

Spring Cleaning

Exodus 12:1-28

Rodolfo Rodriguez

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THE SCENE: Israel had been in slavery in Egypt for years. In answer to the prayers of the Israelite people, God sent Moses to Pharaoh with this command: "Let my people go!"

But of course Pharaoh wouldn't listen and so God brought 10 terrible plagues upon Egypt and Pharaoh to convince them that it was in their best interests to honor His request.

This passage of Scripture from Exodus 12 we'll be looking at this morning describes the beginning of the 1st and most important festival in the history of the Jewish people called the Passover.

From the day of Moses, until today - every year Jewish God-fearing families have partaken the Passover meal as closely as possible. Their Passover meal celebrates the love of their God who freed their ancestors from slavery and who passed over their homes because they obeyed Him in putting the blood of a sacrificed lamb upon the doorframes of their homes.

But Passover was only the first feast day in a weeklong festival called "The Feast of Unleavened Bread" And that's what we're going to be looking at today.

The First Passover

12 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²“This month will be the beginning of months, the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man must get one lamb for the people in his house. ⁴If there are not enough people in his house to eat a whole lamb, he must share it with his closest neighbor, considering the number of people. There must be enough lamb for everyone to eat. ⁵The lamb must be a one-year-old male that has nothing wrong with it. This animal can be either a young sheep or a young goat. ⁶Take care of the animals until the fourteenth day of the month. On that day all the people of the community of Israel will kill them in the evening before dark. ⁷The people must take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸On this night they must roast the lamb over a fire. They must eat it with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. ⁹Do not eat the lamb raw or boiled in water. Roast the whole lamb over a fire—with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You must not leave

any of it until morning, but if any of it is left over until morning, you must burn it with fire.

¹¹“This is the way you must eat it: You must be fully dressed as if you were going on a trip. You must have your sandals on and your walking stick in your hand. You must eat it in a hurry; this is the LORD’s Passover.

¹²“That night I will go through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn animals and people in the land of Egypt. I will also punish all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ But the blood will be a sign on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Nothing terrible will hurt you when I punish the land of Egypt.

¹⁴“You are always to remember this day and celebrate it with a feast to the LORD. Your descendants are to honor the LORD with this feast from now on. ¹⁵ For this feast you must eat bread made without yeast for seven days. On the first day, you are to remove all the yeast from your houses. No one should eat any yeast for the full seven days of the feast, or that person will be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ You are to have holy meetings on the first and last days of the feast. You must not do any work on these days; the only work you may do is to prepare your meals. ¹⁷ You must celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because on this very day I brought your divisions of people out of Egypt. So all of your descendants must celebrate this day. This is a law that will last from now on. ¹⁸ In the first month of the year you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. ¹⁹ For seven days there must not be any yeast in your houses. Anybody who eats yeast during this time, either an Israelite or non-Israelite, must be cut off from the community of Israel. ²⁰ During this feast you must not eat anything made with yeast. You must eat only bread made without yeast wherever you live.”

²¹ Then Moses called all the elders of Israel together and told them, “Get the animals for your families and kill the lamb for the Passover. ²² Take a branch of the hyssop plant, dip it into the bowl filled with blood, and then wipe the blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes. No one may leave that house until morning. ²³ When the LORD goes through Egypt to kill the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes, and he will pass over that house. He will not let the one who brings death come into your houses and kill you.

²⁴“You must keep this command as a law for you and your descendants from now on. ²⁵ Do this when you go to the land the LORD has promised to give you.

²⁶ When your children ask you, ‘Why are we doing these things?’ ²⁷ you will say, ‘This is the Passover sacrifice to honor the LORD. When we were in Egypt, the LORD passed over the houses of Israel, and when he killed the Egyptians, he saved our homes.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped the LORD. ²⁸ They did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.

Pray

OPEN: An EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) was working in the Emergency Room when a father brought in his son. The boy had poked a tire from one of his toy trucks up his nose. The father was embarrassed, but the EMT assured him this was something kids often do.

The technician quickly removed the tire... and the father and son were on their way. But a few minutes later, the father was back in the ER asking to talk to the EMT in private.

The father went into an examining room where he began: "While we were on our way home I was looking at that little tire and wondering, how on earth did my son get this thing up his nose..." and then he went on to explain what the problem was...fortunately, it only took the EMT just a few seconds to get the tire out of Dad's nose.

APPLY: There are certain things that don't belong up a person's nose.

They might fit.

They might NOT even cause much pain.

But they just don't belong.

There are certain things that don't belong in our bodies.

There are certain things that don't belong in our minds.

And there are certain things that don't belong in our homes.

I. And that's precisely what this morning's passage was designed to teach.

The Passover symbolized the freedom God wanted to give His people... but that feast was followed by 6 more days that focused on the fact that God's kind of freedom required His people to REMOVE things from their lives and their homes.

