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Presentation Transcript
Salvation Plan - The Holy Days – Part 1 – Living Unleavened
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We're starting a new series today. It's called *Salvation Plan – The Holy Days, Part 1*. Our topic today is *Living Unleavened*.

In ancient times, the children of Israel escaped from Egypt by night, running for their lives. They didn't have time to let the dough rise in their bread, so they made and ate it in haste and they baked flat bread, without the usual leavening – *unleavened bread*. You can buy unleavened bread in the stores today. A real example of that would be Triscuits. Later, during the spring holy day season, after they had come out of Egypt, God told them to keep a festival for seven days, and that they should eat only unleavened bread, made of the spring harvest grain to remind them of their flight from Egypt, by which their Savior – God – had saved them from Egyptian slavery.

Now, Paul, in the New Testament, shows us that the church was still observing this festival twenty to fifty years after Christ died. So, why don't we do it today? Well, some of us do. And we all should. And we all will when Christ returns.

But let's be reminded of something Paul said. He tells us that when God delivered Israel from Egypt, that was a picture – a shadow – of something to come. We know that because Egypt had killed thousands – maybe millions – of Israelite babies by drowning them in the Nile. God told Moses He was going to kill the firstborn of every human and every animal in Egypt in one night. God is a God of justice! We think we can get away with things, but it all comes back to roost if we don't follow what God tells us to do.

Now, if the Israelites wanted to escape the same fate as the Egyptians, they had to kill and roast a lamb that evening, and then paint the lamb's blood on their doorposts to be protected. And Paul tells us the lamb pictured Christ and the lamb's blood represented covering our sins and protecting us from eternal death. So, there Jesus Christ and His sacrifice are all over this festival.

You believe in those things, don't you? Why don't you keep that day? Not judging, just asking the question.

We see John the Baptist's statement: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." He understood it. So, Paul takes it a step further in 1 Corinthians 5, adding to the shadow – or picture – by explaining what unleavened bread pictures today. 1 Corinthians 5:6 – he says to the church there in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 – *Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For also Christ our Passover Lamb is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast; not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

So, unleavened bread pictured Israel being delivered from Egypt, but for us, putting leavening out of our homes, which is what we do on the day of Passover, pictures being free from death by Christ's sacrifice. Leavening is a picture of sin. And unleavened bread is our life in Christ.

Now, it's true that once we put it out of our homes, we have to be careful not to let it come back in during the festival. And that's true of our lives as well. Once we make our commitment to God, we have to try our best to stay on that path.

Notice that Paul says that we really are unleavened. That means we really are in a sin-free state. Now, is there anybody here that thinks they never commit any sin? Well, I have a secret for you. We *all* do. Some of us might not know about some of them. In fact, I don't think anybody knows all the sins we commit. But, when God looks at us, and then looks at our name in the book of life, he sees no sins recorded against us. We have a clean record.

So, this festival is not about putting the sin out of our lives. We did that metaphorically before the festival started. It's about living in a sin-free state – something that's impossible for us to do, except for one thing. And that is, once we repent of living a sinful life, and commit to becoming like Christ, our past sins are expunged from the books, and before God, we are living in a sinless state.

So, let's take note. Paul, once a Pharisee, who kept Unleavened Bread to picture coming out of Egypt, understood for him, now as a Christian, putting leavening out of his home pictured living in grace by Jesus Christ. So, this festival, according to Paul is a Christian festival if there ever was one!

I hope to take you into the meaning of living sin-free in a more complete way today, understanding what it really means to live in a state of grace and what that state does for us and for God.

To understand this better, let's compare the difference in keeping the law in the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament, if a person committed a sin under the Old Covenant, to be acceptable before God, they had to make a sacrifice – an offering. There were all kinds of them – food offerings, wine, animal sacrifices. If a person committed a serious crime, to be right in the community and with God, it took a really big offering. It was an expensive – prohibitive so, in some cases. So, under that covenant then, if you were careless, your prize bull – if you killed somebody, for example, to be right with the system, you had to give your wealth to get right. As long as you did that, there was nothing about one's attitude that was needed. Now, there were ten bullet points – behaviors – to either keep or avoid – the Ten Commandments – and fines to be paid for violating them. God told people he was more interested in their attitude than the fines they might pay. When it came down to it, if you paid the fine that was required by the sacrifice, you were free from the penalty of the law for breaking it. We have laws like that today.

