

Three Leavens to Beware Of

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen warns against three internal leavens--hypocrisy, worldly compromise, and denial of truth--that can corrupt our spiritual lives.

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Scripture: Matthew 16:6

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Description

Zac Poonen warns against three types of leaven that can corrupt our spiritual lives: the leaven of the Pharisees, which represents hypocrisy and legalism; the leaven of Herod, which embodies worldliness and a lack of spiritual depth; and the leaven of the Sadducees, which signifies disbelief in miracles and the supernatural. He emphasizes the importance of being real and honest in our faith, avoiding the traps of false teachings and worldly distractions that can hinder our relationship with God. Poonen encourages believers to examine their hearts and identify any leaven that may be present, urging them to seek a genuine and transformative relationship with Christ.

Transcript

When Jesus tells us to beware of something, it's good for us to take heed. We better beware of it. You know, things like Jesus said, beware of false prophets.

A lot of Christians just don't seem to beware of false prophets. See, a false prophet in the Old Testament never came with some heathen religious book. They came with the Old Testament.

And a false prophet in New Testament times will come with the Bible. But that's not what I'm going to speak about. There are many things Jesus warned us to beware of outside of us, like false prophets, deception, false teaching.

We can speak about that another time. But then he told us about beware of certain things that are inside us. And that's what we've got to be more careful about.

That guy outside of me who is a false prophet, he can't corrupt me. He can deceive me if I'm not careful, but he can't corrupt me. But there are certain things inside which Jesus told us to beware of, which can corrupt us, which can hinder our spiritual growth, which can prevent us from being all that God wants us to be.

You've often heard me say, God's not angry with His people, but He's very sad sometimes with His people. The Bible speaks about grieving the Holy Spirit. It doesn't say the Holy Spirit is angry.

It says the Holy Spirit is sad. Sad because He thinks of the tremendous potential there is in a person when he accepts Christ. If he will open up his whole being to be filled with the Holy Spirit, boy, it will be like a rocket that can shoot up to the highest heaven.

And instead of that, so many Christians are earthbound. They don't even go as far as the trees, leave alone third heaven. And there the Holy Spirit is sad.

Just like the sadness a father will feel for a brilliant son whom God has gifted with tremendous intelligence, but who plays the fool in school and fails in almost every subject. I mean, a loving father would feel sad. Those of you who have children, how would you feel if your son was failing in almost every subject when you know he is brilliant, when you know he's got the potential to come first in the class? I mean, if he doesn't have intelligence, he's retarded in some way, then okay, we can understand.

But he's got potential. And that's the sadness God feels. So I want to just look with you at three things today.

Three things that Jesus told us to beware of. Which if we, Jesus warned us, some of these things, all three of them have got the potential of very quickly destroying us. It's not a slow process.

Jesus used the word leaven. Leaven is an old word for what we today call yeast. Not E-A-S-T, Y-E-A-S-T.

That's the thing that you put into flour. If you don't put it into flour, you get a chapati. If you put it into flour, it becomes bread, a loaf of bread.

The only thing that makes that thing a loaf of bread instead of a chapati is yeast. And you put it in and heat it up, and all of a sudden it's blown up. And do you know that most of bread is just air? It's air trapped in between that makes it look so big.

You can crush it down, it becomes like a chapati. The yeast that fools people, blows up that loaf of wheat flour into something big. And that's what yeast does.

Makes you big on the outside and got very little content on the inside and most of what is in you is hot air. That's the result of yeast. It's sad.

When Christians are full of hot air, usually comes out of their mouth. All the exalted things they talk about, which are not true in their life. Yeast did it.

So Jesus spoke about three types of yeast or leaven. I want to talk about them. First one, we turn to Mark's gospel and chapter 8. You see, they had gone across the sea to the other side, across the lake.

Mark 8 verse 13. He had fed the multitude there in the previous verses with a few fish, with seven loaves and few fish. In verse 6 and 7 and 8. And then he left them and went across the other side.

We read in verse 13. And they had forgotten to take bread. And they had only one loaf, verse 14, in the boat with them.

And he was giving orders to them saying, watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And the disciples heard this. Oh, maybe we didn't bring any bread and he's complaining about that.

Can you imagine Jesus complaining about bread? That's the last thing in the world he's even thinking about. Their mind was so much on food that they thought, Jesus, you know, very often we think the things we complain about is what other people complain about. We probably don't realize that other people are a lot more spiritual than we are.

And they couldn't understand that Jesus wasn't thinking about bread at all. He said, don't you understand this? Verse 18. Having eyes, don't you see? Having ears, don't you hear? You think I'm talking about bread? No, he said.

I'm not talking about bread. I can multiply this one loaf and feed lots of people like you. You just saw that.

But there's something else. The leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. The leaven of the Pharisees, Jesus described it for us in Matthew chapter 16.

See, these are the three things inside us. The two here and I'll come to the third one we read about here in Matthew chapter 16. And verse 6. He said, watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of the Sadducees.

So there you got three leavens now that Jesus said, beware of, watch out. It's a contaminating thing. It's like, I mean, potassium cyanide.

You know what potassium cyanide does? One drop on your tongue and it doesn't take long before you're gone. We can look at it like that. The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees is contaminating.

It can kill you, corrupt you. Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod and the Sadducees. Jesus spoke about that and it's very important when we read something like that.

Jesus said, beware of. We need to understand. We should not be like those disciples to whom Jesus had to say, don't you understand this? You've got eyes and you read it and you don't try to understand it.