During The Feast of Unleavened Bread - God's people were instructed NOT ONLY to not eat leavened bread during that week. But they were to not allow ANYTHING that had ANY yeast in it in their homes. Anyone who ate anything that contained yeast during that week was to be cut off from their people. Yeast was used by God to symbolize the power of sin

When Israel offered bread to God along with burnt offerings, that bread was to have NO yeast in it.

When Jesus warned his disciples against becoming like the Pharisees, He told them **"Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."** Luke 12:1

And when the Church at Corinth had a man in their congregation who was

engaged in sexual immorality, Paul wrote that they should not associate with the man until he repented... they were not even to eat with the man. He said, if they insisted on "looking the other way", that man's sin would taint the rest of them: **"Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?" 1 Corinthians 5:6**

So, as you can see, yeast was used by God to portray sin in our lives.

II. But as I was preparing for this sermon, I asked myself the question: why would God use yeast to symbolize sin?

(picture of a loaf of bread)

The large loaf in this picture has yeast... that's what makes it rise and puff up.

(picture of a matzah bread)

The large cracker, or Matzah bread, has no yeast and so it is flatter. Sin acts in our lives, in many of the same ways that Yeast works in a loaf of bread

1st – bread with yeast in it tastes good...I've eaten Matzah bread. It's not all that tasty...That's why we make bread with yeast in it. Leavened bread does taste good. That's why we buy it... that's why we eat it.

Likewise, sin tastes good...if it didn't taste good, nobody would be tempted to do it.

2nd – it doesn't take much yeast to change the shape of the flour. It warps the shape of the dough

Similarly, when sin enters into an area of your life... it doesn't take much to change who you are. It doesn't take much to warp your character.

3rd – the yeast make the bread look like it contains more flour than it actually does. The larger loaf may not contain that much more flour than the "cracker" but because of the yeast that is in it – it looks like it has more.

Likewise - Sin can make us believe we have more in our lives than we do.

- Sins like bitterness and hatred can make feel that we have more power over others
- Sins like hypocrisy and bigotry can make us feel more important than we actually are
- Sinning by viewing crude movies or sexually explicit materials can make us believe we are more mature and grown up.
- And the sins of getting drunk or getting high can fool us into thinking we've gained more control over our lives

Sin can make us believe that we've gained MORE of something in our lives... but in reality all we've gained is more decay and rot, because...

Lastly, yeast causes bread to mold and decay from the inside out.

ILLUS: If you leave a loaf of bread out for too long, what happens to it? It gets moldy. Crackers will last practically forever, but leavened bread will eventually decay and rot because of the yeast within it.

In the same way, sin has the power to cause our lives and our homes to decay and to rot. That's why God hates sin... because it destroys us.

III. How to create a G-rated home?

We're asking ourselves: how can we create a home where our families will be safe from the destructive influences of the world around us. How can we keep the world's influences out of our homes?

Well... we keep it out same way we deal with any intruder. We close the door and lock it.

Parents are the "Gatekeepers" of the house. You and I are the ones with the keys to the house. And God relies upon us to make sure the destructiveness of the world doesn't get thru the front door.

Now, I shouldn't have to go thru a laundry list of the types of things we need to keep out of our homes.

* We all know that there are certain TV shows/ movies/ books/ magazines/ games and so on... that teach lessons and morality that we don't want our families to learn.

* We all know that our kids shouldn't be associating with certain kinds of friends, so we shouldn't be letting those "friends" into the house.

* We all know that if our kids get a hold of alcohol or drugs, it could destroy them... so why would I want those things in my home?

* We all know the damage gambling could do in their lives, so why would I want anything like that around my family?

We've got to make up our minds that ANYTHING would hurt our family shouldn't be let in the front door, or the back door, or thru an open window.

ILLUS: Now, there is a thought pattern that can undermine every effort you make to keep the world from influencing your family. Nowadays, TV programs are rated: Y... PG... MA and so on. They show little squares above everybody's heads. The kids have a "Y" or a "PG". BUT above the parents heads - when the kids leave the room - there is this little square that shows an "MA" (mature). It's their way of saying... we put on these "mature programs" for your benefit. You're a grown up...You can handle it
What they're saying is: it's ok to watch "mature programs" when the kids leave the room. They're trying to convince you that what you watch won't influence your children.

Now that's very foolish, don't you think?

One person noted: "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

By giving the impression that certain kinds of TV programs, or activities, or beverages, or drugs, or behavior – whatever... if we give the impression that ONLY GROWNUPS should do these things we teach our children the LIE that this is what mature people do. And those children will desire that maturity. And they will pursue that maturity as early in their lives as possible... because they all desire to be like grownups. (And I'm the first offender)

The moment we buy into the foolishness - that our morality is somehow

different than the morality we expect from them - the lock on the door is broken and the world will walk right on in.

That's why God didn't teach his people to remove the leaven only from their children's lives BUT He taught them to get those things completely out of the house, out of every room and out of the lives of everyone in the home. Essentially, that means that: if it's bad for your kids... it's bad for you.

