

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 1

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:7-12

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: It’s good to be with you. Let’s stand up. Go and greet somebody you haven’t met, and just enjoy some fellowship for a minute.

Bruce: Thank you, men. It’s important that we get to know each other. We come here week after week. We’ve been here for many years. It’s very important that we develop relationships with each other in the body of Christ. One of the great gifts we have is that God the Father calls us His children. He calls us His sons and Jesus calls us His brothers. We just need to act like that with each other, to really enjoy the fellowship that we have with the body of Christ. Don, would you set the tone for us, please? *(Music.)*

Grace, grace, God’s grace!

Grace that is greater than all my sin!

Father, thank You for that gift of grace that You give to us. We understand that justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting all that we deserve, and grace is getting what we don’t deserve. Father, we come to sit at Your feet this day, that You would expose to us in more depth the depths of Your heart as expressed by Your grace to us. May it be so for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Turn in your Bibles, please, to Galatians chapter five, continuing our examination of Paul’s letter to the church of Galatia, where he is teaching us that there are two kinds of religion—the religion of human achievement and the religion of divine grace. And Paul’s position is that he has been given the authority to teach the difference between the two. And that’s what we’ve been examining, because it’s very, very paramount in our church age that we understand the difference between working for your salvation and a salvation that’s by grace. So today I’d like to read the first twelve verses so we keep things in the right context. Actually, we’ll be looking at verses 7-12 today. Galatians chapter 5, beginning at verse 1.

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look! I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit by faith we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

“You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. ‘A little leaven leavens the whole lump.’ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine. And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But why, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I

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still being persecuted? In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish that those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. I came across something that is a wonderful introduction to this particular series, because Paul is distinguishing the difference between the religion of human achievement and the mercy of divine grace. Listen to these words. I came across this recently

“By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves’ it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” That’s Ephesians 2:8 and 9. “Grace is a charming sound, glorious to the ear. Grace pitied us in our guilty, helpless condition. It provided a Savior for us. Grace instituted the ministry of the gospel reconciliation and brought the tidings of divine mercy to our ears. Grace opened our blind eyes in order for us to see and feel our need of the precious blood of Christ. Grace led us to cast away the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and to receive with thankfulness and joy the spotless robe that Jesus accomplished for us. Grace brought us to the footstool of mercy with the cry of the publican, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ Grace enables us to live a life of dependency on Jesus alone for all spiritual supplies. Grace has begun a good work within us and grace will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. By grace we are saved. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24. It is not by works of righteousness which our own hands have done. But we are saved by sovereign grace abounding through His Son.” Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: God’s grace! God’s grace! Grace that is greater than all our sin!

As we’ve seen so far, the Judaizers were teaching that it was not sufficient for the people of Galatia to trust Christ alone for salvation. But they were saying that it was necessary to add to it the Mosaic ceremonial law of circumcision. That’s legalism. And legalism is best defined by the belief that if you perform certain religious duties, God will save you and bless you on the basis of those duties that you perform, not on the basis of the accomplished work of the Person of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a question of what you do, men. It’s a question of what you believe.

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul establishes his right to teach the doctrine of salvation by divine grace, and not by works. In chapters 3 and 4, Paul establishes that the Old Testament taught that salvation was not by works but was by divine grace. And now in chapters 5 and 6, which we’re examining now, Paul demonstrates how to live a life of freedom that is blessed by God and supplied by His grace.

Now notice Galatians chapter 5, verse 1. Paul tells us that Christ has set us free to no longer be bond-slaves to sin or to a legal system, but to empower us to operate with God’s grace through the Holy Spirit, and to operate within God’s moral law by the internal motivation of the Holy Spirit and not by keeping external religious activities.

Notice Romans 7:12. *“The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”* Now as a believer, I do not expect my ability to keep the law to save me. Salvation is by grace. It’s by the five *solas*—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ

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alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. Those are known as the five *solas*. And that’s what Paul is teaching us here in the book of Galatians.

And legalism is adding on to those five *solas* something that you do in addition to that, thinking that if I do this, God is going to give me some merit for what I’ve done. And He will bless me on the basis of what I have done rather than of the accomplished work of Christ.