You've got ears to hear this and you don't take it seriously. I wonder how many of us who read the Bible for so many years have considered and studied the scripture to say, Lord, or ask the Lord to say, Lord, what did you mean when you said, I have to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees? I have to beware of the leaven of Herod and I have to beware of the leaven of the Sadducees. Now lots of things in the Bible, which even if you don't understand very well, doesn't matter.

For example, the sacrifices in Leviticus. Some things you have to add oil and some things you don't. And some things you add salt and some things you don't.

Some things you're permitted to eat and some things you're not permitted to eat. No matter how many times I read it, I can't remember it. But it's not important because I'm not a Levitical priest who's got to explain these things.

And the day of sacrifice is over. I read it and try to get some spiritual lesson out of it. I don't need to remember which sacrifice am I supposed to eat and which sacrifice am I not supposed to eat? Where can I eat the fat and where can I not eat the fat? Okay, forget that.

They're all spiritual truths which we learn. But here is something in the New Testament. Jesus said, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, beware of the leaven of Herod, beware of the leaven of the Sadducees.

Supposing some nominal Christian came to you and said, you're a believer, right? You read the Bible regularly. Could you please explain to me what is the leaven of the Pharisees and what's the leaven of Herod and what's the leaven of the Sadducees? Would you be able to give an answer? Well, by the end of this day, you'll be able to give an answer. If you listen, don't let your mind wander.

First of all, the leaven of the Pharisees, Jesus said here in Matthew 16. He said, don't you understand? I'm not talking about bread, but I'm talking about the kind of teaching, verse 12. He did not talk about the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

There's a particular type of teaching which characterized Pharisees, which characterized Sadducees, which characterized King Herod and his followers. And Jesus was saying, beware of that type of teaching. Now, you can get that teaching from a pastor, elder, teacher.

You can get that teaching from a book. You can get that teaching from your own mind, trying to grasp scripture in a wrong way. Now, the interesting thing is, all these people will have some scriptural basis for what they teach.

You see, they're not going to teach from some heathen literature book or religious book. They're going to teach from the Bible, but beware of this, some you got to detect. Hey, this teaching has got a certain element in it, which I don't want.

And I want to say to you, we're living in days when this leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod and the leaven of the Sadducees is widespread in Christendom. So I'm not just giving you a Bible study. I'm trying to tell you something which will benefit you in your daily life.

It will protect you from all this wrong teaching that's going on in Christendom today. So we turn to Luke's gospel in chapter 12. Luke's gospel chapter 12, Jesus explained what the leaven of the Pharisees was.

He says there in the first verse, the last part, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. So there you got it. It's not being real.

You know, when the New Testament speaks about truth, Jesus said, I'm the truth. There are various meanings to truth. When you say two plus two is four, that's the truth, but that's not the type of truth Jesus is speaking about.

There's another meaning to truth. Truth meanings, you know, like you can say you're speaking the truth about a certain situation. But when Jesus said, I am the truth, what he meant was I am reality.

I am the way, you understand that. I am the life, the life of God. What did he mean when I say I am the truth? What he meant was, I am reality.

The opposite of truth is hypocrisy, unreality. I am reality. That means everything you see in me, outside, is exactly what is inside.

If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. In other words, Jesus was not like frosted glass. You know frosted glass, like we have in these windows, you can't see outside.

And why do we have it? Because we don't want people from outside to look inside and see what's going on here. But we want the light. And that's unreality.

Plain transparent glass is reality. Now I am not saying you should have it all in your houses. I am saying you should have it in our life.

That everybody can see through me. Plain glass. It says about Jerusalem in Revelation 21, it's like crystal clear glass.

That's how we are supposed to be. If you want to be a part of Jerusalem. That there is no phoniness, unreality, in any area of our life.

What we speak is exactly what we are. We are not saying something to create an impression. We are not saying something to make people think that we are great guys or we are spiritual or something like that.

No. We are what we appear to be. And it's not just in our speech.

We can act in a certain way that appears spiritual. Ananias and Sapphira were killed for hypocrisy. They were not killed because they didn't give money to the Lord.

You know what Peter told them? Before you sold your property, the property was yours and God didn't want it. After you sold your property and converted it into cash, the cash was yours. God didn't want that either.

But why do you come here and pretend that you are giving everything when you are giving only 50%? I am paraphrasing the words. You know if Ananias and Sapphira were in a modern church, they would have got an award because hardly anybody gives 50% to God. But the problem with them was they were in a church where people were giving 100% and they pretended that they were giving 100%.

It's very dangerous to be in a spiritual church if you are not spiritual yourself. If Ananias and Sapphira were in the church in Corinth, they would have been probably elders. But unfortunately they decided to join the church in Jerusalem because Jerusalem was a powerful church.

But when you join a powerful church, you better be real. Otherwise God will expose you. I mean that's my prayer.

My prayer is that we want to be a powerful church. We want to be a real church. We don't want to be a church that's phony, unreal, talking some things that are not true, to say we are not perfect.

That's for sure. That's the reason we have this verse up here. Let's press on to perfection.

Telling everybody we are not perfect. The guy standing behind the pulpit is not perfect. Please remember that.

We are still pressing on. Not being perfect is okay. But not being real, that we never want.

We don't want anybody in this church to be unreal. Not even one. Boy, that's a high standard.

Supposing I say, which part of your body would you like to be paralyzed? Your eye or your finger? Or maybe your small little toe? Do you mind if one of your toes is paralyzed? You say, no. I don't want any part of my body to be paralyzed. You say, boy, that's high standard.

You don't want any part of your body to be paralyzed? That's exactly how the body of Christ should be. If you are unreal, you are a paralyzed member in the body of Christ. Christ doesn't want it.

