problem with mankind is. It has to do with what the food symbolizes.

In Titus 2:11-14, the word that's translated "worldly" is *kosmikos*. It's an adverbial form of the word *cosmos*. *Cosmos* means world. We have the adverbial form here "worldly." It means "of the world."

You'll understand it, I think, if I give you a synonym we can all relate to. Its synonym is "carnal." Its antonym is *haggios*. Does anyone know what *haggios* means? It means "holy." The opposite of worldly is holy. Holy means pure; holy means different; holy means set apart.

Worldly lust, which is what these people in Numbers 11 were having an attack of—they were lusting after the food—it was a carnal desire that had gotten out of hand. Worldly lusts are those desires that are not of God but of the world, and these desires are FUELED by the reservoir of concepts that are formed from our experiences in bondage in the world.

Until God calls us, until God reveals Himself to us, until God gives us His grace, the only experiences we have had have been in the world. That's where all our memories lie. That's where our education (secular or religious), the academic things—all of our experiences have been there. Worldly desires are fueled by that reservoir of memories that we've had of those

experiences—whether it's been in school, business, on the football field, driving an automobile or baking a cake. I don't care what it is. All of those memories, all of our ideas and perspectives have been formed there. This reservoir includes that mass of thoughts and opinions and maxims and concepts and ideas and perspectives and speculations, fashions and fads, and hopes and impulses and aims that are current at anytime in the world.

Brethren, we LIVE IN IT—STILL! We are still in it in the sense that that is where we conduct our life; that's where we conduct our business. Because we are so scattered, probably 90-95% of our personal contacts are with people who are of the same mind as the world! It's awfully hard to keep it at bay, isn't it? It confronts us everywhere. It seeks our destruction and it seeks to enslave us again.

I gave that sermon on the Holy Day showing you that the Bible views sin as a dominating master that is seeking to DESTROY! SIN DRIVES THE WORLD! This is why John said not to love the world. It is what we must come out of if we are ever going to be free.

Please turn with me to Psalm 106. There's an interesting thought here. The psalmist is remembering what happened in the past and he's reporting to the people who lived in his day.

Psalm 106:6-7 We have sinned *with* our fathers [not necessarily in exactly the same way at the same time, but rather according to the same principles], we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt *did not understand Your wonders*; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea.

They NEVER even got out of the territory of Egypt and they were ready to turn back. God had made them free, geographically. God had made them free, politically. But they weren't free mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Their mind was still enslaved and they were carrying it everywhere they went.

There's something very sobering about that in the instruction Jesus gave in Luke 14. Jesus said that you're going to have to bear your cross and follow after Him.

What was the cross in reality? Was it not the instrument of Christ's death? That's what He was killed on. Certainly He was killed by sin. We could carry that further, but the actual instrument of His death was the cross. He had to carry it, didn't He? He had to carry His own instrument of death with Him. He stumbled under it and somebody had to help Him.

Do you know that equates symbolically with something that we carry with us everywhere? What is the instrument of our death? It's sin. Sin lodges in the mind. The apostle Paul said in Romans 7 that it is "sin within me." Here's a converted man, an apostle of God, long after he was converted, and yet he said sin still lived in him, and every once in awhile it would dominate him and get control over him, and he would find himself under its domination once again. That cross that we have to bear and carry with us right to the grave is our own mind! "Sin lies at the door," doesn't it? It's right at the door all the time. It's an interesting challenge God has given us. Everywhere we go, the cross is there. It's sobering.

We count the cost before baptism because we want the person who is going to be baptized to realize that this is a reality that we have to face. So it's understandable why the Israelites did what they did. The slave mentality was still there. Here they were in the seventh day out of Egypt and they were still slaves. They wanted to go back.

Certainly the story in Exodus 14 gives every indication that their motivation for going through the sea and into their baptism was because they were faced with an alternative—there was no other way. Isn't that true of our baptism? Don't we get to the place where we feel we have to get baptized? There is no other way to go.

