

Matthew 16:5-12. He Warns His Disciples Against the Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus warns his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and teaches them to be careful of bad doctrine that can corrupt the mind and heart.

Scripture: Mark 8:17

Topics: "False Doctrine", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delves into the importance of understanding spiritual truths by reflecting on how Jesus' disciples struggled to grasp His teachings, like the analogy of leaven. Their lack of faith and spiritual understanding stemmed from hidden unbelief in their hearts, which displeased Jesus. He warns against false doctrines, comparing the Pharisees and Sadducees to modern-day groups preaching misleading teachings that can corrupt minds and hearts. Mortimer emphasizes the need to discern good doctrine that exalts Christ and humbles man, as it is the foundation of true faith and spiritual growth.

Transcript

We often find that people did not understand our Savior when he spoke of spiritual things under the image of earthly ones. Thus, when he spoke of living water to the woman of Samaria, the woman did not understand him. Neither did his disciples now understand him when he spoke of leaven. He did not reprove the woman of Samaria for not comprehending his meaning, because she had never enjoyed opportunities of instruction; but he expected better things from his own disciples, and he rebuked them, saying, "How is it that you do not understand that I spoke it not to you concerning bread?" And how was it that they did not understand? Had they not lived long enough with their Master to know his way of discourse?

It was unbelief which clouded their minds. Because they had taken no bread with them in the ship, they feared that they should suffer from hunger; though their Lord was in the ship, and though He had promised to supply all their need.

They did not express these unbelieving thoughts aloud; but their Master knew they cherished them in their hearts. Who ventures to go to God to express in words his secret unbelief? Who could say in prayers--"We

cannot trust you in time to come? We think it likely that you will forsake us, that you will not care for our tears, or heed our cries." We dare not speak thus to our heavenly Father. Why then should we think what we dare not speak?

Jesus was displeased with his disciples on two accounts--for their want of faith, and for their want of spiritual understanding. How could they suppose that the earthly leaven of the Pharisees was worse than any other leaven? Leaven could not be the worse for belonging to wicked men. Jesus had lately shown his disciples that nothing but sin could pollute; yet their minds were so much darkened by early prejudices that they could not receive this simple truth.

And what was the leaven of which the Savior bids his disciples beware? It was the false doctrine, or teaching, of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both these sects taught errors; but opposite errors. The Pharisees added to the word of God--the Sadducees took from it. The Pharisees added to it commandments of their own invention; the Sadducees took from it all but the five books of Moses, and even these they did not fully believe, for they would receive nothing that they did not understand. The Pharisees were superstitious--the Sadducees were skeptical. The world is now full of people, who, though bearing different names, preach doctrines like those of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Papists resemble the Pharisees, and infidels the Sadducees.

Were even the disciples in danger of being tainted by bad doctrine? Ought we not to fear its evil influence? Bad doctrine, like infected air, finds entrance through the smallest aperture, and unseen spreads a pestilence all around. As leaven will change the nature of a whole lump of flour, so bad doctrine will injure all the powers of the mind, and all the feelings of the heart. The venerable Howells used to say, "Error in principle is the parent of vice in practice." If it be so, how carefully we ought to shun bad doctrine! Though we may be well instructed in the truth, yet we are liable to be corrupted by false teachers. There are some melancholy instances of people who had instructed thousands by their pious writings, receiving in their advanced years false principles into their minds, and attempting to pervert those whom once they had edified. Our constant prayer ought to be, "Hold me up, that my footsteps slip not."

By what mark may we distinguish good doctrine from false? By this mark; the true doctrine exalts Christ, and humbles man; it is summed up in these words--"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in me is your help," (Hosea 13:9.)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/favell-lee-mortimer/matthew-165-12-he-warns-his-disciples-against-the-leaven-of-the-pharisees-and-sa/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net