

Pt 5 the Corruption of the Leaven

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the corrupting influence of leaven in the lives of believers and the necessity of purity and obedience for spiritual integrity.

Duration: 41:36

Scripture: Genesis 19:1, Judges 6:19, 1 Samuel 1:24, Matthew 13:33, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Topics: "Leaven"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the three measures of meal. He explains that the parable represents fellowship with God in service, which can be spoiled by the intrusion of corruption. The preacher emphasizes that the Lord requires complete dedication in service based on the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He also mentions that this parable is one of the four parables spoken by Jesus to the crowd, focusing on the outward appearance of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Transcript

1 Corinthians chapter 5. Sorry about that, but we're coming back to Matthew 13. 1 Corinthians chapter 5. It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you.

For verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already as though I were present concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such and one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good.

Know you not that a little leaven loveth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Now turn back to Matthew chapter 13, Matthew chapter 13 and verse 33. Another parable spoke he to them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.

That's the parable we're going to look at for a few moments this morning. I'm not forgetting that we're due to finish at 1235, so don't get worried. This is the last of four parables spoken by our Lord to the crowd.

You see in verse 36 of this chapter how he stopped speaking to the crowd and went into the house and spoke to the disciples. And as we've said already, not in wishing to bore you again, the first four deal with the outward appearance of the kingdom of heaven on earth as it is in these days. Things have gone sadly wrong.

And the other four deal with the inner secrets of the kingdom and are spoken to the disciples. Here's the last parable which tells us what they may expect to see of the outward development of the kingdom in this age. Now as in the case of the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus gives no interpretation of it.

And therefore we've got to proceed carefully. Remembering, as I said to you this morning, that the popular interpretation is not always right. And also remembering that any interpretation of the parables which contradicts the teaching of Jesus and which is inconsistent with his explanation of the first two, the sow and the seed, the wheat and the tares, cannot be right.

Now there are two possible interpretations of this parable. The first, the popular one, let me give that to you. It is that the kingdom of heaven has become like leaven and without reading any further, that opening phrase in the verse is the basis of the popular teaching.

And the leaven is assumed to be good, and as a result of its working, everything is brought under the authority of the Lord. The kingdom of heaven, in its outward form, spreads throughout the whole world until everything becomes Christian. That's the popular idea.

Do I need to repeat? Yes? Right. I don't think you want me to repeat all. In its outward form, the kingdom of heaven spreads throughout the whole world until the whole world is Christianized.

Now I reject that completely, because it's contradictory to the whole teaching of the New Testament, and there's more than one reason for this rejection. If we accept the teaching that the leaven is good, where in every other instance in scripture, leaven is bad, is evil. Just let me give you one or two verses to support that statement, one or two examples.

One I'll give you in the Old Testament, the picture of, no, the Feast of the Passover, in Exodus 13, verses 3 through 7. Just note that, don't trouble to look it up, just note it. The Feast of Passover, which of course commemorated the deliverance from Egypt. Unleavened bread had to be eaten.

No leaven had to be in the house for seven days. And throughout the whole of the Old Testament you have the corrupting influence of leaven. But in the New Testament, Matthew 16 and verse 6, the Lord Jesus warns the disciples to take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew 16, verse 6. Leaven there was a sign of hypocrisy in religion, professing to be something that we're really not, giving devotion with our lips but not with our heart. Beware of it. Matthew 16, 6. Again, as I've just read to you in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 6, Paul says, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

I've heard that phrase used as an argument by Christian people for the good influence which they hope to have. I remember somebody saying to me just before I went to church, they said, I trust you'll be really leaven in that place. Well, I said, I hope not.

But Paul goes on to say, cleanse out the old leaven. This is 1 Corinthians 5. Let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Consistently, throughout scripture, leaven is a corrupting influence.

And for that one reason alone, I cannot possibly accept that popular teaching of the parable. A stronger reason still for rejecting it is that it contradicts all that Jesus taught about the outward progress of his kingdom in his age. It contradicts all that he taught concerning outward progress in his kingdom.

You remember, or I hope you do, that 75% of the seed in the parable of the sower, 75% of it fell on unfruitful ground. Also, the tares were sown among the wheat. And the picture he drew of the progress of his kingdom on earth, until he comes again, was always conflict and apparent failure.

And let's always remember that the ultimate issue of the kingdom is not the issue here. It's not concerned. There's no question of failure there.