He wants every part to be real. He doesn't have to be big, but you got to be real. A baby is not big, but it can be healthy.

But there are big people, huge people, who are not real, who are not healthy. God wants us to be real. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, which is being unreal.

Pretending to be something we are not. The word hypocrite, as you have heard me say before, is not an English word. There are a lot of words imported into the English from other languages like Dobie.

You look up an English dictionary, you'll find the word Dobie. Dobie is not an English word. It's an Indian word, which means washer man.

Hypocrite in the same way. It's not an English word. It's a Greek word.

And if you went into Greece 2,000 years ago and talked about, are there any hypocrites here? They'll say, sure, we've got plenty. Just go to the theater and you'll find all those actors. The word hypocrite means actor.

Now actor, I mean, when you watch movies, you see actors. It's not a sin to be an actor, is it? If somebody says, I'm an actor. In fact, a lot of young people admire these actors and actresses.

They look at their pictures, they keep pictures of them in their books and in their walls and all that. Here are hypocrite number one and hypocrite number two. Lady hypocrite and male hypocrite.

I'm just using the Greek word. That's all. I mean, if you go to these Greek young people 2,000 years ago, they'd show you.

You want to see hypocrites? Come to my room. I'll show you lots of them. I've got pictures of all of them.

The word just means actor. And Jesus said, don't be an actor in church. Don't be an actor as a Christian.

We know what actors do. They come on the sets where they're acting and they've got to dress up and act like Elijah. For two hours, I'm Elijah.

Fiery man of God. Dressed up. I sound like him.

I look like him. I act like him. And then the act is over.

They say, cut, finished. Okay, I can go home now to my third wife and get drunk. That's how actors are.

I mean, at home, they're somebody else. They're fooling around with women and getting drunk and cheating the government of taxes and all types of things. They're actors.

But at least if you ask them what they are, they say, I'm a hypocrite. If you went to Greece and asked an actor, what are you? He'd say, I'm a hypocrite. Oh, you're a hypocrite.

Great. But you go to Christians and say, are you a hypocrite? Oh, no, I'm not a hypocrite. I'm okay.

But are you? Really? In other words, are you exactly the same when you're two hours in church and at home? Do you have the same values that guide your life in your business as you pretend to have in church? Or is this a stage? I tell you, for many, many Christians, the church and the worship service is a stage. How do I know? Because I've done it myself. I'm not throwing stones at anybody.

I can't throw stones at anybody if I did it myself once upon a time. But God showed it to me. More than 30 years ago, I cried out to God and said, Lord, there's one thing I want to get rid of in my life.

Unreality. It's a thing I cried out and cried out and cried out for months. I said, I ask you only for one thing in my life, Lord.

Make my outer life correspond with my inner life. And enable me that I will never in my life speak about anything that I have not practiced. I don't want to practice what I preach.

No. I want to follow Jesus who preached what he had already practiced. And I want to be one who preaches what I've already practiced.

Not going to practice what I preach today. No. And I decided that I would never in my life from then on.

This is way back in 1975 when we started our church. I would never speak about anything that I had not practiced or that I was not striving with all my heart to attain. Yeah, you can speak about that.

For example, be anxious for nothing. I don't think there's a human being in the world who can say, I've reached that. I haven't.

Be anxious for nothing. It's a Mount Everest. But I'll tell you something.

I'm not at base camp like I was many years ago. I've moved up quite a bit on that mountain. I haven't reached the peak.

But it's a lot, lot, lot, lot better than it was a few years ago. Because I've come to see God as my father. So I'm not pretending that I've reached the peak.

But when anxiety comes, I say, hey, I shouldn't be. I want to commit that to the Lord. I want to do what the Bible says, be anxious for nothing.

But in everything by prayer and supplication, make your requests known to God with thanksgiving. And the peace of God will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. And I begin to experience that.

I do what scripture says. Sometimes it's a battle. Sometimes it's a period of time before that anxiety goes.

But I keep battling it. Anxiety comes about something. I remember when if our children went off to some school or some function when they were small, and they didn't come till late at night, naturally we'd be a bit concerned.

And that concern, which is good. Parents should have a concern for their children, can develop into anxiety. It should not.

Concern is right, anxiety is wrong. But sometimes we go over, and that's happened to me. I've repented and said, Lord, I want to have a concern for my children, but not anxiety.

I want to have a concern for different things. I don't want to be an unconcerned type of person in the world. I want to have a concern for the churches I have a responsibility for.

I want to have a concern for the young people in our churches. But I don't want to be anxious. So, you know, to be real doesn't mean to say, I'm perfect, I've reached up here.

No, to say, well, this is what I am. But I'm not a fake. I'm not counterfeit.

But I know the years when I was counterfeit, when I was preaching things which was not true. And the leaven of the Pharisees was there. And, you know, leaven, how it blows up.

I told you, if there was no leaven, it would be like a chapati, this thin. But you put leaven inside, and it's just a matter of, I don't know, having baked bread, is it two, three hours? Suddenly, becomes so big. You know how you can press bread? It goes right down.

You can't press a chapati and make it thinner. No. Because there's no yeast in it.

You press bread, goes down, because there's yeast in it. Are you like that, my brother, sister? It's destroying your life. Far better to say, listen, I'm not this great spiritual guy like you are, or like you pretend to be.

I'm at this level. I mean, have you ever in your life, let me ask you, a very simple question. Have you even once in your life, even once, asked a little boy, which class are you in? And if he's in second standard, he tells you, I'm in fourth standard.