Paul tells us that freedom in Christ does not mean that we’re free to sin whenever we want to and get away with it. It means that we can override the compulsion through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Everything that we do, men, is tainted. And yet through the ministry of the Holy Spirit He helps us override that compulsion to want to sin through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That’s what freedom is. Freedom is living by grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, and not bound by these legalistic 5rules and being motivated by externals. Liberty in Christ is being controlled from the inside, rather than being pressured from the outside. It is the freedom to do or not to do out of love, not bondage to do what I have to do out of fear.

Last week we examined the dangers of false doctrine. And today we want to look at the dangers of false teachers, beginning in chapter 5, verse 7. Let’s take a look at these things.

Remember, Paul has said this. The danger that was creeping into the church was the false doctrine of legalism. It’s very, very easy for us to do that, because it’s so simple to think that I need to do something to earn God’s favor, because in my mind I’m not doing enough.

Well friends, we need to understand this. Your enough and my enough is never enough. But Christ’s enough is always enough.

I think that the best example of the worldly system, that your efforts are never enough, is your resume. I’ve told you this before. The only thing your resume reveals is what you’ve not accomplished. It doesn’t reveal what you have accomplished, because an HR representative is going to look at this. “Oh, he doesn’t have. She doesn’t have,” because they’re basically looking at your resume and saying, “It’s not enough. You don’t have the right education. You don’t have the right certificate. You don’t have the right experience.” And what the world is saying is that your enough is never enough. And so inside the church we have this tendency to add on to what we think Christ has done because, basically, we don’t believe that what Christ did for us was enough. So we think that we have to add on to it.

That’s the problem that Paul was facing with the church at Galatia. They were saying that you need to add on top of what Christ has done the ceremonial law of circumcision. Now we have a tendency to do the same thing in our own church, to add something on to the Person and work of Christ.

So Paul taught us last week about the dangers of false doctrine. And now we want to look at the dangers of false teachers.

First of all, notice verse 7. *These false teachers hinder the truth.* Verse 7. “*You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*” The first thing a false teacher is

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going to do is that he is going to hinder you from pursuing and running the great race of truth.

Paul was fond of athletic illustrations in his writing. And he often used them in his letters. His readers were very familiar with the Olympic games, as well as the entire Greek athletic contest arena that always included foot races. That was one of the primary elements in the Olympic games in the Greek contest—the foot races. And Paul uses that illustration here by saying, “You were running well.”

Now it’s important to note that Paul never uses the image of the race to tell people that they need to work themselves in a race to be saved. He doesn’t say that. He’s always talking to believers about how to live the Christian life. The Christian life is running. It’s not running to be saved. It’s running to be obedient.

Now notice. The contestant in the Greek games had to be a citizen before he could compete. Do you see any similarities there? We become citizens of heaven through faith in the Person and work of Christ. Then the Lord puts us in the course that we run, and we run to receive the prize. Philippians 3:12-21.

Transcriber’s Note: Philippians 3:12-21, NKJV. *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal and the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

Bruce: We are now citizens of the Kingdom. He now puts us in a race—not a race to earn your salvation, but a race to express your salvation to the glory of God. And each of us has a separate race.

And Paul is saying this. “You were running well! You were doing things correctly! Who is interfering with this?” That’s his question in verse 7, because the first thing that a false teacher will do is hinder the race of truth. We don’t run to be saved. We run because we’re already saved. And we want to fulfill God’s will in our lives and do it for His glory.

Look at Acts 20 verse 24. Would somebody read that? Acts 20:24.

Participant: *“But I do not count my life of any value or precious to myself, only that I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*

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Bruce: “That I might run to finish the course that God has given me and the ministry He has given me.” That’s what Paul is referring to in the church of Galatia. “You were running well. You were adopted and trusting Christ to give you the race that He wanted you to run for His glory. Who came along and who is interfering with this?”, because the first thing that a false teacher is going to do is that a false teacher is going to hinder the truth in running the race that we have.

