

**SECOND ANNUAL
APPALACHIAN LECTURESHIP**

AUGUST 5, 1995

THEME:

Wilt Thou Not Revive Us Again

**Held at:
CAMP CREEK CHURCH OF CHRIST
Wendover, Kentucky 41775**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Need To Be Revived	
<i>Jim Hayes & Tommy Watkins</i>	3
Revive Us To Evangelize	
<i>Clifford Reel</i>	8
<i>Paul Vaughn</i>	11
Revive Us To Stand Against False Doctrine	
<i>Larry Cole</i>	15
<i>Jim Day</i>	18
Revive Us To Benevolence	
<i>Eddy Craft & Wesley Simon</i>	21
Revive Us In The Home	
<i>Keith Cozort</i>	28
<i>Charles Huff</i>	32
Revive Morality	
<i>Jerry Brown</i>	37
<i>Clayton Winters</i>	42
Revive Personal Commitment	
<i>Clarence Howard</i>	48

NOTES:

The Need To Be Revived

Jim Hayes & Tommy Watkins

Introduction Isa. 35:1-

It is appropriate that we begin this series of lessons with a look at what it means to be revived. From Webster, we get the following definitions of revive: (a) To **return** to consciousness or life; to become active or flourishing again; (b) To **restore** from a depressed, inactive, or unused state; to bring back; (c) To **renew** in the mind or memory; (d) To **renew** attention to or interest in something.

From the Bible, we have a beautiful word picture painted of what it is to be revived:

(Isaiah 35:1-7) *"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. ²It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. ³Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. ⁷And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes."*

According to this reading, the spiritual life of both the Jews and Gentiles had become a wilderness and a dry land, waste and void, desolate and empty. However, it would be revived to a picture of spiritual beauty and gladness, blossoming and

thriving with joy and singing. The advent of a savior would generate a spiritual awakening that would result in such restoration of vitality. This renewal is followed by an exhortation to strengthen the weak hands and to make firm the feeble knees. Weak hands and feeble knees are symbols of unbelief and defeat, but now, in God and in the new vibrant life He bestows, is to be found the strength needed for victory and triumph. There are now a new relationship and responsibility. Each individual must encourage his fellows (verse 4). We have here one of Isaiah's trios—the hands, the knees, the heart. The heart is the workshop in which all our deeds are fashioned. The heart must be bold and courageous, fearless, and strong if the hands are to be strengthened and the knees made firm. At the time of this spiritual renewal, the spiritually lame will leap as a hart, a strong male deer, the tongue of the speechless will sing, all the people will be changed as they are transferred from a desolate wilderness to a luxuriant garden, reviving life and transforming character.

This is a picture in contrast. A dry, deserted, desolate wilderness transformed into a lush garden with majestic cedars, beautiful flowers, bubbling springs, and crystal clear waters. This is more a description that will be fulfilled in the spiritual world as we can see if we read on in the rest of the verses of this chapter. Still, it presents us with the wonderful picture of one who was spiritually desolate but now is revived, who was formerly dead but now is thriving.



THE WORLD NEEDS TO BE REVIVED

Is this a picture of the world today? Are we living in a world that has become a dry and desolate wilderness? I think if we look about us we would have to answer a resounding yes, the world needs to be revived today. Immorality, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, drug abuse, child molestations, abortions, murders, euthanasia, hatred, envy, strife, profanity, immodesty, pornography, lasciviousness all abound in our communities and in our nation today. As horrible as this list of sins is, some of them are LEGAL! I will not cover them in

depth because Brother Brown and Brother Winters have the topic "Revive Morality" and I am sure they will do an apt job presenting this issue. However, it is necessary to note a few things to show just how great is the need to be revived in our world today.

In 1993, California signed an order for an amendment to the state constitution protecting homosexual "rights." This legislation was passed after a riot in San Francisco which demanded such a law. One state succumbed to pressure from a group of criminals insisting their lifestyle be accepted and protected. This group comprises only 1.4% of America's population, yet they commit over half the child molestations in our country, have killed 68% of the victims of mass murders, have an average of 50 different sexual partners per year, and 90% of them enjoy inflicting or receiving pain. This is the group of criminals that dictated a legislation for defense of their "lifestyle" in California. Does the world we live in need to be revived to spiritual life?