I have never heard that till today. Have you? I mean, I'd have serious concerns for such a boy if he ever told you that. I have never.

Even if he failed last year, I mean, he may be a bit reluctant to say which class he's in because he failed. He may avoid the question, but he won't pretend. Because he knows you can find out pretty quickly.

I have never met a boy who says I'm in fifth standard when he's in third standard. But look at the number of Christians there are. That is hypocrisy.

Pretending to be somewhere where we're not. But look at the number of Christians who act like that. Who are unwilling to take the low position and say, I'm not saying we should be satisfied with that low position, but to acknowledge where we are.

Do you think it's wrong for a child to say, I'm in second standard? What sin is there? There's a sin if he pretends he's in third, when he's only in second. But there's no sin in saying, I'm in second. You know, that's honesty.

And for many, many, many years, I've convinced about one thing. That the one thing God wants in us more than anything else is honesty. You've heard me.

And like Peter said, I'll keep on saying it till I die. And Peter said in 2 Peter 1, I'm going to say it so often that even after I die, you'll remember Peter. Oh, he's the guy who talked about that.

And you'll remember me long after I'm gone. That, oh, he's the guy who talked about honesty as being the most important thing. That's right.

I'll never get tired of saying it. Because so many people think God doesn't take that seriously. That is the thing which God takes seriously most of all.

I want to say, if you start your Christian life, start with honesty. If you're in first standard, say you're in first standard. If you're in second standard, say you're in second standard.

Very often we can't gauge what standard we're in, but at least we need not pretend to be something we're not. And you see, these Pharisees had another characteristic, and that was a very legalistic attitude towards other people. I want to show you that in hypocrisy.

You two go together. You know, legalism and hypocrisy. What Satan has joined together, we can't put asunder.

Okay? Satan has joined legalism and hypocrisy together. We usually can't separate them. Matthew chapter 12, we read, this is in a paraphrase here I'm reading, On the Sabbath, Jesus was strolling with his disciples through a field of ripe grain, and the disciples were pulling out the heads of grain and munching on them.

You know, this is probably a narrow path through a field, with stalks of corn or grain on either side, and the disciples were probably going in single file, with Jesus in the front, one or two close to him, and some others behind. And the Pharisees were watching. You know, one mark of a legalist is that he watches other people very carefully.

Uh-huh, what is he doing? How is he dressed? I'm not interested. I've got enough to worry about watching my own life, instead of spending my time trying to watch other people, unless I have a responsibility for them. If they are my children, I have a responsibility for them.

Sure, I've got to watch how they dress and how they do many things, how they speak, if their language is not respectful, if there's foul language. Sure. Or if they are members of my church, and I'm an elder, I have a responsibility for them.

I have zero responsibility for visitors. Visitors, I say, glad to see you. I can see 101 things wrong in their life, perhaps I won't even speak about one of them.

God bless you, come again. But once a person decides to be a part of this church, and come under the eldership, I say, boy, then I take over. Then I'm going to be your father.

I'm not going to be a consultant pediatrician, who comes and gives you my opinion, and not bother whether you take the tablets or not. If you die, you die. Consultant pediatricians can't watch all the hundreds of children they give advice to, to check up whether they die or not.

But a father, even if one child, leave alone die, if a child's fever goes up from 98 to 100, he's concerned. Now, 100 degrees fever is not serious, but father gets concerned. Because he's a father.

I tell you, there are very few fathers in the church today. Many teachers, but very few fathers. What's needed is fathers.

But as I say, I'm not bothered about judging other people. The Pharisees used to judge. And here it says, the Pharisees watched these people pulling out grain.

Now you were permitted to pull grain. God had said in the Old Testament, that anybody walking through a field is permitted to pluck grain. That means if you, or grain or anything, you see somebody's mango hanging there, and you just pull it out and eat it.

It's great, no? If you lived in Old Testament times, you walked through people's fields. But he said, but the Lord said, don't bring a basket with you and collect. That you can't do.

I mean, if you're hungry, you can pluck it and eat it. The Lord was teaching something to people to be generous and large hearted. Don't be such a miser.

You got 500 mangoes hanging there. You can't let this fellow take one or two. Let him take it.

God was trying to teach his people to be large hearted and good. And at the same time, he was also trying to teach people not to take advantage of this law and bring a basket along and say, hey, we can grab. No.

So they were plucking grain. It is permitted under the law. But the Pharisees said, hey, the Bible says you're not supposed to do any work on the Sabbath day.

And these guys are plucking it on the Sabbath day. So he said, your disciples are breaking the Sabbath rules. Verse 2. And Jesus said, really? This is a paraphrase by the way.

Really? Didn't you ever read what David and his companions did when they were hungry? How they entered the sanctuary and ate fresh bread off the altar. Bread that no one but the priests were allowed to eat. And didn't you ever read in God's law that the priests carrying out their temple duties break the Sabbath rules on the Sabbath all the time.

And it's not held against them. There's one thing I love about Jesus. He sticks up for me.

Have you got friends who will stick up for you? Through thick and thin. They'll stick up for you when it's thick. But when it's thin, as the Bible says, there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

It's a verse in Proverbs. I think it's the last verse of chapter 16 or something. There's a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

That's Jesus. He'll stick by you through thick and thin. And see how he sticks by his disciples.

You see, you guys are picking up one verse in scripture, which says, hey, these guys are not obeying this verse. And Jesus says, haven't you read how David was hungry one day? You read that in 1 Samuel. And he came to one place and he said, hey, I and my friends are all hungry.

