

and celebrity worship leaders. The performance is as diverse and as varied as all the individual, self exalting actors, who star in their own church plays.

John 15:13

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

It is true love to die to self so that Christ can live in you, through you. In its most simplified state this is true Christianity. This is the greatest expression of love. It requires you to die to self. To lay down your life, your old man, your sin nature, what the Bible calls your flesh and allow Christ to dwell and reign in your heart by the Holy Spirit. It requires you to live for Christ. To daily obey the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and daily do the will of the Father from your heart. This is what is meant by the expression, *the preaching of the cross*. To those who love self, pride, religion, the lie, the act, the leaven of the Pharisees, this is foolishness. This is why this message is rejected by false Christians and false Christianity. The prideful, self exalting actors, think it is foolishness.

NOTES:

1 Corinthians 1:18

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, (**the preaching of the cross**) but according to their own desires, because they have **itching ears**, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to **fables**.

Greek (*knethomai*) - translated - **Itching Ears** - Ears which have to be continually scratched or titillated with novelties, tickled or **entertained**.

Greek (*mýthos*) - translated - **fables** - A myth; a false account, yet posing to be the truth; a fabrication (fable) which subverts (replaces) what is actually true; fiction, story telling.

The very definition of entertainment.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

by Ron Brick

In Matthew 23, Jesus rebukes the religious leaders of His day. He speaks to the Sadducees and Pharisees. Seven times in the chapter, He calls them hypocrites.

Matthew 23:25

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and **self-indulgence**.

The Greek word Jesus uses, that is translated here, Hypocrite, means **actor**.

Greek - **hypokrit** - a stage actor, one who pretends to be what he is not.

The Pharisees were hypocrites, they were actors. The sin of hypocrisy would become the scourge of the Christian church. It would prove to become such an effectual attack against Christianity, that in the gospels, Christ warns against it on two separate occasions. First with a scathing denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 and on another occasion, with a direct warning to His disciples.

Luke 12:1

12 He (Jesus) began to say to His disciples first of all, "**Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy**."

Now, leaven is yeast. When added to dough it spreads through the dough and causes it to puff up and rise. Both Christ and Paul use this characteristic of leaven to denote the nature of sin which likewise spreads and puffs with pride. It

is also used by Christ to illustrate how the kingdom of heaven would grow or spread with the preaching of the gospel.

Matthew 13:33

33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

Paul uses the illustration of leaven to teach how a little sin holds the potential to spread through the whole congregation, the church and the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 5:5-8

6 Your glorying is not good. **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the **unleavened bread of sincerity and truth**.

The Jews were commanded by God to celebrate the Passover feast with unleavened bread. Paul tells us the reason here. It is the unleavened bread of truth. It is a picture of Christ, the bread of life without sin, without the lie. So when Christ is warning His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees, He is saying beware of the sin or lie of the Pharisees. Their sin, the sin of the lie, which is hypocrisy, has the potential to spread throughout the church, and poison the kingdom of God.

Why is hypocrisy the bane of the Christian church? It is because as soon as the Christian turns back from the cross of obedience to the Spirit of God, walking in the Spirit, he or she becomes a liar, an actor, a hypocrite. When the church loses obedience to the call to die to the flesh, the church becomes flesh. The church becomes leavened. The true church becomes a false church. It becomes an act and all the participants actors in a play. The church becomes entertaining theatre. When the Spirit of God first began to show me this, He used the phrase, **“playing church”**. The Christian who turns back from the cross of obedience is given to the leaven of the Pharisees. Once the Christian is no longer walking in the truth of the cross, but still wants to be seen as a Christian, he or she is forced to pretend. They start playing church. True Christianity can only be fuelled by self sacrifice and that sacrifice, in order to be the kind of sacrifice that reflects the perfect obedience of Christ, must result from obedience to the Spirit of God. It was obedience to the Father’s will that produced the perfect sacrifice of Christ. This same kind of sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ and His obedience, is reflected through the Christian, as the Christian obeys the Father’s will revealed by the Spirit of God. It is this kind of sacrifice that forges a true faith agreement with the cross and it is this kind of sacrifice that produces true Christianity. The true is always fuelled by the cross of the Father’s will. Sacrifice done out of religious observance or spiritual pride is just more show and hypocrisy. It profits nothing. When the cross of obedience to the Spirit stops, then the true stops, hypocrisy sets in and the leaven of the pharisees takes over. This is true for individual Christians, for congregations and whole denominations. Stop preaching the cross and the true stops and the acting lie begins.