Pornography is more popular in our society than is McDonalds. There are said to be at least 15,000 adult bookstores in America which is reported to be three times more than the number of McDonalds restaurants. There are approximately 20 million pornographic magazines circulated each month, dial-a-porn is readily available to one and all, pornographic movies and comic books are displayed, even computer pornography is now available.

Profanity is rampant on television shows, video movies, and in the theaters. Bob Hope is quoted as saying, "With today's movies, if we took out all the bad language, we'd go back to silent films." Filthy, vulgar language is used to ATTRACT viewers. What does this tell us about our society. A spiritual revival is greatly needed!

When a nation of supposedly God-fearing people legalize murder in the form of killing innocent babies before they are born, then we know that something is dreadfully wrong. Intelligent, educated people can see nothing wrong with this termination of life. It is a woman's choice. Brethren, Yes, our country needs to be revived!

II

THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE REVIVED

1. What about the church today? Does it need to be revived to spiritual life. Are we like the churches in Asia who suffered various problems between them. Are we like the church at Ephesus who had "*left thy first love*" (Revelation 2:4). We may be able to align ourselves with the church at Laodicea whom the Lord described by saying, "*thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*" (Revelation 3:17). Or maybe it is the church at Sardis that we are following, "*I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*" (Revelation 3:1).

2. The early church was active, alive, and growing. It began with about 3,000 souls being baptized (Acts 2:41). It then grew and churches sprang up all over the Roman Empire. We can read of daily additions (Acts 2:47), of the conversion of about 5,000 men (Acts 4:4), of multitudes of men and women being added to the church (Acts 5:14), verse 7 of chapter 6 even tells us, "*...the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*"

3. Which of these pictures describe the church today? Do we "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) as the early church did? Or are we more like Ephesus, Laodicea, and Sardis? Do we think that we are alive, but are really dead? If we compare the church today with the church in Acts, I am afraid, Brethren, that we would have to consider very greatly the possibility that many of the congregations of the Lord's church today are dead. How many souls have we saved this year? In the last five years? How many missionaries do we support? How many out-reach programs do we have? What are we doing to reach the lost, besides of course preaching the gospel from the pulpit each week? Do we need to be revived to spiritual life? YES, brethren, I am afraid it is a grave necessity!

III

THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS TO BE REVIVED

1. What about the individual Christian? Do we need to be

revived? This is a question each one of us would have to answer personally after an inward reflection of our lives. Am I doing my part to spread the gospel to the lost? Am I doing anything to spread the gospel? If so, what? Can I make a list of ten things I personally am doing to serve God and take the Gospel to lost souls? Well, I go to church faithfully, I pray often, and sometimes I read my Bible. If I have time and feel like it, I will go see a sick family member, or at least call. I do pray for the sick on our sick list, but I haven't really visited or checked on any of them. That is about all I can think of right now.

21 Brethren, I think we are desperate to be revived. Psalms 51:12 says, "**Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;**" Habakkuk pleads in 3:2, "**...O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.**" Do we need to be revived? Those dead in a world of sin need to be revived to a spiritual life; the dying Church needs to be restored from a depressed, inactive and unused state; the dying Christian needs to return to consciousness, to become active and flourishing again; the drifting Christian needs to have his mind, memory, attention, and interest renewed once more.

backuse As the church at Ephesus was told, "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;*" (Revelation 2:5), and as the church at Sardis was told, "*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.*" (Revelation 3:3)

NOTES:

REVIVE US TO EVANGELIZE

Clifford Reel & Paul Vaughn

Clifford Reel — Encouragement To Do Evangelism

Mat. 28:18-30

Introduction

1. The church today needs to be encouraged and taught to do evangelism. The Jews did not have a plan or program to make proselytes to their religion. They were born into their beliefs. Even under the Limited Commission (Mark 10:5,6), the apostles were not allowed to go to Gentiles or Samaritans but only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel". Such is not the case with the church. Under the Great Commission we are given the responsibility of evangelizing-instructing in the gospel-going with the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20).
2. In any worthwhile activity, opposition and hindrances are to be expected. Satan, our adversary, will hinder evangelism if he can (I Peter 5:8). Fear of failure, persecution and danger might discourage some. When Jesus told Peter to launch out and let down his nets, Peter remembered past failure and said, "Master, we have toiled all night and taken nothing" but he did show faith by saying, "at thy word, I will let down the net" (Luke 5:4-6). Let us not despair because of recent failure but obey the Lord's command to go (Mark 16:15). Paul was not hindered because of danger or possible persecution. It seemed that wherever he went with the gospel he met with opposition. Jesus promised no easy path (Matthew 7:5:10-12), but a great reward. Let us not seek to excuse our failure by saying "they would not accept the gospel if we took it to them". This borders on judging which Jesus forbids (Matthew 7:1). Neither should we seek to escape responsibility by saying "the field where we labor is such a hard field".
3. In this lesson we want to consider four encouragements to do evangelizing. First, ~~The Songs We Sing~~ encourage us. Remember the personal work classes when we used to sing

"Lead Me To Some Soul Today"? Being stirred by singing "The Gospel Is For All" should move us. Other missionary songs are: "Rescue The Perishing", "Let The Lower Lights Be Burning", "Send The Light", and "Seeking The Lost". Notice the verbs of "Rescue, Send and Seek".

II A second encouragement to evangelism is **The Teaching of Scriptures**. Even in Samaria, Jesus told his disciples to "*Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest*" (Luke 10:2). The world today needs more willing workers and more of God's people praying for more laborers in the kingdom. The mission of the church is to "*Make known the manifold wisdom of God*" (Ephesians 3:10), and this is clearly stated in the scriptures.

III Third, **Souls we know** should move us to tell them the gospel. Man knows so much about this world and so little about things spiritual. Think of the lost people you know: neighbors, friends, family, fellow workers, and young people in the community and their need for being taught. Souls in foreign lands such as the country of Ukraine are eager to hear the good news. The joy of helping a person come to a saving knowledge of Christ is almost indescribable. A faint picture of it is given in Luke 15, where repentance of a sinner produces joy among the angels in heaven.

IV Let us turn to the New Testament for the fourth factor, **Samples or Examples** of those who sought the lost. Jesus stated his mission clearly, "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). His example serves as a moving force to his followers to bring the lost to him. The Jerusalem church is a powerful example. There were saved people added to the church daily (Acts 2:47) and on being dispersed, they went "*every where preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4). Paul's example of evangelism should inspire us. His teaching was personal as well as public in that he went from house to house (Acts 20:20) and warned people night and day (Acts 20:31).

Finally, we give a few SUGGESTIONS to encourage us to take the gospel to the world. (1) Remember the power is in the

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gospel (Romans 1:16). (2) Love is the key—Love for the lost and love for the Lord (John 14:15,23). (3) Look for and take advantage of opportunities (Galatians 6:10). (4) Be concerned and zealous (I Corinthians 15:58). (5) If you can't preach or teach, do something else (Matthew 5:16). (6) Realize that straying sheep need attention (James 5:19,20). (7) The most unlikely, to our way of thinking, are often good prospects (Saul of Tarsus). (8) Start close to home (Acts 1:8; Mark 5:18,19).

NOTES:

Paul Vaughn — Evangelism

The greatest need in the world is for the Word of God. The only way the Word will reach those in need is by Christians teaching and preaching it. Paul understood his responsibility as a servant of God to proclaim the good news of Christ. He said, (I Corinthians 9:16) *"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* It is the only message approved of God. The gospel is the cure for a sin sick world. Evangelism is the means of proclaiming the gospel and it is the responsibility of the churches and individual Christians to teach it!

In order to be pleasing to God the church of Christ must be evangelistic. This means direct involvement in teaching Jesus Christ, and encouraging those lost in sin to obey God's Word. The process of teaching the gospel may be accomplished by radio, television, pulpit, classroom, newspaper or one on one personal evangelism. But the Great Commission must be carried out with zeal and determination!

COST OF EVANGELISM

Any effort worth doing costs! Evangelism is no exception. It cost Stephen his life. (Acts 7:59-60) *"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon [God], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."* Paul suffered greatly for the cause of Christ. He said, II Corinthians 11:24-25 *"Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;"* The first century church had members put into prison and put to death for the cause of Christ and His church. The cost was great, but the church of Christ grew as the blood of Christians was shed in proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

The cost of evangelism today is high. It takes a great

amount of money to send out missionaries. There are many church of Christ that work very diligently in raising funds so the gospel of Christ can be taught to those lost in sin. Yet, the cost of evangelism is measured in more than money. It can be measured in tears and pain in the heart. The price of evangelism should be measured by a careful and guarded approach to God's Word. Paul said, (II Timothy 2:15) "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" The cost of evangelism is measured in sore feet that walk from door to door in order to proclaim the gospel. It is measured by time, the hours that go into preparing for a class or encouraging those in need of comfort.