Now a very literal translation of chapter 5 verse 7 of the book of Galatians would be this. *“You were running well. Who cut in on you so that you stopped obeying the truth?”*

Now in these races each runner was to stay in his assigned lane. But now and then, sometimes in the Greek games somebody would cut into your lane and interfere with your progress. That’s what Paul is alluding to. He’s saying, “You were in your lane, the lane that God gave you to run the race of grace that caused your salvation. Who is cutting in on you to hinder your race for His glory?”

That is what the Judaizers were doing to the Galatian church. They were cutting in on the assigned lane of the race of the individual believers in the church of Galatia. These legalistic obstacles they put on them forced them to change direction and to go on a spiritual deviation course. Paul is saying this. “Who’s cutting into your lane? Who’s interfering with you pursuing the truth? You were running well.” You’ve got to be careful of those false teachers, because they’re going to interfere with your running the great race of faith.

Paul is saying this. Before you consider following this group, you’d better check out what kind of people they are. Go to Galatians chapter 6, verses 12 and 13. *“It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law. But they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh.”*

You see, they only wanted converts to add to their accomplishments, because it made them look good. That’s very, very typical of false teachers. They’re not so much concerned about you and your well-being and the race that you’re running for God’s glory. They’re really more concerned about getting more people to sign up for their movement just because they want to have more people involved. In other words, it’s a very, very selfish thing, because they want you to be involved because it’s going to make them look good. Rather, the gospel of Christ is designed to make us look good and God look good, not false teachers. They only wanted converts to add to their accomplishments because it made them look good.

Now quite honestly, men, much of the church is subjected to a bag of legalism, a sense of dos and don’ts. We think that they’re supposed to make us more spiritual, more mature. But the book of 1 John talks about testing the spirits. You’ve got to test the spirits. And Paul is saying this. Before you follow somebody, you’ve got to check them out and see who they are. Find out who they are by character.

Legalism prevents the listeners from applying the truths of Scripture that edify them. Let me take you to 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 1 and 2.

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“But false prophets also arose from among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality. And because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

One common feature of false teachers is that they deny the Person and work of Christ. The best thing you can do, if somebody is teaching you something and you’re not sure about it, ask them this. “Tell me. What do you think of the Person and work of Christ? What do you believe about the Person and work of Christ?”

The race toward spiritual maturity cannot be run with the shackles of legalism. You’ve got to be aware, men, when somebody through false teaching is cutting into your lane. You’ve got to be very, very sensitive to that.

Oftentimes in our culture today, false teachers will deny the Deity of Christ. He was a good teacher. He was a good moral man. He was a good motivator, whatever else He may be. But the real issue is that they’re denying the Deity of Christ. That’s one of the elements that false teachers render today in our society.

Christians think differently about Jesus. Look at Acts chapter two. Turn with me to Acts chapter two, to Peter’s message at Pentecost.

One of the things that makes a Christian a Christian is that he thinks differently about the Person and work of Christ. Now after Peter’s great preaching at Pentecost, that wonderful sermon, notice their response. What was their response? “What shall we do?” You see, something happened in the preaching of that message at Pentecost by Peter that changed their view of the Person and work of Christ. And their response was, “What do I do, because I’ve learned something about the Person and work of Christ?”

You see, what makes a Christian a Christian is that he thinks differently about Jesus Christ. We think correctly, Biblically and truthfully, about the Person and work of Christ. And if somebody is not thinking correctly about the Person and work of Christ, he can’t be a Christian. The first indication of your true saving faith is that you think differently about Jesus.

The crowd said, “What shall we do?” Peter said, “Repent and believe. Be baptized because you repent.” The thing that makes a Christian a Christian, men, is this. You know what you believe. Salvation is not what you do. It’s who you believe. It’s what you believe. Do I believe in the Person and work of Christ? Is it the Jesus of Biblical revelation or the Jesus of human imagination? What distinguishes a Christian is that he had the right view of the Person and work of Christ. Christians think differently about Christ.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: Can a false teacher hold the truth of the Person and work of Christ, but by his actions and his lifestyle in a sense deny the reality of that operation?