And he asked the priest there, do you have any bread here? He said, sorry, we run out of bread, except the bread which is kept in the, whatever was the equivalent of the tabernacle those days. In the tent, the holy bread on the table. There was a table of showbread with 12 loaves.

And nobody was allowed to eat that except the tribe of Levi, the priests. It was a law. The priest said, hey, you guys are not part of the tribe of Levi.

You can't eat this. David said, well, I believe God understands. We're going to die.

Man, what are you going to follow all these silly rules? We're dying. Let's eat it. And if God kills us, he kills us.

But in any case, we're dying. So he ate it. And God didn't kill him.

Wasn't that good of God that a guy broke his rule and he didn't kill him? I tell you, there's something that David once said when he did a sin and the Lord said to him, okay, I'm going to punish you for this sin. Do you want to be punished by God or punished by man? And David said, Lord, you please punish me. Don't let me ever fall into the hands of man because man is so unmerciful.

He said that in 2 Samuel 24. I love that statement of his. Let me fall into your hands, O God.

Don't let me ever fall into the hands of man because men are so unmerciful. That song we sing. Can you pick out that song? The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind.

You know, where it says, But we make his love so narrow. it is, yeah, you know, it says, one of the verses, it says, There is no place where all your sorrows are felt more than in heaven. And, there is no place where all the stupid blunders you have made are given a very kind and merciful judgment than in heaven.

That's the place. Let me read this to you. It's really great.

No, this is not the one. There is a whiteness in God's mercy. There is a whiteness in God's mercy.

You know, it says there that, Heaven is a place where our mistakes are given a very kind judgment. Whereas on earth, we don't get that type of kind judgment from people. That's the thing I love about that song.

That's why David said, I want to fall into God's hands, you know. Men are so full of rules and legalistic people, rules and rituals. You've got to do this, you've got to do that.

Now, I'm not saying we should lower our standards. I've had to face this and try to get a workout, an answer to this over a period of 30 years, and I've come to this conclusion myself. Do you find it? I'll read this to you.

It's one of the most beautiful songs I've, and it was written by a Roman Catholic, just by the way. There are some godly people there in that faith. There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.

And there's a kindness in His justice, which is more than liberty. There is plentiful redemption. Please put that light on.

Don't turn it off. There's plentiful redemption in Christ's blood, that has been shed. And then it says, there's no place where all our sorrows are more felt than up in heaven.

There's no place where all our failings, this is the line I wanted to show you, there's no place where all our failings, and haven't we got failings? I have such kind judgment given. See, men don't give us a kind judgment when we have failed. God does.

Because His mercy is so wide. Because the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. Man's mind is so narrow.

We're so strict. But the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind. But, we make His love so narrow.

With all types of limits of our own. This rule, and that rule, and this verse, and that verse, and the other verse, and you haven't done this, and you haven't done this, and you're plucking grain on the Sabbath

day, and this woman was caught in adultery, and goes on, and on, and on, and on. All types of limits, and we've got a verse for it.

And we magnify His strictness. There's one little verse there, we put it under a magnifying glass, and that little dot becomes like a planet. Boy! With a zeal to fight for that huge law, which is like a dot.

A zeal that God will not support. But if our love were but more simple, we would take Him at His word, and our lives would be all sunshine in the sweetness of our Lord. I love that song.

I've sung it for many, many years. And sometimes I sing it to myself. Just to remind myself what God is like.

His heart is so large. He's not a stickler for little, little rules. He's not like a policeman.

Hey, come here, and you know you're caught. He's not like that. He's not like that.

He's large-hearted. He understands why you failed. He makes allowances.

Men will not make allowances. Men won't make allowances for the stupid things you said. You want to see a man in the Bible who said a multitude of stupid things? Job.

Read the book of Job sometime. He said some good things, like I know my Redeemer lives and all that, but I think he said about 10% good things and 90% stupid things in that book. And at the end of it, he said, God, what shall I say? I'm sorry.

One word. I repent. And God wiped out that 90%.

And said, everything Job said is right. Isn't that great? It's like a teacher who gave you 10 problems to do in mathematics and 9 of them were wrong. And you say, well, I'm really sorry for what I did.

And she rubs out the 9 problems and says, there was only one question in the paper. You got 100%. Great.

Isn't that great to have a teacher like that? You know, God is like that. And He does not... You see, if a teacher did that in a school, she would be violating the rules. But God can do it.

Because those 9 mistakes you made, Jesus paid for with His blood. That's why. So, He doesn't violate any rule.

The moment you repent, you say, Lord, I'm sorry. It's gone. And the Lord says about Job in the last chapter, My servant Job has never said anything wrong.

It's you guys who said something wrong. And you look at what those 3 fellows said in the book of Job. They all said the right things, but with the wrong spirit.

They were the Pharisees back there in Job's time, trying to hit out at people. And I believe Job was the first book of the Bible written long before Genesis. Because Job lived before Moses who wrote Genesis.

And the first book of the Bible deals with Pharisees. So, legalists, who are out to catch people for little things. Now, I'm not saying we should lower our standard.

But what I've discovered through 30 years, I keep my standard. And I'm merciful to other people and say, Well, maybe they don't have the light I have. I'll wait.

God waited for me for many things. And He's still waiting for me to get light on probably a thousand things in my life. Can't I be a little patient and wait for that person to get a little light, which he or she may not have.

I've learned that. But it's taken me a long time, I'm sorry to say, to learn it. I used to be so strict and so hard on people if they slipped up somewhere.

My standard was right. But I didn't realize I was a Pharisee. Those Pharisees never knew they were Pharisees.