We have to give the Israelites credit because Hebrews 11, right around verses 25, 26 or 27, says they did go through the sea in faith. They must have recovered themselves. I think their recovery was largely due to the fact that Moses was there and he really was a man of faith. They could look to him.

They had the right kind of leadership from Moses (and maybe some others as well) and they obediently gathered themselves together and went off in faith through the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:10-12 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

Okay, a question: Do you understand your purpose, now that God has called you? That God has called us to freedom and freedom right now, while we are still living in this world, has NOTHING at all to do with location. It has EVERYTHING to do with the way one thinks—thinks about himself; thinks about himself in relation to others; thinks about himself in relation to things; most importantly, thinks about God and God's purpose and God's salvation.

You can begin to see where I am heading here. When God begins to call us, He begins an educational process in which the experiences that we have had in the world, apart from God, are going to slowly but surely be covered over and eradicated by the experiences that we have with God within His purpose. Those experiences with God will replace the experiences that we have had in the world, and we will begin to draw on the reservoir of those experiences with God to do our thinking and our decision-making.

Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God according to the *inward* man.

It didn't matter where Paul was. He was a free man—he was in prison singing hymns of praise to God. God heard those hymns and sent an earthquake and then set him geographically free. Not only that, He used the earthquake to bring the Philippian jailer to repentance and begin the process of setting him free. Our God works in interesting ways.

Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind [Where's the problem? It's in the mind.], and bringing me into captivity [bondage, slavery] to the law of sin which is in my members.

Romans 8:2-3 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has 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 did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh. . . .

Do you understand what Paul is saying here? He's saying that the problem with the Old Covenant (not just Israel and Egypt) was not in the covenant. The problem was in the people. It was weak through the flesh. The problem (reading through the context of Romans 7 and 8) was in the mind. They weren't converted. It's as simple as that.

Romans 8:4-6 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their *minds* on the things of the flesh [remember that], but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

The problem under the Old Covenant was the way the people thought. They thought the way they did because they were missing elements vital to God's way. One was the Holy Spirit.

Remember when we were in Numbers 11, the Israelites rebelled because they were having problems with their diet. They complained that their diet was not as stimulating as what they had in Egypt, but I said to you that was not their real problem, and that their real problem lay elsewhere.

I Peter 2:1-3 Therefore laying aside all malice, all deceit [guile], hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking [connect that to Titus 2:11-

14], as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Remember the word "grace" as it appeared in Titus 2. Now we're talking about God being gracious once again. Peter tells us here that we are to desire the word of God as a newborn babe [desires milk]. We have a grandson who, in a few days, will be three months old. I can tell you from having watched him that he desires milk. When he gets hungry he lets his mother, his dad, and (he has a pretty lusty voice) he might let the whole neighborhood know (if the door or window was open) that he was hungry and he desires milk.

Peter is saying here that we should desire the milk of God's word in the same way that a baby desires to be fed and cries and strives to get milk when he is hungry. The Bible's writers frequently used food as a metaphor for the word of God. Here it is "milk." They do this because, even as food gives satisfaction or sustains our life, energizes and refreshes us physically, so does the word of God fulfill many of the same functions for us spiritually.

Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. [These people had regressed.] For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of a full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Milk, then, is equivalent to the simpler, foundational material of God's word. Meat—those things that are more profound, mature and refined. A person who is only on milk, Paul says, is unskilled. Perhaps a more accurate translation would be "inexperienced" or "untried."

Consider this with a human child. Their diets are mainly milk and are they not unskilled? All they can do well is cry or dirty their diaper. They do that with the expertise of a master. But anything else, any other requirement of life, they can hardly do anything. What do they need? They need time. They need growth. They need the kind of food that will sustain and support and

produce growth to take them to the place where they are adults. All the while they are growing up they are going through experiences and becoming more skilled, tried, tested, and proven.

God is using this to help instruct you and me that we need to be growing. An extremely important part of the growth cycle is having the right food to feed the mind.