Bruce: I certainly think that’s possible, because they may have the show but they don’t have the heart. It may all be for show. I think there are a lot of people who throw the words “Jesus Christ” out now and then. But if you look at the quality of their lives, it would indicate that they really do not believe what they’re saying. Then I think you

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would have to go back and look at the seven traits of a person born of God, or the seven tests of true saving faith. If you claim, that’s one thing. But if you do, you don’t. So that’s very possible.

We have to be very, very discerning, men, because one thing that false teachers are going to do is that they’re going to hinder us in running the race of truth. Yes, Brian?

Brian: There’s a new trend of not calling God the Father “Father,” because it’s not gender neutral.

Bruce: Right.

Brian: How concerning is that?

Bruce: Well, we ought to be throwing hand grenades at ‘em. *(Laughter.)*

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s serious. We don’t take that lightly. That’s spiritual warfare. You know, we need to apply all the elements of our spiritual warfare. We need to take that armor. We draw a line in the sand and we don’t cross that. So we can’t let that go. In a moment we’re going to talk about the leaven and how it impacts the body. That’s one of the things that false teachers will do. So you brought something up, Brian, that we’ll touch on in a minute. Any other questions? Yes, Bob?

Bob: Yes. Just a little bit more on these false teachers.

Bruce: Okay.

Bob: What is most important as a first step? To ask the appropriate question, to assure them of the answer if we have a false teacher? Or is it more important first to observe and watch before we ask the question and draw conclusions from that observation instead of the answer to the question?

Bruce: I think it’s a both/and. It’s not an either/or. Yes, we need to observe. We need not to have a critical spirit about somebody in the church. That’s Matthew chapter seven. Don’t have a critical spirit. First of all, we need to take the log out of our own eye before we take the dust out of somebody else’s eye. You need to examine yourself first. That’s where it all starts.

Then you examine this person and his conduct, his truth. Then you come to the point of asking him the question. If you observe that for long enough of a time, and you think there might be some divining in their truthfulness, being a false teacher, then I would ask him the question. Tell me what you think about the Person and work of Christ. I think that’s the question to start with.

Bob: Can they give what would be the answer that would reveal that we have a false teacher?

Bruce: It’s his definition of what Christ has done. Who is the Person and what is the work of Christ? Now they might give you the right answer. They might be very deceptive. It might be a cover-up. So you have to be very discerning.

But I think the point of it is that we have to take a stand. The first question I would ask is this. Tell me what you think of the Person and work of Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? Start with that, and then go from there.

Bob: Thank you.

Bruce: Yes, Don?

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Don: Wouldn't we have to go further in some instances though, because they could be orthodox about who Christ is.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Don: But what is the gospel? How am I saved? Is it faith and works?

Bruce: There you go.

Don: Faith alone? Whatever.

Bruce: To that first question, you don't need to have a litany of ten questions. The first question is going to reveal to you the next question you need to ask. So their definition of the Person and work of Christ is going to say, “Okay. I need to go down this road. If that's your view of Christ, how are we saved? Is it by human achievement or is it by grace?”

So then that leads you to the next question. But you don't need to have ten questions that you go through. Ask them the first question. Who is Jesus Christ? And that will give you with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the leading of the Spirit to go on to the next question and ask it. And that will mean probing in greater depth. Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: I was just going to say that if Jesus tells me that God is my Father, then I had better go along with Him, and not the latest trends.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: Is there anything about feminism that's right? *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: Ted?

Ted: I mean, it's just that there are various versions of it. I mean there's no question that we have men who treat women abominably. Men are stronger. By their very strength they can dominate. And we can justify that by Scripture. So there are some good things that have come out of it. But it all just depends. I mean if it sets out to divide us as humans from one another, that's not all bad. But there are some sins that men have done historically that need to be reprov'd.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: I'm saying that outside of normal respect, and people are begging for respect, I don't see anything in feminism that is going to get us very far. I mean, we treat each other respectfully as humans. The feminists are into dividing and separating people. They are anti-pregnancy, anti-life.

Ted: Would you say that wanting women to have the chance to vote was a day of feminism in 1923?