One of the terrible things about being a Pharisee is you don't even realize you're a Pharisee. So, there's a lot more to be said on that. But we don't have time.

You read Matthew 23 sometime. Let's go on to the leaven of Herod. You see, Herod is the type of person who I would say Herod's leaven is the opposite of the leaven of the Pharisees.

You know, the narrow way is such a narrow little thing. There's a cliff on the left and a cliff on the right. And you can back away so much from the cliff that side that you fall over the cliff the other side.

I'll give you a little bit of news. The devil doesn't bother. He doesn't mind which side of the cliff you fall over.

So long as you hit bottom. So, the opposite cliff to the leaven of the Pharisees, the leaven of Herod is the leaven of worldliness. Herod was a worldly man.

He believed in feasting and watching sensuous women dance like even if it was his second wife's daughter dancing. And he enjoyed it. He was a funny man.

You know, I'll just show you something very funny about him. There's something that you see in a lot of Christians. Mark chapter 6, we read.

Mark chapter 6. I want you to see something here. There were two people whom Herod liked. One was John the Baptist, the fiery prophet.

And the other was this sensuous belly dancer called Salome. He liked to see both of them. Have you seen Christians who like to hear God's word from a fiery preacher on Sunday morning? And then like to watch something sensuous on television on Monday evening? That's Herod.

That is Herod. See that, it says here in verse 20. Herod was afraid of John knowing that he was a righteous and holy man.

And he used to enjoy listening to him. He enjoyed listening to him. Of course, he didn't obey anything that John the Baptist said.

The Lord told Ezekiel that in the Old Testament. He said to Ezekiel, don't be fooled by all these people who come regularly to say, oh, brother Ezekiel is preaching. Let's go and listen to him.

Don't be fooled by all that. You see the crowd sitting there. You're like a man who's just singing a nice song to them and they say, yes, yes.

They nod their heads. They're not going to do us. Ok.

So we were talking about Herod. There are people who like to enjoy fiery preachers, who are not interested in obeying what that fiery preacher says. I mean, it says he was afraid of John the Baptist.

There are people who are afraid of a fiery prophet of God. But that doesn't mean they are spiritual. This is the one verse in the New Testament which says, you can enjoy listening to the most fiery preacher in your generation and you may not be spiritual.

You may be as carnal as Herod. That is the leaven of Herod. You can fool yourself by thinking, oh, I love that preaching.

It doesn't make you spiritual. Because it says, at the same time, when he gave a banquet, verse 21, it says, verse 22, the daughter of Herodias, her name was Salome, came in and danced and Herod was happy with that too. He also enjoyed, he enjoyed John the Baptist and he enjoyed, in the Message Bible it says, she dazzled Herod.

Herod's eyes became wide open when this belly dancer came before. A lot of Christians are like that. They enjoy listening to fiery sermons on Sunday and watching sensuous things through the week.

That's the leaven of Herod. They don't have any standards in their life. and if ever the Holy Spirit tries to convict them, hey, you know, that's not good for you to watch that movie.

Hey, get behind me Satan. That's legalism. I'm supposed to, I'm not a legalist.

I believe in watching movies and everything else. You're calling the conviction of the Holy Spirit, Satan? No, you haven't committed the sin against the Holy Spirit because you're doing it in ignorance. Okay.

You're forgiven. But, just be careful. Just be careful that the devil doesn't fool you with such teaching.

You know, that's the standard answer. You see, these are people at opposite extremes. Here are one group of people who are always picking on rules and rules and rules and rules and hey, this, this, this, what about this verse? What about that verse? Hey, you're not obeying this.

You're not obeying that. And then you have the opposite cliff where people just do what they like and anything they don't like, it's all legalism. Fine.

What is going to be the result? You're going to be more dazzled by the Salomis than by the powerful, prophetic preaching of John. And you know what happened to Herod? You read that he wanted to see Jesus once. He was, he's not only, John the Baptist, he was excited when he heard that he's going to get an opportunity to see Jesus.

See Luke chapter 23. That's another thing we see over here. Luke's gospel chapter 23.

It says here in Luke's gospel chapter 23 when Pilate, when Jesus was brought before Pilate for judgment and they said he's stirring up trouble and Pilate said, oh, he's a Galilean. You know, Pilate was the type of person who didn't want to take responsibility. He knew that Jesus was righteous and the Pharisees just

brought him up because of jealousy.

So he said, if he's a Galilean, I'm going to wash my hands of him. Send him to Herod because Galilean is under Herod's jurisdiction. It's not mine.

So it says here, in verse 6 and 7 of Luke 23 when Pilate realized he was a Galilean, he said that comes under Herod's jurisdiction so he passed the buck to Herod. And Herod happened to be in Jerusalem for a few days at that time. He said, this is great.

Herod is here. Let me pass the buck to him. And then it says in the next verse, verse 8, Herod was delighted when Jesus showed up because he had wanted for a long time to see him.

Now when you think that a person's been waiting a long time to see Jesus, like Simeon, the old prophet in the temple who waited almost all his life to see the baby Jesus, you think Herod is in the same category because he also waited a long time to see Jesus but his intentions were entirely different. Because he wanted, he'd heard so much about him and he said, I heard there's a magician around in town who does all types of tricks and I'd like to see some of these tricks. Don't we all like to go and see magicians doing little tricks on the stage? And he thought of Jesus like some magician and he said, I hope I can see him do something spectacular.

And it says he peppered him with questions but Jesus did not answer one word. You know what Jesus' silence meant? You think I'm going to speak to you who got convicted in your heart by the preaching of my forerunner John the Baptist and you just chopped off his head to please a bunch of sensuous, sex-hungry followers of yours? I will not answer you. And Herod got furious.