Even as a person will physically become easy prey for attack by disease, become unproductive and maybe even die if their diet is not sufficient, so will a person who does not regularly imbibe of God's word. They will also open themselves up to the spiritual forces that will infect and weaken them to where they can actually come to the place where they will be subject to spiritual death. That's pretty sobering.

In Matthew 4:4 and in Luke 4:4—you can turn to either one, because they both say essentially the same thing.

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

There is a dimension to life apart from food and water and that dimension is given life by the word of God. It's given strength; it's given the ability to grow by the word of God. The word of God provides an absolutely vital dimension to a person's life. It is vital if the person is going to live the abundant life and eventually have eternal life.

This analogy can be drawn even farther and I think it is vital that we do so in order to understand it even better.

Jesus is clearly identified as the Logos, the Word of God.

John 6:32-33 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God *is He* who comes down from heaven and *gives life* to the world."

Did you notice those words—"gives life to the world" (Matthew 4:4)? He speaks that to living people. He is talking about a different kind of life. He is talking about the abundant life. He is talking about a life that is free. He is talking about a life that will eventually be eternal, as well.

John 6:48 I am the bread of life . . .

John 6:50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die . . .

Verse 63 is very important in this regard.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.

That ties that right together with giving life to the world. That ties it right together with Matthew 4:4. These scriptures are telling us that we are to imbibe of Jesus Christ. Of course, not literally, but the instructions that He gave through His word and example.

Let's begin to tie this more directly to the Days of Unleavened Bread. Leavening is a type of sin—maybe I could even say leavening is *the* type of sin. It was used by the writers in the Bible to illustrate this because of its natural qualities of spreading, fermenting, corrupting, and changing from one form into something different than it originally was. That's what sin does. It infects, it spreads, it corrupts, and it changes us. Look how innocent we all start our life as children. We are so beautiful when we start. By the time we get to be adults, we become what we are now and we need to go back to being a child—a child in the right way. That's the way God works. He has kind of an ironic sense of humor, I find.

In Matthew 16:6—we'll just look at this quickly. I'm not going to say a lot about it. The subject in verse 1 has to do with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They came testing Him and asked Him for a sign.

Matthew 16:6 "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees"

Matthew 16:12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Here leaven is used to signify the corruption of doctrine. We need to consider this because we have a lot of friends who are still in the Worldwide Church of God. There's hardly a person in the church who does not recognize that that church is headed downhill spiritually. Certainly it is still part of the church of God, but they are heading down spiritually and what is corrupting them? False doctrines.

Is there not a scripture that says, "*A little leaven leavens the whole lump*"? Indeed there is! Those who remain are going to become corrupted by the corruption that surrounds them. Brethren, the very least we can do is pray to God that He will somehow turn it around. I know people who have already written it off. They say, "Well, there are still some people there who are still spiritually-minded. They have the right and good attitude." But by and large they are saying it's down the tubes. I won't go that far. I'm just telling you what they say. We need to cry out to God and ask Him to somehow turn that organization around.

Leaven is used in other places. In Luke 12:1 it signifies hypocrisy. In the Psalms it is frequently used to indicate bitterness and anxiety—a person who is full of internal churning.

II Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The living Word of God, Jesus Christ, never sinned. NEVER WAS THERE a life so completely unleavened as Christ's. The combination of His example and His words—out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. What came out of Christ's mouth were words that were uncorrupted, untainted by a carnal heart in any way. It was totally and completely spiritual. Everything that came out of that mouth was pure evermore. The word of God, in terms of His words and in terms of His example, has been given to us to be the basis of our thinking.

Exodus 12:15-17 Seven days you **shall eat** unleavened bread.

That is an absolute command! You shall do it—seven days. There is no reasoning around the thing where you only eat unleavened bread if you eat bread. "Seven days you shall EAT unleavened bread." DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHY? Seven is the number of perfect completion. Nothing can be added to the number seven as far as perfection in Biblical numbers is concerned. What God is saying, from the time you leave Egypt, from the time that you accept the blood of Christ, from the time that you are **free** and receive the grace of God, NEVER IN YOUR LIFE ARE YOU TO FAST FROM GOD'S WORD! You are to eat it completely and totally for the rest of your life. We can't AFFORD to fast in terms of God's Word. This is the very thing that we need to get into us so we think like God does. (I'm talking here symbolically, you understand.)

