

Essay: Spitting out Pretzels

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) but the focus is on the sin. We all know that.

What really impresses my heart is the level to which we are growing as a fellowship and more important, our love and devotion to Our Living God. When Robbie told us last week 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 with the love of obedience being put into practice (Isa. 1:19). We didn't get to this level overnight, this has transpired over the last several years of 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).

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 2 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 has been a true delight in sharing and watching the growth in The Lord we have within our fellowship. Changes have taken place I feel in all of us. There seems to be a greater awareness and understanding of God's Word.

I know this past week has not been without challenge for some of us, at least me anyway. From mechanical issues to back spasms so bad I couldn't stand up. Seriously, Thursday morning I woke up with a back pain so bad I couldn't stand up when I got out of bed. I actually laid on the floor praying! Quite contrary to my old self of a few years ago...not that I'm not old now. But God is making me into a new person (Romans 6:6, 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 4:22).

In any case, God answered my prayers rather quickly and He got me back on my feet in order to get my daily chores accomplished. Even driving in our wonderful traffic has seemed to abated to an almost pleasant task this year. 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 all around us is. 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. 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.

May we all be conscious of the "leaven" each and every day of the year as we grow together to worship God 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