But in the development of that kingdom on earth, there appears to be failure. That's always the in our minds. If we accept, therefore, the popular interpretation of the parable of the leaven, we find ourselves contradicting the teaching of the first three.

Therefore, I suggested it cannot possibly be biblical. There is, however, another interpretation of this parable. And by the way, if you have really time before you leave Cavernry, you should take the opportunity of studying the parables in a book by Alexander White.

By Alexander White. Several books, and you'll find great blessing from it if you have time to read them. Let me therefore give you the scriptural and true interpretation of this parable.

It assumes always that leaven is evil. But it doesn't stop by reading the first phase. It reads right on, the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole, it was all leavened.

Now, if we understand the meaning of that, you've got to take into account, just as you do in every other parable, not only the leaven, but you've got to include three measures of meal in which a woman deliberately hides leaven. Until, by the working of the leaven, the whole lump is under its influence. Just as in every other parable, the wheat, the field, the tares, the enemy, every factor had to be taken into account, so here.

Here's the picture then, got it in your mind, in your notes perhaps, in which this woman hides, hides three measures of meal. Now, what's the saviour mean by using this picture? The only safe answer to that question is to recall three measures of meal as it's used in the word of God. Let me give you one or two instances.

First in Genesis, Genesis 18, verse 6, where Abram and Sarah entertained the Lord for a meal. That must have been a wonderful occasion. He came into their home, and they prepared three measures of meal, and then they were let into a secret.

He told them about coming one day to their home of a child, Isaac, and he told them of the immediate destruction of Solomon Gomorrah. The secrets of the Lord are always with those who fear him, and so he let them into the inner circle of friends. And I turn over the pages in the Bible, in my mind at least, and find in the book of Leviticus, just note that chapter one, first of all, the burnt offering.

Leviticus, of course, is a book which is full of symbolic teaching. The burnt offering, and in chapter two, the meal offering. Oh, the meal offering, yes, I'll leave it at that.

The offering spoke of dedication of life to the Lord. The meal offering of dedication of service. Part of that offering was retained by the priest, and part by the worshipper.

And notice, from it, all leaven had to be excluded. Oh yes, all right, repeat. The burnt offering spoke of dedication of life, chapter one of Leviticus.

The meal offering of dedication of service, and from it, all leaven had to be excluded, verse four, verses ten and eleven, of Leviticus chapter two. There's the picture of perfect communion between God and us, on the basis of dedication of life and service. Just for the sake of your notes, you might jot down that Gideon, Judges chapter six and verse nineteen, and Hannah, first Samuel, chapter one, verse twenty-four, both brought such an offering to the Lord.

Three measures of meal, like that. Therefore, in this parable, we've got the picture of fellowship with God, in service, spoiled, spoiled by the intrusion of something that corrupts. Fellowship with God, in service, spoiled by the intrusion of something that corrupts.

The Lord requires, most of all, the dedication, utter dedication of ourselves in service, on the basis of Calvary, the basis of the cross. And this parable tells us that our testimony to his grace must be based on fellowship with him, purge of all corruption. Slowing down just a moment, not you, but me, that you may just put one sentence, note word by word.

We can only bear testimony to the glory of the Lord, if our lives are separated from all, of which leaven is the symbol. Is that it? Really? Right? Okay? Your hand is aching. Bless you, sorry about that.

Now, after that meal, Abram stood face to face with God and pleaded for Sodom. And that meal was the symbol of his separated life and the basis of his prayer. This is particularly the sentence I wanted you to get.

Ready? Sure? Here it comes. Qualification--this is very clumsy, but I can't think of a better way to put it. You tell me how you would have put it after the lecture.

I see you've put it better than I do. I'm sure you would. Qualification for admission to the inner circle of God's friends is unqualified obedience.

Got it? Repeat? Unqualified. Well, what does qualified mean? No, qualified obedience. No, no, no.

Yes, you could. That's right. That would be another use of the word.

That's our stupid English language, isn't it? It can mean other things. I can't do that because I'm British, I can't help it. But look, qualification for admission to the inner circle of God's friends is unqualified obedience.

What I mean by that sentence is that--what do I mean? The right, I qualify to be admitted to God's inner circle if my obedience is without any question. You've got it? Good. And if you like to compare that, Abram's right to pray for Sodom was based on that, on his admission to the inner circle of God's friends, in contrast, of course, to Lot.

Lot. I won't--just jot down these verses and see how Lot blew it completely. He was down in Sodom, couldn't do anything for the city.