Let's go on a little bit further just so you'll see that this was not a one time thing. I think that we understand that if God says something one time it ought to be a command to us. If He says it twice, three times, four times, five times, how about six or seven times?

Leviticus 23:6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days *you must* eat unleavened bread.

Does that make it any stronger? It certainly does to me. You *MUST* eat it.

Numbers 28:16-17 On the fourteenth day of the first month is the PASSOVER of the LORD. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days.

In Deuteronomy 16:3, he says the same thing. The scriptures are very clear. We are to eat unleavened bread seven days and that typifies taking in the Word of God.

I Corinthians 5:7-8 Therefore purge out the old leaven [Notice this process. The old leaven has to be gotten out.], that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. [We've been

unleavened through the sacrifice of Christ. In another place, I believe in John 15:5, He told them they were clean through the word.] For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. 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.

I think we are generally familiar with the word "truth." This is the same word that appears in John 17:17, where it says, "Thy word is truth." This word is used in a number of ways in the New Testament. It can mean genuine. It can mean real or reality, as opposed to mere appearance.

In John 17:17, it is used in the sense of something derived from a pure and holy God and declaring the will of that God as compared to that which is from the world, which is the course sullied by the experiences of men.

Here, in I Corinthians 5, it is used in the sense of truth in conduct. In other words, the truth has been taken in by means of word; it has been believed; and then it has been put into practice. This word "truth" in the Greek is very similar to the word "sincerity", which precedes it, and is contrasted with malice and wickedness, which are works of the flesh.

The word translated "sincerity" means "pure or clear." The English word "sincere" is a very good, accurate translation of that Greek word. The English "sincere" comes from the Latin and means "without wax." In other words, there is nothing at all that is contaminating it. This is behavior that is not contaminated.

The word of God in I Corinthians 5:7 has been imbibed in the person and it has resulted in a pure, a sincere, a realistic and genuine behavior or conduct.

The connections there are very obvious. As surely as strength and vitality falls on the heels of eating the right kind of food, so does the vitality of the mind—that is, the life of God is strengthened so we can grow into an adult by the word of God.

Eating unleavened bread is symbolic of eating the pure and unadulterated word of God, which is spirit. These things begin to go in a circle, don't they?

That spirit, in turn, becomes the basis for thinking within new parameters—parameters that always take God into account.

Proverbs 30:5-6 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

The word "pure" might be better translated "refined." What it means is, what is in the background, is that people have put it to the test and it works. That's why the advice comes. It's been refined. It's as pure as can be gotten. Then he adds to it, "Don't add to it and it will be a shield to you."

Why will it protect you?

Psalms 18:30 As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven [it fits right in with refined, tests, pure]; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

Why the implication of protection? Protection from what? Protection from all of the things that bondage and sin imply. If we don't have the refined, the pure, the unadulterated word of God, the only alternative is the word of men! There's nowhere in God's word where He says the word of men is pure; that the word of men is true; that the word of men is refined. The word of men is limited to the experiences of men and it is limited by the prejudices of men. Even though a man may try to report something—as in a history—honestly and as accurately as he can with all sincerity, he doesn't have the breadth of experience of God and he doesn't have the unprejudiced mind of God.

If we are going to use the words of men in place of the words of God, we will not be protected from bondage. We will slide back.

Right now these days are the Days of Unleavened Bread. The focus is on the word of God, because that's what it's going to take—along with the help of God, the Spirit of God—to keep us FREE, to keep us in the liberty that God has given to us.