Or as Paul said **"...a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" 1 Corinthians 5:6**

All it takes is a simple opening of the door for sin to enter your home and it will affect the lives of everyone you love. That's what God is teaching us here.

IV. And there's something else I believe God's teaching us here
As I thought about this passage in Exodus 12, I noticed something intriguing
The FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD was only done once a year. They removed the leaven from their homes roughly in the month of April.
Does that sound like something we do?
Yes, this was literally a "Spring cleaning"

Practically everybody does an occasional "Spring Cleaning" in their homes. Things have laid around and collected that clutter up the attic, the basement, the garage, and so on.
And so once in a while, we realize we have to "clean house" and get rid of all that clutter and trash that have accumulated throughout the year.
It's not that we planned to have all that clutter in our homes we just began to realize that there it was.

It's the same way with the worldly influences. In spite of our best efforts some of the world's R-rated thinking and morality can slip into our homes – either by the influences our children encounter, or by the things we bring into the home.

In Jewish society - to prepare for the Passover - the family spends an entire week scouring the house for any and every small crumb of yeast they can find. They do that because God commanded **"For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses." Exodus 12:19**

In other words, they weren't just getting rid of the yeast that happened to be laying on the floor. They had to look in every nook and cranny – every hidden corner of their home - to find the leaven and remove it.

That's what we need to do with our homes. Every once in a while, we need to look our homes over and ask ourselves...

... would that magazine prescription please God

... do those books hinder my walk with God

... do those TV programs I watch undermine my family's faith

Problems in our homes can often come from thinking "just a little" trash won't hurt.

ILLUS: There is a story of a girl who approached mother while she is preparing salad. Casually she asked for permission to go to amusement center that had a particularly bad reputation.

When her mom said no, the daughter exclaimed: "All the girls are going to be there... etc."

The mom was silent for a couple of moments and then began to reach into the sink and pulled out some of the wilted lettuce and scrapings from the vegetables and sprinkled them on the salad.

Astonished, the daughter asked her mother what she thinks she is doing.

The mother replied, "I just thought that if you didn't mind putting garbage into your heart and mind, you wouldn't mind a little garbage in your salad."

CLOSE: What I want you to remember from this sermon is that there are certain false concepts that can undermine your efforts to protect your home and family from the influences of an R-rated world.

Two of these we've already covered:

1st false concept is that you - as an adult - can have a different morality than your children

2nd is the belief that a little bit of sin won't make any difference

But there is the false concept. That last false idea is that: simply removing sinful influences from your home will protect your family. This springs from the

concept that freedom comes from removing sin from our lives. Actually, Scripture teaches that freedom comes from God and we remove sin from our lives because He has shown us mercy.

The Feast Of Unleavened Bread focused on removing the symbol of sinfulness from the home.

But that weeklong festival began with a celebration of their freedom from slavery - The Passover Meal. In other words: It wasn't the removal of sin from the home that made them free. GOD HAD MADE THEM FREE

Removing sin from their homes was not what made them free. Removing that sinful element was based upon the freedom God had given them. They removed the sin BECAUSE God had freed them.

Now that isn't simply an Old Testament idea. TURN WITH ME to Romans 6. In the previous chapter of Romans, Paul explained that God loved us so much, it pleased Him to forgive our sins. So, in the opening verse of Romans 6, Paul basically says: If it pleases God so much to forgive our sins... why don't we really make Him happy and sin a lot?

Romans 6 "So do you think we should continue sinning so that God will give us even more grace? ²No! We died to our old sinful lives, so how can we continue living with sin? ³Did you forget that all of us became part of Christ when we were baptized? We shared his death in our baptism. ⁴When we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and shared his death. So, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the wonderful power of the Father, we also can live a new life. ⁵Christ died, and we have been joined with him by dying too. So we will also be joined with him by rising from the dead as he did. ⁶We know that our old life died with Christ on the cross so that our sinful selves would have no power over us and we would not be slaves to sin. ⁷Anyone who has died is made free from sin's control"

Romans 6 is telling us that our freedom came from belonging to Jesus, and because we were now new creatures in Him, we should no longer engage in sinful activities of our past life.

Too often people will say that they don't want to become Christians until they clean out their lives (Spring Cleaning). They fail to realize that it isn't in removing the yeast of their past sins that will make them acceptable to God. We can only be free when we accept Jesus on His terms:

1. Faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior

- 2 Repentance of our past sins
3. Confession of Jesus as Lord
4. Baptism into Christ

Then and only then is Spring Cleaning effective and beneficial.

Pray

God we thank You for Your grace in Christ Jesus and for the freedom from sin that You blessed us with and we ask You for understanding, wisdom, strength and willingness to guard our bodies, minds, hearts, homes and families from the evil influences of the world and we ask You to help us be and stay clean from sin so you can use us as good examples and not as horrible warnings to those around us, specially our youths and kids. We thank you and pray to you in the name of Jesus our Lord, amen.

God bless you!