He was mightily offended it says. And he turned on Jesus and he got all his soldiers joined in they taunted him and jeered him and dressed him up like a king and made fun of him because he was angry that this man wouldn't dare, wouldn't even bother to reply to him. Oh, I love Jesus.

The dignity there was in Jesus. He couldn't care less whether this man was going to chop off his head as well. He knew that his father controlled everything including Herod.

I want to show you something else about Herod in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 12. See, this is the leaven of Herod. You got a little glimpse of it as you see.

Excited by God's Word and excited by filthy movies at the same time. Beware of it. Beware of it.

Don't think just because you are temporarily excited on Sunday with God's Word and then that that excuses all the other sensuousness of the rest of the week. The type of books you read, the type of thoughts you indulge in, they can't be excused just because you like to listen to John the Baptist on Sunday morning. Oh, that doesn't excuse anything.

So we read in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 12 that there was some problem there between two groups of people in Tyre and Sidon. You read about it in verse 20 onwards. And so they got friendly with the king's right hand man called Blastus and asked him to put in a good word for them.

They got a delegation together to iron things out because they needed food from Judea. So they couldn't afford to let this problem go on for long. So one day they arranged for a meeting and Herod robed in his pomposity, took his place on the throne and regaled them.

I like this paraphrase. He regaled them with a lot of hot air. He regaled them with a lot of hot air.

You know, empty words. And the people, they played their part. You know, these people from Tyre and Sidon, they'd be told, listen, whatever he says, he's a dumb guy, he's going to say all types of stupid things, but just say, hey, this is the voice of a God.

They'd be trained. And the people heard all these stupid things. They'd say, ah, this is the voice of God.

We've never heard anything like this. And that was the last straw. God had had enough of Herod's arrogance and sent an angel to strike him down right there.

Herod did not give God credit for anything in his life. The mark of the leaven of Herod. We don't humbly acknowledge that everything we have is from God.

Our intelligence is from God. If you have spirituality, it's from God. You don't boast about it.

Your Bible knowledge is from God. Your gifts of the Holy Spirit are from God. Your preaching ability is from God.

If you've done well and successful in business or in your profession, that was God. The money you earned is not your money. It's what God enabled you to earn.

That's giving credit to God. For everything. Lord, this is not mine.

This is not mine. Everything is Yours. He wasn't a humble man.

People who got the leaven of Herod are not humble. And because he didn't give God credit for anything, down he went. Rotten to the core.

A maggoty old man, if ever there was one. The maggots began to eat him. And he died.

Don't be a maggoty old man or a maggoty old woman. You know, I've had the rare privilege sometimes of seeing some of God's sweetest saints, 80 years old, 85 years old, serving God from the time they were 15, 20, sweet, gracious, godly, humble, separated from the world and living for God. And I said, Lord, I want to be like that when I'm an old man.

Kind, gracious, never complaining about anything. And then I've seen other people who are grumpy, sour, demanding when they're in hospital, they curse the nurses, they want this, they want that. Boy, that's another type of warning.

Lord, please don't ever let me grow old like that. Watch it. Look around you at the older people.

You see two types. There are very few of the godly type. And if you want to be that godly type, make sure you're a sweet person today.

That you grow into it. You know, as we grow older, some of our ability to control ourselves goes. You know how people get sick and they can't control their bladder.

And they have to have bags and things like that because they can't control their bladder. There are other things we can't control. We can't control many things which we can control when we're 20, 30.

It comes out. Words come out of our mouth which we can't control, which we could control earlier. And I'll tell you that, when you get old, if you have not cleansed your heart a lot of things are going to come out of your mouth which will show what you really were like all the time.

All that worldliness and filth and sensuousness. I mean, I know one brother who told me about an 80 year old man who was still having a trouble with the lust of his eyes. I mean, one would think that by the time he's 80, even natural desire has died out.

But he's stoked with the flames of passion. He wants to watch all this filthy stuff in movies to provoke his passion. How is he like that when he was 80? I don't know, 80 or 85.

And he admitted it. That's because he was not careful when he was 25. He was not careful when he was 35.

He was not careful when he was 45. He was not careful when he was 55. You go on like that, like that.

I'll tell you when you're 85, you won't be able to control it. You'll just be a lustful, filthy, old sex maniac. Because in the days when God gave you the power to control it and you didn't seek Him for the power of the Holy Spirit, you just let go.

There are people like that who get angry, who are sour and critical. Yeah, many of them may realize it later. Some of them may realize, some don't, but this critical, grumpy spirit.

Watch it. Worldliness. Be careful that you are not one of those who loves to listen to God's prophets on Sunday and becomes sensuous watching Salome the rest of the week and seeking glory for yourself.

You'll become a maggoty old man or woman. The third. The third is the 11 of the Sadducees.

Now the Sadducees were the people who didn't believe in miracles. Jesus spoke, we read about them in Matthew chapter 22. They didn't believe in the resurrection.

And they say there is no resurrection. And we also read in another passage, they didn't believe in angels and spirits and all that. In other words, these are the Christians who don't believe in miracles.

You know, the day of miracles is over, they say. Well, God doesn't do miracles today. That was all in the first century.

It's all over. Speaking in tongues, that was way in the first century. It's not today.

God doesn't do miracles today. There are lots of believers like that. I mean, they are not legalists.

They are not worldly. They are good Christians who come to Sunday morning and listen to God's Word. But when they have a problem, they don't have a God who can help them solve that problem.