Christ is the bread that came down

from heaven. He is unleavened bread, He is sinless bread; the bread of truth and life.

John 14:6

*6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, **the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**”*

The church is called by God to follow Christ and also become bread to the lost. We do this by dying to self. By taking up the cross of obedience and following the commands of the Spirit of Christ. When the disciple of Christ receives the emblems of Christ, the unleavened bread, His body and the wine, His blood, he or she is saying that through obedience they are willing to fellowship with His death in order to displace self with the nature and life of Christ. The **“Christ one”** who receives the emblems is receiving Christ, His nature, His life and His ministry to feed the lost with Him, the bread of life. Through obedience to the Spirit they will die to their own lives, plans, dreams and ambitions and do the will of the Father from the heart as Christ did. Christ celebrated the Passover, the last supper, with his disciples using unleavened bread. He asked His disciples to, **“take this bread”**, without hypocrisy and join him in the experience of the cross. They are called to die with Him in order to be raised with Him and live anew by Him in the power of the Spirit of God. To live to do the Father’s will on earth. This is true Christianity. A Christianity without the dying of the man of sin, the old man of pride, disobedience and rebellion, without the cross, without the preaching of the cross, becomes a heartless Christianity. It is a shell without the guts inside. It is a form of godliness without the power. (The power is the resurrection life that is continually fuelled by the continual death. *Death is swallowed up in victory.*) Paul warned of

the dangers of an outward show or form of Christianity, without the substance of the cross, when he said.

2 Timothy 3:5

*5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. **And from such people turn away!***

Losing the core of Christianity was such a dire prospect to Paul, that he warns us to turn away from Christians who have a form, a show, an act, but lack the power or the real. Paul knew the potential for this hypocrisy leaven to spread. Actors that have an outward appearance of the real, but lack the guts of the thing, should be rejected and turned away from. Paul says that, **“it is the preaching of the cross that is the power of God unto salvation”**. When the cross stops, the act begins. The false church rises, the actors rise and take centre stage in the theatre of the religious. When the preaching of the cross stops the great lie begins.

Satan is the father of lies. When the church lies by dismissing the cross, the preaching of the cross, the welcome mat is laid out for Satan to intrude into the holy place. The front door is swung wide open to the spirit of the hypocrite and the master deceiver comes into the house of God to play church. He is given centre stage and permission to start the entertainment. The Church begins to turn into theatre and the performance arts take over. Everyone joins in. The leaders begin to wear religious costumes and the laity are encouraged to follow. The truth is sacrificed to the lie and a religious demon is given full sway.

When we give up the simplicity of just dying to self to live for Christ, embracing the cross and its message,

something else comes in to substitute. That substitution is the leaven of the Pharisees, a false Christianity, a put on, a play. Void of the cross Christians are not real Christians so they feel the need to put on an act. They pretend because real Christianity is only revealed when Christ, the true, the real, is allowed to live through the Christian.

2 Corinthians 4:7

*7 But we have **this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.***

Romans 8:10

*10 **And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***

Colossians 1:27

*27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

The Christian is called to die to self, the sin nature. To get out of the way by yielding to the Spirit of Christ. To let Christ be in charge; be the boss, take over. This is a death sentence to self, the sin nature, pride and the leaven of the Pharisees. Most hate this message, this cross, this call to death, so very few are true Christians. Many who start out true end up turning back from this narrow way, they turn back from the cross and end up becoming actors trying to act like Christians. Where this acting lie is told, Satan has legal right to dwell. If Christ is the truth, Satan is the lie. It is this lie, this act, this spirit of performance that has produced clerical collars, robes, traditional denominational dress codes, and in more recent history, with the influence of mass media and the entertainment industry, celebrity pastors