Exodus 6:5-8 "And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'"

Here God promises to bring them out of their bondage and, of course, we understand this also applies to you and me, to bring us out of our bondage. This time, though, He is getting to the root of the problem. The last time provided an analogy. The last time gives us an example we can look at and learn from. This time, with you and me, He's playing for keeps and He's getting to the root of the problem. The problem is in us. It is in our minds (remember Romans 8:3).

The Old Covenant was weak through the flesh. We're no different from those people. Human nature hasn't changed. Satan hasn't changed. The world hasn't changed. God hasn't changed. His Spirit hasn't changed. His truth hasn't changed. All of those things are constant, so the problem is still in us.

The solution has to be a change of mind and the pure word of God. The unleavened bread plays a very large part in this. We can learn from John 8 that truth shall make us free. We also find, in John 8:44-45, that Satan was a murderer and a liar from the beginning. He was the one who instigated the sins of Adam and Eve and we can understand from that that our bondage is very directly tied into lies and deceit.

This is what has to be broken free from. God never lies. His word is always true. It can be relied on and if we use it, it keeps us free and it protects us from falling back into the world once again.

God doesn't remove us from one geographical location to another. We have to come out of our own personal, spiritual bondage, regardless of where we are, because that is the real problem. We physically remain where we are, but there is something else that has to be added, and that is that life takes its values from its goals and purposes.

Most people's purpose in life is merely physical, so the things that they pursue in life and the means that they use to accomplish those goals is what are bringing everybody into bondage. The goals are carnal, and the ways of reaching those goals are also carnal. They involve lying. They involve murder. They involve adultery. They involve fornication. They involve stealing. They involve coveting. They involve breaking the Sabbath. They involve taking God's name in vain or building statues to God. The Ten Commandments are involved in that, but it's much bigger than just the Ten Commandments.

In terms of Christianity, its great goal causes one to set the very highest of standards. The goal is the kingdom of God. There is no goal that has higher standards than the kingdom of God. It takes a pure word to keep one strengthened to accomplish those goals.

We will finish on this scripture in Luke 4; because we have what I think in one sense is Jesus Christ's specific purpose statement for His ministry.

Luke 4:16-19 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Every one of those things has to do with words. Everything that came out of Him came out of an absolutely pure heart. He said, "I'm going to preach the gospel to the poor." The poor are those deprived or powerless, and the reason for this was to give them vision, to give them hope. That's the first thing

Moses told the Israelites—"We're going to go to our own land. We're going to be free."

Then Christ said, "We're going to heal the brokenhearted." He means those whose hearts are broken in terms of repentance. So He says, "I'm going to take care of all the past mistakes. I'm going to heal you. I'm going to give you comfort so you start out the journey in good condition, spiritually."

He said, "We're going to preach deliverance to the captives." He's going to inspire enthusiasm and give hope for a bright future. He's going to give recovery of the sight to the blind. He's going to give truth, and therefore direction, and clear thinking to people. He's going to set them at liberty. He's going to forgive them their sins and keep them free. He's going to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, so the time is now, and instill them with urgency—every one of them working on our mind.

Hardly any of us have moved an inch we might say, since we've been in the church. Most of us are in the same general area in which we were called. Even if we did move around the country, we're still under the same human government. God is after our mind. He wants to change the heart until it is pure like His Son's.

In all of these functions, God is working on the mind by means of His word and by means of His truth empowering us through an educational process, and the addition of His Spirit to make the best possible use of the free moral agency in our lives.

In John 1:12, it says—and you really have to see this in its context, because at the beginning of the chapter, Jesus is identified as the Word of God, the Logos. A little bit later He is identified as the Light of the world. The Light of the world is the truth of God. It points the right way. His word is truth. Then in verse 12, it says that we are given the right to be sons of God.

I want to change that word "right." It's not that it's wrong, because it is an accurate translation. But in the margin you will see "authority." Let me change it to another word: "empowered," because that's really what it means. We are empowered to become part of the kingdom of God. That empowerment has come by means of His calling, and the revelation of His

purpose through His word, and all the other instruction that is necessary for the accomplishment of that great purpose that God is working out.

That word is pure and unadulterated. It is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.