He seemed, Genesis 19, 14, as one who mocked. He'd spoiled his testimony by allowing the spirit of Sodom to get into him. You can check that.

I have no time to do more than give you the verses. Genesis 13, 12. Genesis 14, 12.

He had a look at Sodom. He liked it. He dwelt in it.

He became a magistrate. Genesis 19, 1, when he warned them, it was about time to get out because the place was going to be destroyed, everybody laughed at him. He'd lost his testimony, in contrast to Abram.

It was a separated man who had the power to pray and to save. So, my last wee sentence for you to get down is just this. The testimony to the glory of God depends on separation from the leaven of corruption.

Testimony to the glory of God depends on separation from the leaven of corruption. Just give yourselves a rest a minute. Let me go back in my memory to a time when I was taking an open-air service at Southampton, you know where that is, South England, and speaking to people who were working at the docks there, hundreds of them, and I was getting constantly heckled, particularly by one man in the crowd.

And he, when I finished, rushed forward at me and he said to me, you're a dirty coward. I said, what do you mean? Oh, he said, I was wearing a dark collar at that time. He said, I've worn my collar that way around and the whole thing's rubbish, nothing in it.

Oh, I said, you mean, what, you've been a minister? Yeah, oh sure, it's absolute rubbish, nothing in it. And you've left the ministry, oh yes, long ago. I said, hold on a minute, you say I'm a coward? Well, I'm still in it and you're out of it.

Who's the coward? You or me? And that was too much for him. And he came forward and he rushed at me, spat at me, and launched his fist at me. I was very glad that I used to play rugby football and I knew how to get him down on the ground in a way in which he'd get the worst of it.

And before he ever got hold of me, I got right underneath him and chucked him right over my head. Oh, I couldn't do that now. And he sort of came up sober.

He was blind drunk. And I said to him, if you're the coward, you need Jesus. And he went away and I was so interested in that man, because after all, that sort of thing doesn't happen every day of your life, that I thought I'd just find out about him.

Do you know what I found? He'd been a missionary in India for 25 years in an evangelical mission. And one day his wife said to him, can't take any more. It's going to ruin the children here.

I've got to take them back to home to get them educated. And he argued with her and said, I can't take it without you. She said, well, I can't take it here anymore.

And so she left him. And six months later, another woman, a broken home, a ruined missionary station, and years later, drunk in Southampton. My, I don't stand in any sense in judgment of that man.

I pray for him. It is born again. It's not my business to know whether he is or not.

I'll see him in heaven. But that's leaven getting hold in a man's life and ruining his testimony. When you get into the ministry, you'll find that your greatest temptation is either money or sex.

Watch it. The leaven. Let's go a bit further now.

What does this leaven picture? Well, the leaven of the Pharisees, that is hypocrisy. Leaven of Herod. That's in Mark chapter eight and verse 15.

And the leaven in the church at Corinth was sin and impurity. All things which mar our testimony constantly. And we need to pray daily that the Holy Spirit would write that truth on our heart.

Let me speak slowly for one minute. Power, power to bring conviction to people about Jesus, power to bring conviction to people, is feeble to the point of impotence. Because of internal corruption, hypocrisy, like that.

Okay. But thank the Lord that is not the last word. But I have to ask myself and ask you, is Jesus on good terms with us this morning? Or is my testimony ruined by corrupting influence? Is the principle of my life, what's the harm in it anyway? When Corinthians 5, 7, cleanse out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump.

For in fact, you are free from that leaven for our Passover lamb has been sacrificed Christ. God never works in your life or mine in a way that's contrary to his nature. It's always by way of the cross.

I'm only really free from corruption when I'm not free to be free of God. You better put that down, I think, and just think it through. I'm only really free when I'm not free to be free of God.

Take in Corinthians 5, 17, if any man be in Christ is a new creation. Old things are passed away, all things are become new. Therefore, sorry, oh yes, yes, just a moment, I get my old mind working right, coming in reverse.

You're only really free when you're not free to be free of God. Romans 8, 2 would be an authority for that. The law of the spirit of life in Christ has set me free from the law of sin and death.

All right, now it's a sort of post, 5, 7, yes, okay, hurry up, I mean that's me, not you, sorry. Just have these moments sometimes in lecture. The thing is, and just let me give you, give it to you, it follows the teaching of this parable, how do I avoid becoming a casualty? How do I avoid being a dropout? How can I possibly press through the strains, which seem to accumulate as you get older, and finish the course with all guns firing? The needed resistance to stress can't be registered on some computer or on some human grading system.

