

Little Foxes: A Little Leaven

Mark 8:11-16¹¹ The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. ¹² Sighing deeply in His spirit, He *said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” ¹³ Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side. ¹⁴ And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. ¹⁵ And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” ¹⁶ They *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread.

Matthew 16:11-12¹¹ How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Leaven is whatever has influence over our spirits and minds. Leaven needs access, and it comes in through teachings. It matters what teaching and what teachers you listen to!

The teachings of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod were dangerous because they shared one destructive quality:

Luke 12:1-3 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first *of all*, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ³ Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

Matthew 23:1-3 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ² saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*.

Hypocrisy! The practice of saying one thing and doing another, being inherently inconsistent, and teaching others to do things you yourself have no intention of doing.

The false front of hypocrisy is always a running hourglass. The truth- all of it- will be known and loudly proclaimed!

The hard reality is that hypocrisy is a heart-revealer. The person is not what they claim to be!

Bad teaching, from hypocritical teachers, is a leaven that works its way all through our spirit and mind, bearing bad fruit!

Bad teaching: immorality can be left unaddressed in the church and it will not hurt anyone.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? ⁷ Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Bad teaching: just add a little law to grace, and then God will accept you. In fact, God requires it.

Galatians 5:6-8⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.⁷ You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion *did* not *come* from Him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*.

How should I test the teachers and teaching I listen to?

1 Corinthians 8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

Is the teaching exclusive, full of pride, arrogance, and hardness? Or is it fueled by the Love of God and love for people?

1 Timothy 1:5 ⁵ But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Psalms 101:6 ⁶ My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.

Is the teacher a faithful person, the same in all circumstances? Is the teacher blameless (no obvious sinfulness)?

What if I have been leavened by bad teaching? God offers the counter-leaven, the pure water of His Word!

Luke 13:20-21 ²⁰ And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

The leaven of the Kingdom spreads within us until it has expanded and healed our hearts and minds!