I had a good friend once, who had a big BMW road bike. And he had joined a local bike club and would go on long rides with them in the summertime. One day, while we were having lunch, we were talking about Taos, New Mexico. I had just moved to that state and had been there. And my friend said, "Did I tell you about the big ticket?" And I said, "No, tell me. He said he was on a long stretch of rolling hills before coming into Taos from the south. If you live in that area, you may be familiar with that. He said it was such a nice day and he felt so free, he was letting it out a little bit. He came over a rise and there was a local police car on the right. And he radar detector on his bike went off immediately and the police car lights came on before he even passed the officer. So, he pulled in behind the police car, actually. I said, "How fast was the speed limit?" He said, "45." And I said, "And you were going...?" And he said, "130." Now, in New Mexico, that means jail automatically. But the officer, after learning that my friend was not, at least, a criminal – was not a drunk or high – had a legal license and insurance and a spotless driving record, presented himself as respectful and apologetic, reduced the speed on the ticket below 135 to just under the "go directly to jail, do not pass go, do not collect \$200" number. So, he did not have to go to jail – strictly out of the mercy of the officer. It still left him a fine of hundreds of dollars. And this fine, though it was not about poor judgment, and in an Old Testament sort of way, was only about exceeding the speed limit, it still made quite an impression on my friend. I asked him what he learned. And he told me in all sincerity that he would, from now on, always go the speed limit when cresting a hill. So, it was an Old Testament kind of approach to the law of God by the people of Israel.

Now, under the New Testament, God is taking a completely different approach. He hasn't done away with His laws. Jesus specifically said in Matthew 5, that He did *not* come to do away with the law, and that not one dotting of an I or crossing of a t would be removed from the law until all is fulfilled. Well, *all* hasn't been fulfilled yet. So, now it's not good enough to simply avoid killing someone – such as in the Ten Commandments. To keep the law, we must also avoid hating a person or people. There is no longer any room for racial, cultural, religious, political social animosity. And not only that, but to hope the best for even those who have mistreated us,

and pray for them, and do good for them. This same approach – this letter of the law is not good enough anymore, but now it's the spirit of it – the full intent of it – this same approach is taken with all Ten Commandments. In fact, Jesus said the whole point of us keeping the law was to help us learn how to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves – the first four Commandments about how to love God, and the last six are about how to show love to our neighbor. This kind of approach makes it impossible for us to obey His law completely.

So, what does God want of us? If it is impossible for us to obey the law in the spirit, what's the point of trying. And I know you're all going to say, "Well, we're now under grace. Our sins are covered. We covered by Christ's sacrifice." And that's true, and that is probably the most astounding gift of all. One Passover, Jesus Christ sacrificed His life. He took all our sins on Himself and paid the death penalty in our place. Without that, everything would be completely futile. There's be no way out. Perhaps the greatest, most far reaching act ever done by a human being. And this festival pictures living in that state of grace sin-free. But that's not all the benefits we're offered. There's more besides forgiveness. Now, forgiveness of our sins is the greatest gift. There are other benefits we can look into at this festival. It's about living in a sin-free state.

In the current state of grace, we're offered amazing things! They're so big our feeble minds can barely receive them. God can say it over and over and we still don't get it. And the relief is so great – the realization of God's love for us is so profound – when we look at these gifts, it's hard to take it in. So, what is that bonus that we're offered if we commit to living in a state of grace – the state where we want to obey God because we love Him and want to be like him every day? Well, let's look at some of the changes that come to us once we become a part of God's church and we're forgiven of our sins. We're told that we can love God with all our hearts – if God's Spirit is in us to do that – we can love our neighbor as ourselves without fighting back. We no longer have to judge other people. We don't have to worry. We have the capability of trusting God. We can live by the beatitudes. We can seek first the Kingdom, and then all essentials are going to be provided for us without us having to just plod along under a heavy burden. We know that if we stand up for God, God is going to stand up for us. So, these are always seen as things we have to do. They're not gifts – they're burdensome. But you know what these things are? These things are the way we live and function once we're resurrected. They are the values of God's Kingdom. And Jesus is offering them to us now, as a part of His church.