Bruce: As we're moving on,-- *(Laughter.)*

Participant: Getting back to verse 2.

Bruce: Verse 2 of chapter 5?

Participant: Yes. Don't let yourself be circumcised to improve your faith. I mean, prior to this, only men were really identified in Scripture.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: Because circumcision has to do just with men. It has nothing to do with a woman, unless a woman was under the man's umbrella because of his circumcision and it's very symbolism.

Bruce: Yes.

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Participant: But it’s also physical. Only a man can relate to it. I don’t know a woman who could relate to circumcision. So then and now we don’t have to be circumcised. What is that movement? I’m not saying that first you have feminism. But what does that mean? What did it mean to a woman before, when men had to be circumcised but she couldn’t identify with that? Now can she identify more with the Scripture? And is that something, that Christ opened up the Scripture to all?

Bruce: Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: The answer to that question is that baptism is for both men and women. So the fact that women are baptized is a clear sign that Christ has given them full status and equal dignity with men.

Bruce: Amen. Also circumcision of the heart is the issue.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes, right.

Bruce: The circumcision of the heart, not the circumcision of the foreskin, is the issue. So women are amenable to that. Christianity is the best thing that ever helped women’s liberation.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We need to understand that. Prior to that, Christianity was really an offense to many of the cultures of the world because it opened up the quality and respect and dignity of women. Now unfortunately, we’ve taken that and abused it. So we have to be careful of that. There could be some false teaching that slips in there. Yes, Bill?

Bill: There’s a deeper issue here, I think. Peter says that in the last days that men would be prone to love the lie rather than the truth.

Bruce: Right.

Bill: And we see that today. What’s so special or appealing about a lie, that people want to believe the lie instead of believing the truth?

Bruce: It’s a great way of justifying your own conduct. It’s justification. I justify my own conduct by believing a lie, because look! This is the thing that I’m following. Therefore, I’m okay. Jim? Oh, yes?

Participant: I think there have been Christian men at times who have misunderstood Biblical headship.

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: In fact, it’s tyranny over them.

Bruce: Absolutely. It’s the same thing—

Participant: (*Unclear.*)

Bruce: Absolutely. Yes?

Participant: It’s interesting, I think, what you’re saying about Christianity upgrading the status of women. Today, Christians are looked at as being the most oppressive.

Bruce: That’s right. That’s correct. It’s just the reverse. And why is that? Somebody has gotten involved in the church and interfered in running the right lane. That’s because of false teachers. That’s what Paul is warning us about. That’s why it’s so important for us to be aware of this.

There’s a second thing Paul teaches us. Not only do they interfere with the truth, but notice verse 8. *These false teachers are not from God.* They are not from God—verse 8.

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“This persuasion,” meaning this false teaching, *“is not from Him who calls you.”* It’s a reference to Him who calls you. God calls you to saving faith.

Notice. Romans 8:30 tells us that God calls people to saving faith. *“Now those He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.”* You see, Paul is saying that the persuasion to follow legalism does not come from God. A merciful God who called them to salvation does not promulgate that kind of legalistic message of saying that you need to add something on top of what Christ has accomplished.

Notice 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 13 and 14. *“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this He calls you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

God’s saving call is administered through a presentation of the true gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And because God has called you to Himself, He’s not going to add something on top of that because the work of Christ, the salvation process for us, is finished.

False teachers either teach a new gospel, or they lessen the true gospel, or they add to the true gospel, one of those three things. They lessen it, they create a new one, or they add to it. And we need to be very discerning, because those messages are not from God. They are from man himself.

Number three would be this. Notice verse 9. *They contaminate the church.* First of all, they hinder the church. They are not from God. And then look at verse 9. They contaminate the church. *“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”*

Now his explanation goes from the athletic illustration to the cooking illustration. Paul introduces the idea of yeast or leaven.

Now in the Old Testament, leaven is generally pictured as the symbol of evil or a symbol of sin. During the Passover, for example, no yeast was allowed in the house. You can read about that in Exodus chapters twelve and thirteen. Worshipers were not permitted to bring mixed leaven with their sacrifices (Exodus chapter 34, verse 25.)

