

The Kingdom Like Leaven

by Wayne Goff

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” Matthew 13:33.

Matthew records the parable of Jesus which takes up one verse! The kingdom of heaven is compared to leaven and its invisible, pervasive effect on the entire loaf of bread. Most often leaven is used in a bad sense, but here it is used of that which is good. The kingdom of heaven is good influence upon the society of man. The power behind the kingdom is the Word of God, Rom. 1:16. It can transform a sinner into a saint! Thus its influence upon the heart of man, though unseen by human eye is quite effective as it permeates the heart. I have seen the power of God's Word operate slowly but surely upon the most unwilling heart. The only requirement is that the human soul be willing to listen and learn. God's wisdom can turn a sour disposition into a lovely one. God's powerful message can soften the most hardened, hopeless heart. Every single soul in this congregation who has obeyed the Gospel has been changed in some way by God!

Now multiply each individual's obedience times the number of people that constitute a local congregation and you can begin to see the power that God's Word yields. The fruit that is born is of the most wonderful kind: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Who can argue with that product? In fact, even the inspired pen noted that “Against such there is no law”! Jesus commented on a tree's fruit: “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” (Matt. 7:17-18). Thus the fruit borne by those in the Kingdom of Heaven is the influence for good that Jesus speaks about in this parable.

For example, the Gospel does not explicitly forbid slavery. Instead it instructs slaves to “be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ” (Eph. 6:5). Then it instructs Christians who might be slave owners to do good to their slaves, “giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven” (Eph. 6:9). But over a period of time, as the Kingdom of Heaven operates upon the hearts of men, upon society's conscience, and upon a nation's will -- slavery vanishes! Why? Because the ultimate influence of true religion teaches man to love your neighbor as yourself -- and nobody longs to be a permanent slave of another.

Another example is the permeating influence of Christianity under any earthly government. Without qualification, God instructs us to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks ... for all men, for kings, and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). How different is that from all the godless, hateful rhetoric we hear on the radio every day? Paul lived under the power of the Roman Empire, governed by the most wicked Caesar, Nero! And yet he commanded us to pray for such governments and such rulers! Why? Because in time -- sometimes centuries -- nations can change or come to an end while Christianity lives on until the end of time. It is hard for us near-sighted humans to see the truth of Matthew 13:33, but history will bear out its truth.

The same can be done in marriage if the unbelieving mate is willing to remain with a godly Christian mate (1 Cor. 7:12-14; 1 Pet. 3:1-2). Their good influence may convert their mate “without a word,” but it must be truly lived in all humility and godliness.

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