

Essay: Spitting out Pretzels 2021

Yesterday at lunch I ordered French Onion soup without thinking. I was careful to make sure I ordered unbreaded wings not even aware of what I had done.

However, God's Spirit is quick to remind us when we step out of line. I tore into the soup (usually I just eat the cheese of the top anyway) but quickly remembered the bread underneath! Thankfully, I only ate cheese and broth, no bread, or my buddy Arlo would have had bread and onion soup all over him. The wings would have to suffice. Feeling my age, I was reminded of the following essay we did back in 2018, when Robbie told us of spitting out pretzels because he wasn't sure of their ingredients. So here is a revised version of the essay from 2018.

Last week, prior to The Feast of Unleavened Bread, we all took to the removal of leavening and products containing leaven from our homes. Our conscious efforts have become a yearly practice as we grow in God's Word. Even to the point of reading food labels so we do not inadvertently make the wrong choice while shopping. The conscious effort to remove leaven from our lives is commendable (and a responsibility) and the focus is on the sin. We all know that. However, we learned last week in reading the Bible verses from the Old Testament that God tells us 4 times as much to eat unleavened bread over putting out the leavened.

Ingesting the Word of God will leave no room for the other.

In pulling back the cheese in the onion soup, the bread reminded me of hidden sin. Something we may overlook out of habit. A constant and continual searching of ourselves while ingesting the Word of God and growing in the likeness of Jesus Christ will help us remove this leaven from our lives. God has His ways of making the necessary and desired changes in us but we must do our part.

What really has impressed my heart is the level to which we are growing as a fellowship and more important, our love and devotion to Our Living God and His Son Jesus Christ. When Robbie told us back in 2018 of his focus on shopping for a snack, reading all the labels and contents, and inadvertently overlooking a pretzel and spitting it out, I could almost see Our Lord Jesus smile a warm smile. Seeing one of His own demonstrating the love of obedience (**Isa. 1:19**). We didn't get to this level overnight, this has transpired over the last several years of keeping His Sabbaths and Holy Days, fellowship and Bible Study. More importantly is our growing desire to please God (**1 Thess.2:15, Heb. 11:6, Heb.13:16**). We are told we must love God with all our heart, soul and our might (**Deut. 6:5, Josh. 22:5, Matt. 22:37, Mark 12:30**). It gets easier every day.

In putting God and His Word and Will for us first, we can begin to grow in the likeness of His Son (**Col. 3:10-13**). Less of self and more of Him. The past 5 ½ years seems to have flown by and the change is noticeable, the growth is evident. We are moving toward fulfilling our Creation Purpose, being obedient to God's Commandments, keeping His Sabbaths and His Holy Days, and we are doing it according to His Word. We know that He meant it if He said it at least **157** times throughout the Bible to "Keep My Commandments, Obey My Commandments, and do My Commandments" and so on. In fact, Commandments is mentioned in nearly every chapter of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days has become a delight (**Psalm 112:1, Psalm 119:47, 143**). Our keeping them leads to more wisdom and understanding (**Deut. 4:6, Psalm 49:3, 51:6, 111:10, Prov. 9:10, Isa. 33:6, James 3:17**).

Our devotion and diligence to seeking God's Wisdom in His Word will yield continued growth (**Psalm 27:4, 69:32, 119:2, Prov. 8:17, Isa.55:6, Jer. 29:13, Lam. 3:25, Matt. 6:33, 2 Pet. 3:14-18**). Personally, it is awesome to witness the

growth in The Lord we have within our fellowship. Changes have clearly taken place in all of us. There seems to be a greater awareness and understanding of God's Word.

We have all faced a barrage of challenges this year which is no surprise. Attacks are common especially leading up to God's Holy Days. Quite contrary to my old self of a few years ago, God is changing us all into a new person (**Romans 6:6, 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 4:22**).

Even driving aggravations in our wonderful traffic has seemed to have subsided to a tolerable nuisance (Andrea's crash doesn't count, the morning rush in which she drives is like a game of dodgeball). With God's help, a little easy listening on the radio, I barely say any comments about the driving habits of others! Well, at least the swear words have gone (**Prov. 16:32**) and even now if I mumble "idiot" I'm quick to ask forgiveness (**Psalm 34:13, 58:1**).

Being aware of the "leaven" in our lives helps us to remember how ever-present sin is all around us. Satan never attacks when we are at our strongest (**1Pet. 5:8**), much like a lion, he will take out the weakest or the stragglers from the herd. Equipped with this knowledge, we can stand fast in our faith and stand on the Word of God (**James 4:7**).

As we close the first two Holy Days on this year and await The Pentecost, may we do so with anticipation (and counting for ourselves) with a joyful expectation of the change Our God is working in each and every one of us. We know without any doubt that if we remain faithful and do our part, He will do His. "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"-**Phil. 1:5-6**. The countdown to "First Fruits" has begun.

May we all be conscious of the recognizing and putting the “leaven” out of our lives. More important, we must be sure and eat the unleavened bread of God’s Word each and every day of the year. As we do, we will grow together as a family of God and worship Him in truth and in spirit. “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come or be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” -**Phil. 1:27**

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