

April 12, 2019

Warm hellos dear brethren, and spiritual family here on the Gulf Coast, and scattered children of God.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Spiritual Inflammation

We'll soon be observing the Passover Memorial Service and spring Feast Days of Unleavened Bread. I pray you will all have a reflective, meditative and inspiring observance and celebration of these upcoming days.

Will you discover any leavened food that you had missed before the Feast and have to throw out after the Feast begins? Perhaps you'll find it after the days are complete? This will only be part of the lesson of these days.

A visiting elder and his wife once stayed in our home in North Carolina during our absence as we traveled outside the U.S. They relayed to us, "that a case of bottled pure water in our home, upon examination while drinking, contained sodium bicarbonate!" Yes, in water? Who would have thought?

Over the years, I have sometimes, but not always, found leaven or leavened food during these days in my home. But there is something that falls in the realm of "leaven" or malice and provocation that I would like to get rid of - the pain in my knee and back due to injury when I was younger, and subsequent surgery. It results in inflammation of the muscle, joint and tendons - It is very painful! The knee swells up and becomes inflamed from the inside out. Simple tasks like walking up and down stairs become difficult. The pain makes my attitude, well, less than what Christ would expect of me.

Carrying luggage while traveling is a chore! This is why I often sit down after a sermon message, and talk and fellowship with brethren from a chair.

More importantly, though, it reminds me that there are conditions that can beset us *spiritually* and cause spiritual pain, inflammation and discomfort.

We humans can give in to behaviors, words and attitudes that can inflame and cause pain in our own lives and within our relationships. When anger builds up, that can lead to irrational acts and hurtful words that cause pain to others and ourselves that are not easily healed. What is that saying, "once you've thrown the rock, you can't un-throw it!"

Anger seems to often be a problem with men. Women can also display hurtful anger. "Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman." (Proverbs 21:19) This could be applied both ways. Anger and wrath are several "brands" of *spiritual leavening* that we are

to remove. "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." (Colossians 3:8)

When we perceive that unhealthy wrath and anger have made their appearance in our minds and emotions, we need to take action to keep them under check. Repentance is vital. "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26)

The instruction encourages us to defuse the anger before we act on it and before it inflames us. If I sense my knee is going to begin swelling, and pain is coming on, I can usually defuse it by taking a small amount of Ibuprofen. But if I don't heed the symptoms and let it get a foothold, then I will suffer for many days and sometimes weeks. In other words, I need to address it immediately.

The examination prior to and during the Passover and Days Unleavened Bread is critically important. Are we "puffed up"? Are we inflamed? Do we become quickly angry?

Our human condition with a Romans 8:7 nature makes us vulnerable to being provoked and inflamed. The apostle Paul wrote several letters to the congregation at Corinth.

They had allowed pride and carnality to become embedded in the congregation and Paul likened it to leaven. "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? vs 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. vs 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness . . ." (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Paul asked them to search out the infectious malice and ill will and get rid of it and put it away. We are to mortify the deeds of the flesh.

Paul also wrote a second letter of encouragement and instruction. He warned the congregation of false apostles who sought to infect and stir up the congregation with the leavening of deception and false teaching. To ignore this fact and think that this is not around us today would be foolish.

He was concerned that when he came personally to the congregation next time that he would find more carnal and hurtful behaviors. "For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults" (2 Corinthians 12:20).

Paul concluded this multi-faceted letter with encouragement and good will. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Corinthians 13:11). Allowing Christ to live IN us is the healer of that spiritual inflammation.

Yes, the only true source of healing is God's Holy Spirit and His Holy word. That's the part that we see really allows us to change! Eating of that unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Let us continue to receive that special healing during these upcoming days of the Unleavened Bread and after, and not allow anger and contentions to cause injurious "spiritual" inflammation.

Again, may God continue to richly bless you. Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily! Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott and Gayle Hoefker (The Living God Ministries Gulf Coast)

The schedule for this week's Sabbath are:

April 12 - Praises Gifts and Prayers to welcome God's Sabbath 7:00 pm (via Telephone with Stephen Glover in Montgomery)

April 13 - Spirit and Truth Worship 10:15 am, with no local services held in Spanish Fort. (All are welcome and encouraged to connect live via our normal phone conference from Montgomery).

April 13 - Sabbath Fellowship (interactive Bible Study) 4:00 pm from Montgomery (connect live all others via telephone conference).

Upcoming dates for LGM Gulf Coast:

Passover-April 18, **7:30 pm** Spanish Fort @ Hoefker's, and in Montgomery.

NTBMO – April 19, **7:00 pm** @ Hoefker's Home in Spanish Fort.

UB-1 – April 20, **10:15 am** Worship Services @ Hoefker's in Spanish Fort, Noon Meal at 12:30 pm, Almond Branch Evangelism (Bible Study) 2:00 pm,(connect from Montgomery), Family style potluck meal @ Hoefker's 5:00 pm.

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