There was one and only one that I know who said, I have finished the work which you gave me to do. John 17, verse 4, the Lord Jesus. And the answer to our question of how I can avoid being a dropout is found in a man, that's a capital M, Jesus himself, in a man who, mixing with others, in a living experience of stress and antagonism, what I would call fishbowl living.

You'll find when you get into the ministry, as I hope you will, it's like living in a fishbowl. Everybody comes and watches, your home is wide open to the public, and what goes on there is the most important thing, not your pulpit, but your home. And in face of every kind of opposition, Jesus was able to report back to his father, mission accomplished, mission accomplished.

And the reply of his father, the answer from heaven, was he learned obedience through the things that he suffered. Hebrews 5, 8, do you know, and that's a verse I've never dared to preach on. I'd like to hear somebody preach on it, but I wouldn't dare.

No. He learned obedience, Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered. That's a tremendous statement.

Yes, mission accomplished, why? Because discipline was accepted. Discipline accepted. That's the answer, how I avoid being a dropout.

Mission accomplished, because discipline accepted. Paul speaks of the dying of Jesus, not so much as referring to death on the cross, as to daily dying being the sort of pattern of his life. Always refusing to live for himself, dying completely for the love of self-preservation.

That's what Satan tried to make him do in the wilderness, but found he'd met his master. For to give up his dying in favor of some escape scheme, which Satan offered him, would have finished his right to claim mission accomplished. Oh, I'd like you just to get that deep into your heart.

Got it? Or do I repeat? Three minutes to go, right? Press your hearts. Hallelujah. Don't make me laugh now.

I'll go over this bit. Paul speaks here of his dying of Christ, not so much as of looking back on the cross, not that. Because he was always, always refusing to live for himself.

Dying to the devil's temptation, the devil's lie, of preserving himself. You'll see that in Matthew 4, if you look at the temptation. To give up his dying in favor of some scheme of self-preservation, would have finished his right to claim mission accomplished.

And, and, and listen, that principle has got to apply to all who follow him. Except the discipline, oh, this is it, of renouncing the voice that comes at you constantly of self-preservation. God, as I said to you yesterday, you are daily dying more than you're right to live.

You're daily dying more than you're right to live. Oh, I hope, I'm going to be back in June, God willing. I hope I may meet lots of people, lots of people who really experienced a touch from God here, a call to service.

First of all, it's a bit vague. Then, it becomes clear, and then it absolutely masters you. And, we are just our lives.

As we see how God equips us for it. Oh, mission is the thing. That's it, I want to be a missionary.

Of course, everybody's a missionary, or a mission field. If Jesus is your Lord, you're a missionary. If he isn't, you're a mission field.

You don't have to go abroad, have a visa, you just have to live right where you are, and you're on a mission field. The Lord, but mission becomes a thing. And then, then I'll tell you what happens.

The Lord puts your feet on the ground. It's a bit sort of an aura to it, first. You've got a halo.

You want to be a missionary? Terrific. But, then God puts your feet on the ground. And I'll tell you how he does it.

He applies the discipline that you've got to accept. And usually, I don't say always, but usually, it is applied through clumsy and unsympathetic sort of people that you don't like, and whose authority we resent. Oh, we don't mind discipline, but please, Lord, let it be administered by some nice people.

You know, people we can really enjoy. Nice people. He doesn't do it that way.

Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered, and he wants to build into my life and your life patience, endurance. So, he selects the things that I suffer at the hands of other people. I remember for years, and I won't give you any names, I remember the years praying, Lord, take that person out of my life.

I can't stand him. I'm so glad the Lord didn't answer that prayer. I'm beginning to thank God for prayers he's never answered.

How much, supposing you had every unpleasant person taken out of your life, what an awful lot you'd lose. What an awful lot of benefit you would no longer have. Because the process of adjusting to those we have to live with is the thing that mellows and matures our character to be like Jesus.

To bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. And the call the Lord has brought right down to earth, because he wants the glory of God to shine through you. And that's only accomplished through the cross, 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 10.

That, I believe, is a natural follow through of the parable. The exact opposite, the refusal to accept the corruption of leaven, which will enable me and you to say one day, Lord, thank you. Discipline accepted, therefore mission accomplished.

Therefore, you will know what it is to be able to say, Lord, I'm climbing on track with you. Time, 12.38. Sorry about that. Goodbye.

See you, God willing, tomorrow.

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