Notice what it says in Hebrews 10:16:

Hebrews 10:16-18 – *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord; I will put My Laws into their hearts, and write them in their minds. Not going to be a struggle. And then he adds: "I will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more." We know about that. Wherefore, where there is forgiveness of these, there is no more offering for sin needed.*

So, when Christ walked the earth, He announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand right then. He would write the spirit of the law on their hearts. When Jesus and God the Father come to live in us – by the Holy Spirit – He then begins a lifelong process of change within each of us as He shapes us into the kind of being that Jesus was as a human.

Notice what Paul says in Romans 7:14:

Romans 7:14-17 – *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate. If I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, and that is good. So it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

So, living in a state of grace does not mean that we don't commit sins anymore. It means that we are forgiven of them. But the difference is that we are now struggling to obey God, rather than to just go with the flow of our human nature. Before we're converted, we seek our own will, disregarding the spiritual law. Once God starts writing His laws in our hearts, we gradually no longer want to follow our own will, but God's. See, what I want to do changes from what I want to do to what God wants me to do. Paul continues in verse 18:

V-18-20 – *For I know that nothing good dwells in me – that is, in my flesh....* Now, the word *flesh* is not *body*. It's *sarx*, which is that part of us that is all evil. That wasn't there when God made Adam and Eve, so you can guess where it came from. *For I have a desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.* Let me read that again: *For I have a desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. For if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me.*

So, he's a new person, once he's converted. He doesn't want to do what he used to do. That's not the real him anymore. He's different. That's what comes to us when we're in a state of grace – when we have God's Spirit. We can begin living by the values of God's Kingdom in heaven right now and start receiving the benefits. You know, it is always said that, if you break the law, there are penalties that come along with that. And the whole creation is built that way. If you go along with the love of God in your life, then you're going along with the flow. And if you're going along seeking your own will, you're fighting it every step of the way. It's a hard way to go.

Now, it's not that we still don't have the old person to contend with, but that we are different in what we *want* to do now. We don't want to sin, repent, and go sin some more – like a lot of people who are spiritually immature do.

Here's a real emotional expression of Paul in this same chapter – verse 24 of Romans 7:

V-24-25 – *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? And he*

answers his own question: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So that I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*

So, everything works in God's Kingdom. There's peace, productivity, security, safety, no anxiety, no depression, no war, no enemies, no illness. Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and all of these good things, and the absence of all the bad things, will be added to you.

Now, it's not a new place to live. We still live in this world. But the blinders come off, and we see things God's way gradually. We are offered security in obtaining eternal life. It doesn't have to be a question anymore. As long as we stay faithful to our commitment, and are not entangled in the world and fall away, we're going to make it!

So, there's freedom from the death penalty even when we make mistakes or are weak. And the burden of the law, which is guilt, is removed as God chips away and chisels us into the image of His Son. We don't have to feel guilty any longer. And we can know that God's working on us. What a relief to know that we're not under the law anymore – under the penalty of the law is what that means. We no longer have to worry about our status with God as long as we continue on with Him.

And what does "continue on with Him" mean? It means *trying* to obey His law. Sin is the transgression – or the violation – of the law. So, the way you don't sin is to try to live godly. So, we no longer have to worry about physical issues as we have set our minds on God.

Notice what else he said in Romans 8:6:

Romans 8:6 – *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace* – eternal life and peace.

Jesus made some profound promises that are good for us to think about during Unleavened Bread. Let's go to John 16:33:

John 16:33 – *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.* Oh! John 16 – this is one of the chapters just before He was taken that evening. He's explaining about God's Kingdom to them – their place in it. And He said, *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.* Okay. *In the world you will have tribulation.* So, do we live in the world? Yeah. But are we in Him? Well, as much as we are, then we'll have peace in spite of what's going on around us. And He said: *But take heart; I have overcome the world.* You don't have to worry about it. I've got you covered."

Another things that He said – this is way earlier than where we were just reading. This is in the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It says in Matthew 4:17:

Matthew 4:17 – *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent – make that change – for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It’s right here. I’m with you and I’m bringing the Kingdom of God with Me.*

Now, when He said that, He knew that He wasn’t going to return for another 2,000 plus, probably. But He was saying that He had something for them right then. It was a whole new ballgame. It wasn’t the Old Testament letter anymore. It was a new spiritual thing, where God said He was going to write His laws in our hearts. And that process is going to relieve us of the stressors that we’ve been under before.

