

LOVE FOR THE UNSAVED

“Today you will be in Paradise.”

(Luke 23)

Leaven is a piece of old dough put in the bread mixture to make the bread dough rise. You can't see it, but it silently works beneath the surface and you see its results. Jesus knew human nature, even after we are converted, and told the Twelve to **“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees”** (Matthew 16:6).

We readily see modern day Pharisees in members, who talk about loving those outside the church and rejoicing when they are converted, but don't want **“their kind”** in “our church”. When church members hang a “Not Welcome” sign on their hearts, new converts can spot it a mile away. And when that happens, the church should hang a “funeral wreath” on the door.

But Satan is wise and cunning and has other ways to turn us into Pharisees like the older brother. One example, is in our attitude towards those who serve Satan all their lives and “receive” Christ's forgiveness when they are dying - “deathbed conversions”.

A man asked two local politician friends if they would stand by his casket at his funeral, one on one end and one on the other. When they asked why, he said, “I want to die like Jesus died; **between two thieves.**”

Jesus died between two criminals and both of them joined the crowd in mocking Him (Matthew 26). But one of them, when he heard Jesus asking the Father to forgive them (if they asked for it); took Jesus at His word and asked for it. That very day he was with Jesus in heaven.

When I preached this, I called him “The man who found heaven's door at death's door.” One of the “Beatles” asked about his faith, said; “I may think about what happens after death someday, when I am old, but not now”.

There are problems with that. We can **die at any time** and I believe the unhappiest people on Judgment Day, will be those who say of accepting Jesus, “I always meant to do it.” Another problem is that, in my sixty years of preaching, I have **never had a dying person ask me** to tell them how to be right with God.

I have shared the gospel with many dying people who “accepted Christ”; but only God knows if their conversion was real. I have seen people “accept” Christ in crisis situations like this and never follow through and start living for Him.

After I preached on this thief, a lady said it didn't seem “right” or “fair” for him to be allowed into heaven. She said, “He never did anything for the Lord and people like you and me have served him for years.”

That was the older brother's attitude. He saw his work for the Father as “slavery” instead of a “privilege”. I thank God every day for the wonderful life of serving Him, seeing Him make me a better person to my family; seeing Him help others through me; etc. I have told people, I am so ornery and bull-headed that my wife can barely live with me “saved” and there is no way she could have lived with me “lost”.

Which is better - a person coming to Christ when he is eight-years-old or eighty-years-old? Every parent knows it is eight. They don't want to see the hurt Satan can do to their children when they serve him.

A reminder for those who keep “putting off” giving Jesus your sins to forgive and your life to change – You don't know you will see tomorrow and the saddest people who are sent away to be punished for eternity are those who “always meant to get right with God.” Matthew Henry said, “There is one New Testament example of deathbed conversion, so no one must despair, but only one, so no one can presume.”