Transcriber’s Note: Exodus 34:25, NKJV. *“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.”*

Bruce: Though there were some exceptions. Now Jesus used leaven as an example as a picture of sin when He warned against the leaven of the Pharisees. You can read about that in Matthew chapter 16, verses 6-12.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 16:6-12, ESV. *“Now when the disciples had reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Watch, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, ‘We brought no bread.’*

“But Jesus, aware of this, said, ‘O you of little faith! Why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it

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that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’

“Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Bruce: And Paul also used the idea of leaven as a symbol of sin in the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter five.

Now yeast is a very good illustration of sin because it is small. But if left alone it grows and permeates the entire arena. It just starts with one little thing. And after a while it’s just going to permeate and take over the whole arena.

The false doctrine of the Judaizers was introduced to the Galatian church in a very small way. But before long it takes over the whole understanding of salvation. All you have to do, men, is just add circumcision to it. All of a sudden, they begin to follow that. The truth is hindered and it permeated the whole church. We need to be careful about leaven and how it permeates the church.

The spirit of legalism does not suddenly overcome a church. We don’t just flip a coin and say that legalism is going to overcome the church. It happens very slowly. It’s like leaven. It’s introduced very secretly in the church today. And then it grows. It becomes long and it becomes poison to the whole assembly and the whole church, because it impacts the whole church.

In most cases, the motives that encourage legalism are generally pretty good. We want to have a more spiritual church. We want more people to come, whatever it may be. But the methods are not Scriptural. So men, we have to be very, very careful in the church today when the leaven of deception is planted within the church, and then all of a sudden, it just begins to take over. And we could give numerous illustrations of what’s going on in the church today.

Now I’m rather archaic. I’m a Neanderthal. I personally struggle a bit when I see people coming to church with their coffee cups and their doughnuts.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I just struggle with that a little bit.

Participant: You mean in the sanctuary?

Bruce: Yes, in the worship service. They come in with their coffee cups and their doughnuts. Now personally, I struggle with that a little bit. I’m saying, “Don’t you understand where we are? We’re in the presence of a holy God, One who has called us to saving faith, One for whom I come to think about the Person and work of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.” Do I come to some motivational seminar?

You know, I have to be honest, men. I struggle with that a little bit. And I know other people are going to say, “Well, it’s better that they’re there than that they would not be there.” Well I understand that also.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: But there comes a point, men, when we stand up for truth and dignity and respect and awe. Really, men, we’ve lost what I call the fear of God, a sense of awe, a sense of reverence, a sense of respect.

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 1

If you were to go to the governor’s house for dinner, would you wear flip flops and tank tops?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Probably not. Would you come into the house of the Lord, into His presence—and I realize that we’re always in the presence of the Lord—and I understand that it’s better to have them in flip flops and tank tops than not to be there; I understand that. But what kind of a message are we communicating when that becomes the norm, as opposed to taking people and elevating them back into the presence and the fear of God? That’s just one of the things that I have to struggle with when I go to church, because I’m so concerned about the leaven. Those are things that just start so subtly. And it begins to permeate. And what we have now is a whole myriad of different approaches to worship—some which may not be Biblical, some which may be motivated by good but may not be Biblically correct. Yes, Brian?

Brian: Bruce, did you see by chance the research that came out a day or two ago talking about this specific topic, about evangelicals in their beliefs and how drastically different they are from what they once were. Did anybody see that?

Bruce: I did not see it, but I’m not surprised about what you just said.

Brian: (*Unclear.*)

Bruce: But do you understand the point that Paul is making in verse 9? The leaven impacts the whole loaf. Men, we’ve got to be discerning.

Now we don’t have critical spirits. You know, we don’t go up to somebody and say, “You can’t come in here because you’re wearing flip flops and a tank top.” We’re not saying that at all. All I’m saying is that those of us in leadership, what image are we projecting about the awesomeness and holiness of God? When we do that correctly, I believe that the Holy Spirit now moves in people in such a way that He begins to alter their thinking about the Person and work of Christ and the work of God.