They only wonder whether there is a human being who can help them. Is there a doctor who can help me perhaps? Is there an influential politician or police officer who can help me solve this problem? But God, God doesn't help people in any way these days. That's the leaven of the Sadducees.

No belief in miracles. They don't believe in angels, spirits. Anybody talks about some mighty thing God did, they take it with a pinch of salt.

You've got explanations for that. Christians like that. You know, all types of funny things they say.

I've heard people say, how did Jesus feed the 5,000? Well, somebody said, it's not the ordinary size loaves that we see these days. You know, when he speaks about 5 loaves, it doesn't tell us the size of the loaves. Oh, I see.

That's how he fed the 5,000. Can you imagine this little boy carrying this huge loaves, massive fish. I mean, anything to explain away the miracles.

And there's another explanation for that. Somebody said, well, you know, when all these selfish miserly 5,000 people saw this little boy unselfishly opening his packet, they took out their secret packets from there. They all had secret packets.

And that's how they were all fed. Don't be a person who doesn't believe in miracles. I believe there are things in your life that God could have solved perhaps, if you have trusted him a little more.

This 11. You know, you gradually hear, nothing happens, nothing happens, God doesn't do anything, God doesn't do anything. And gradually, you begin to feel that, well, we got to just take, watch out for ourselves.

There isn't anybody else watching out for us. I tell you, there is a God in heaven who never slumbers or sleeps. I thank God for that.

I thank God for the angels who protect me when I'm on the roads, especially the roads of Bangalore. I thank God. Multiple angels, not just one.

I mean, as the traffic increases, I think more angels are required on the streets in Bangalore than in the villages. Sure. To keep that other car and get that fellow to brake, because otherwise you'll have a collision.

Oh, it's happened to me numerous times. I believe in miracles. I remember when my children were growing up in our home and there would be problems, physical problems, school problems.

Boy, I said, God can solve that problem. My wife and I would kneel down and we've always done it. Whenever we've had a... Whenever our children had a problem or a sickness, if they were ever sick, I'd lay my hands on them and say, in Jesus' name, they've got to be healed.

Not because I'm not a healer, I don't have any healing gift, but I'm a father. And you're fathers. God tells you to lay your hand on your child and pray for that child in the name of Jesus that that problem will be solved.

Do you think God gives sicknesses to people? I ask this question. Which father will give sickness to his children? I've never met a father like that. I say, can you say that at least God is a better father than you? Don't ever say when a sickness comes to you, it's from God.

There can be other causes, but it's not from God. It's because we live in a sin-cursed earth. It's probably from the devil.

But whatever it is, it's not from God. And so, therefore, I've got God on my side against it. That's the thing that encourages me.

We keep praying. Are you facing a difficult problem? Don't have the leaven of the Sadducees in you that says, Oh, what's going to happen? Poor me. What do you mean poor me? Have you got a father in heaven? Or not? I love that story of the two little birds.

You've often heard me say it. One bird telling the other, Why are these human beings always so worried with their brow furrowed like that, anxious? Birds are watching us, you know. And the other bird says, Well, I think probably they don't have a heavenly father like you and I have.

That's why we can sing and we're happy. They can sing and they're happy because have you ever seen a bird going around like this? Particularly the larks and the nightingales, they sing. They wake you up in the morning sometimes with these sweet little songs.

They're happy. They don't know where they get the food from for the day. They don't have a bank account, but they're happy because they've got a father in heaven who cares for them.

What about you and me? Aren't we better than the birds? God is a God who does miracles. There's a resurrection. I believe in a resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked.

That's why I want to live a holy life. Paul said, I have hope that there will be a resurrection of the wicked and the righteous. Therefore I keep my conscience clear.

I'll show you that verse in closing. Acts of the Apostles. Chapter 23 Sorry, 22.

Sorry, 24. Right. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 24.

In verse 15 and 16. I have a hope which these people also cherish. There will certainly be, verse 15 of Acts 24.

There will certainly be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Sadducees didn't believe that. Now, if you say you believe that, therefore, I do my best to keep my conscience absolutely clear before God and before men.

If I hurt somebody, I go and immediately ask an apology. You ask me why? Because I believe there's going to be a resurrection of the righteous. I want to be in that crowd.

That's why I'm apologizing right now. When husbands and wives have problems, I ask them one question. I've asked some of you that question.

Does your wife ever apologize to you? Does your husband ever apologize to you? Okay, mistakes all of us do. But do they ever apologize? And sadly, in many cases, the answer is yes. They sometimes feel sorry and they ask forgiveness.

But sadly, sometimes the answer is no, brother. I have never once heard her saying I'm sorry. That was my mistake.

Please forgive me. I say, like the doctors say, call the relatives. Inform everybody.

There's no hope. There's no hope. Well, you don't have to be like that.

You don't have to be like that. God can do a wonderful work in you. Believe in the resurrection.

There's going to be a resurrection. Keep your conscience clear. Believe that God can do a miracle for you.

Don't let this leaven of unbelief spread and destroy your life. Shall we bow our heads for a moment? Think of the things that Jesus told us to beware of. Your particular problem may be one of these three areas and not all three.

And whichever thing God has spoken to you about, very often we think, oh, that's not my problem. Maybe it isn't. But maybe the other two are your problem.

You need to identify the leaven which is in your life. You don't have to worry about the leaven in somebody else's life. Leave them to God.

God is able to deal with them. Find out what's the leaven in your life. And deal with that.

Say, Lord, I don't want any of these three leavens in my life. Heavenly Father, help us each one. In Jesus' name.

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