Here’s another concrete promise Jesus makes to us. It’s in Matthew 11:28:

Matthew 11:28-30 – *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

So, we look at the world news and we wonder, “Is our burden light?” Or, “Can we find rest for our souls?” Well, yes! In Christ, we can – not in the world, just like He said. Earlier we read that in *Me* you may have peace – in *Me*. In the world, you’ll have tribulation. So, I guess the question is, “Where do you want to be?”

I have an example from my own life – I’ve mentioned this before – but when I was in my late 60s, I started to realize that I hadn’t saved up enough money to retire. Quitting two different church organizations – that kind of messed with my retirement program big time. Not that I regret doing that – and maybe I didn’t start saving soon enough. It seems like I’ve always been late to the party in some things. But it looked like we weren’t going to have enough to retire with any kind of dignity – without being a burden on others. And I was worried about it. I was concerned. One day, after I got out my Bible and I read that scripture in the Old Testament, where God said that He’s going to carry us to our old age, and He’s going to be with us even then. And I read where David said he had never seen a righteous person begging bread. Well, I know that I am righteous only because of Christ’s sacrifice, but I’m still righteous. So, I had to decide: Am I going to continue on and worry about this? Or, am I just going to try to do my best, and try to live my life in a way that is frugal, and try to recover myself from the situation – and maybe, ask God to recover me from it? Well, we’re not completely out of the woods – and I’m not saying this for anybody to feel bad for me. I’m just talking about how God can give us rest. That’s the point. And I don’t worry about that anymore. I try to make plans, but I know that God’s got my back.

There are other areas of life where I haven’t been as successful doing that, so I’m not boasting. I’m just hoping that this can enlighten some of you about what that feels like – to just let go and let God give us rest – to take care of it. He’s overcome the world, and if we take advantage of the things He offers us right now, as part of His Kingdom values, we don’t have to worry about

anything in the long run. We're going to win. We're going to attain salvation. We're going to be able, with Christ's help, to overcome the world and what it throws at us. And we can be at rest.

So, what's our challenge in all this? Do you know what it is? Do you know how to live in that unleavened state, where we're allowing God to take care of us?

Well, there's this story in the Bible about a man named Jairus. His daughter was sick, so he went to find Jesus, hoping Christ would heal her. He believed that He would. And Jesus was going with him to his home to heal the girl – He was willing to do that – and along the way, as he approached his home, he learned that his daughter had died before he could return. So, he had not left in time to save her. In his procrastination, he had failed her. He felt responsible. And Jesus said to him, in his upset, “Do not be afraid. Only believe.” Do not be afraid. Only believe. Those words encapsulate what He wants *us* to do in every circumstance – when we're threatened, or when we're afraid of something, or fearful. Do not be afraid. Only believe.

Only believe in what? Well, that He's our God, that He's overcome the world, that He's going to give us rest, that His Kingdom, for us, is at hand if we have His Spirit. Even Jesus' disciples, after seeing hundreds of healings and other miracles, could not find a way to put away fear, and simply relax and believe. Now, they *did* after He was crucified and resurrected. But while they were with Him, they didn't get a lot of what He was saying to them. At one point, in His frustration, I think He told them, “If you have even the tiniest bit of faith in Me, you could tell a mountain to move, and it would!” He didn't say, “I would move it.” He said, “You could do it, *if* you had even a tiniest bit of faith in Christ.” He told the leper, whom He cleansed, that his faith had made him whole. And the leper had said to Christ, “I know that You can heal me, if it is Your will.” It wasn't that He couldn't heal him. It was that he didn't know if it was His will or not. And once Jesus told him that it was His will, then he was certain God was going to heal him right then, which He did. And so his faith made him whole as well. And that is all we need today to live unleavened. All we have to do is believe and trust God. And amazing things will happen for us – little things, big things, whatever. It's all we need to live in a state of an unleavened life. We can relax. Our load is lifted. Our chains are broken. God has our backs. We're covered. Living an unleavened life is ours, if we'll just reach out and take it.

This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.

Remember, as an adult member of a congregation in the Church of God, you are responsible to help promote peace, safety and inclusiveness in your congregation.

We are a youth advocacy ministry. One of the reasons we made this presentation, beside the fact that is a holy day in which to worship, is to strengthen you in your faith – not just for yourself, but so that you can help all of your congregation's children, who are a vital part of your spiritual family.