Only the Holy Spirit can do that. We can’t do that. But we’ve got to set the arena that is correct so that the Holy Spirit can work in the heart of that person to bring about a change in them. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, I completely agree with what you just said. But what if somebody came up to you as you expressed those concerns,. And he says, “Well you’re being legalistic! How dare you tell me that I can’t bring a doughnut or coffee into the sanctuary, or dress the way I want!”

Bruce: What would I say?

Don: Yes.

Bruce: I would say, “That’s your opinion. There’s no argument where opinions are concerned.” (*Laughter.*) I’m not even sure that I would go in that direction.

Don: Okay.

Bruce: We wouldn’t even have to get into a discussion about that, because that’s going to be a dead end. It’s just going to go on and cause frustration.

Participant: I don’t mean to take us off track here in any way. (*Laughter.*) I’ve heard some pastors say that if I don’t dress down, I would scare the flock away. I would make them feel uncomfortable.

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 1

Bruce: Yes. That’s true. In my own church that has occurred several times. I was recently asked why I always wear a suit and tie when I preach. Nobody else does.

And I said, “That’s part of my rebellion against society.” *(Laughter and applause.)* So I say that I’m a rebel at heart. *(Laughter.)* There are three things that are at the heart of my rebelliousness. I shave, I don’t have tattoos, and I wear a suit to church. *(Laughter.)* Can you imagine that? That’s my personal rebellion. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Try wearing a collar.

Bruce: Yes, wear a collar.

Ted: I was with a pastor that I got into a conversation with at a church that’s very evangelistic. We’re talking about practices and customs. But the issue here in Galatians is doctrine.

Bruce: Correct.

Ted: It’s bad teaching. And we had a point of discussion because he believed that the Communion table must be open to everybody, whether they were believers or not, and that for us to close the Communion rail was unloving, not to mention hindering evangelism. And I said, “No. It’s a family meal, not a meal for everybody.” That would be an example.

Bruce: Yes, exactly. That’s exactly right. Yes, please?

Participant: I talked to somebody and we had this discussion about the centrality of the message. I said, “If you bring in as phase one, of whatever kind, but if they don’t believe that Christ is the only way, the truth and the life, we aren’t doing our job.

(Unclear.)

Bruce: Well, here’s where the work of the Holy Spirit comes in. The Holy Spirit convicts, convinces, converts and comforts.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We cannot do what the Holy Spirit can do in a person’s life. We cannot be somebody else’s Holy Spirit. Our greatest weapon in the church is truth. We proclaim truth. How people respond to that is going to be their responsibility and they will be held accountable for it. I cannot respond to somebody on His behalf. All I can do is labor in word and doctrine to make sure that I’m proclaiming truth, because truth is the weapon that the Holy Spirit will use to work internally in a person to bring him to the point of saying, “I need to change my view of the Person and work of Christ because I’m learning things about Him that I did not know.” We cannot be somebody else’s Holy Spirit. We have as our greatest weapon the proclamation of Biblical truth. That’s what we’ve got to do. And we have to trust the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I can’t do it for him. If you would give me that ministry, it would be in deep doo-doo. *(Laughter.)* That’s up to the Holy Spirit.

But you see, the greatest weapon that we have, men, is the proclamation of truth. That’s what Paul is saying. If these people creep in, they’re going to interfere with running the race. “You were running well, but something has interfered with it.” We’ve got to be discerning about that. We’ll pick this up next week and continue this same outline. There are a couple of other things that we need to learn about false teachers.

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 1

Thank you for your participation in this discussion. Men, I just trust that we’re making application of Biblical truth in our lives. Remember this. We cannot be somebody else’s Holy Spirit. We’ve got to trust the Holy Spirit to do His work. Let Him do it. He’ll do it far better than you or I ever could.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You for truth. If we said things that are not consistent with who You are in Your Biblical revelation, according to Your character, Your attributes or Your nature, would You remove those thoughts from our minds, so that we would only be focused on those things that are true and accurate that are given to us in Your word? May it be so for Jesus’ sake, that we will continue to run well. And don’t let people interfere in the lane in which You’ve called us to live, for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.” *(Applause.)*