

# All Rise!

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As I write this article, my wife is in the kitchen fixin' up some cinnamon rolls. I am sitting here at my computer with great anticipation of the upcoming feast that will take place in about an hour. I'm also sure that when our son reads this article, flashes of home will blaze through his mind, and his stomach will naturally begin to growl. As it is in this house today, it will be in his house on the day he reads this. Flour and yeast will fly as dough is being made, and the fragrance of cinnamon rolls from a hot oven will fill the air. (In spite of all your efforts, son, it will not taste the same as mother's home cookin'!) Just thinking about those cinnamon rolls rising makes me drool! As I savor the moment that those scrumptious cinnamon rolls touch my lips, I can't help but be reminded of some great lessons concerning yeast in the Bible.

Twice Paul used a proverb concerning leaven to warn Christians of the effects of evil. By inspiration he said, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8). In each instance, the effects of evil is clear. The working of evil will rapidly influence others as yeast does dough.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul is dealing with the effects of Judaizing teachers. These teachers are influencing others to return to the Old Testament, but Paul contended that "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Paul realized the rapid influence of false teachers and, therefore, pointed out their error to stop the effects of their doctrine. One false teacher can bring devastating effects upon a congregation of believers if he is not stopped. It is sad though that some in the church are saying that those who warn of false teachers are negative "knuckle heads." It is bewildering why they are considered negative when they are the very ones who are "pulling them out of the fire" (Jude 23). Paul's use of the proverb, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," is to reveal the need to stop the mouths of those who would subvert the household of God (cf. Titus 1:9-11). It is not negative to keep someone from making "shipwreck" of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19). That's positively positive!

In 1 Corinthians, Paul deals with some of the problems that existed in the church at Corinth. In chapter five, Paul relates the report of fornication existing in the church between a man and his father's wife. The remedy to the problem is expressed in several ways. Paul said, "he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (5:2). Also he declared "to deliver such an one unto Satan" (5:5).

Further the apostle proclaimed, “Purge out therefore the old leaven” (5:7). In addition Paul charged, “not to keep company . . . with such an one no not to eat” (5:11). Finally he ordered, “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (5:13). It is obvious that Paul is dealing with church discipline by withdrawing fellowship. The apostle instructs that there are two purposes in the withdrawal of fellowship. First, it is “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (5:5); that is, to save the disciplined person. Second, it is because “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (5:6). Thus, a second purpose is to protect the church from the widespread influence of evil!

Our Lord used this same analogy concerning the doctrine of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod. In Matthew’s account Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (16:6). Mark adds the “leaven of Herod” (8:15). At first, the disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying. They thought He was speaking concerning bread. Finally after Jesus explained further, the disciples understood “how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:12). On another occasion, Jesus exhorted, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). In each instance, Jesus warned of the widespread influence of evil.

There is one occasion in which Jesus uses the influence of yeast to a lump of dough to represent the influence of good. It is recorded in Luke 13:20-21. Jesus said, “Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” When the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed, the honest hearts of men cannot help but be influenced. This, in effect, continues to spread to other honest hearts. Just as evil influences others to do evil; good influences others to do good.

Leaven is an active ingredient in dough. In the Bible, it often represents the influence of good or evil. The Lord intends for His church to be an active leaven of good in a world of evil leaven. We are to be a people who are “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). However, when the church allows evil to exist within it, it is leavened by evil and becomes evil leavening to the world. Thus, each of us should ask, “Does my leaven influence good or evil?” Let each one of us determine to rise to the occasion and be good leaven.

(Now, to the cinnamon rolls, I must go!)