The cost of evangelism is high. Thank God that there are a few who are willing to pay the price. Let us pray that more Christians and congregations will be willing to pay the price that is needed to evangelize the world.

MOTIVATION

Jesus has commanded that His disciples evangelize the world. (Matthew 28:19-20) "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.*" The church of Christ is at a time in history when this command can be carried out to millions of people. Technology has enabled the church of Christ to reach the lost by printed page, radio, television, and video. There are many churches that have campaigns locally and in foreign countries to carry out Jesus' command to evangelize the world. What will keep Christians from doing evangelistic work? It can be summed up in one word, lack of **MOTIVATION!**

The motivational force that will influence Christians to evangelize is love. Jesus said, (John 14:15) "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" To love God means that His commandments are kept. (I John 5:3) "*For this is the love of God, that*

we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Love for God and Jesus is the motive that should prompt evangelism.

Love for those lost in sin prompted God to send His Son to be the Savior of those who are in obedience to Him. (John 3:16) *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* One cannot be a faithful follower of Christ without love which is the force that motivates evangelism.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

The purpose of evangelism is proclaiming the Word of God. In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul gave instruction to proclaim the word. (II Timothy 4:1-2) *"I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."* It is the preaching of the word that can affect the heart of a sinner.

Evangelism promotes Christ and His doctrine. It is never appropriate to preach one's opinion. (II Corinthians 4:5) *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."* Humor, opinion and entertainment cannot save a soul from hell. Sadly, there are some congregations that receive more humor, opinion and entertainment than the gospel.

There is no other plan to save those in sin apart from the preaching of the gospel. When the gospel is preached, the power of God is glorified. (Romans 1:16) *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

Evangelism is sowing the seed of God's Word. The seed sown in honest hearts will produce a Christian. There is a great harvest to be reaped by those who are diligent in proclaiming the Word.

CONCLUSION

In the materialistic world that seeks flashy pleasure at all expense, one can see the need for evangelism is urgent. In comparing the population of the world with the evangelistic efforts of God's people, it is also seen that there is a need for soldiers of Christ to rise to the battle and be militant for the cause of Christ.

The New Testament church had a terrific impact in the first century because they were evangelistic. After the death of Stephen, a great persecution came against the church and Christians were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Those who "*were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4). Will it take persecution of God's people for them to be once again evangelistic? Let us pray that our love will be the motivation that will cause us to preach the GOOD NEWS and not persecution!

NOTES:

REVIVE US TO STAND AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE

Larry Cole & Jim Day

Larry Cole – Stand Against False Doctrine

“Never in our lives has the need for true Christians to arise and join the battle for truth and righteousness been greater or more urgent, nor has the eternal gain or loss been more extensive, than NOW!”

The fact that we should stand against false doctrine is emphasized throughout the Bible. The fact that we need a revival in standing against false doctrine is evident when you begin reading or listening to what is happening in our great brotherhood. “Nearly every distinctive point of doctrine proclaimed by churches of Christ has been sacrificed by one or more teachers among us—touching upon such matters as baptism for the remission of sins, the use of instrumental music, the reality of hell, the nature of the church, and the importance of truth itself.” “Along these lines concerning the church and the plan of salvation, past and present discussions have been and are being conducted with denominational members and preachers at various times. The almost unbelievable aspect of the present controversy is the necessity to deal with the same topics which once were controverted only with denominational champions, but now they are required to be discussed with men from among our brotherhood!” “It is sad to contemplate, but true, that relatively few brethren, young and old, see the struggle for what it really is: a struggle for the very heart and life of the church”.

What saith the scriptures? We are probably most familiar with Jude 3. We will look at that verse in more detail later. Paul’s admonition to the elders of the church at Ephesus was to “watch” (Acts 20:28-31). There are verses that teach us to hold fast (I Thessalonians 5:21; II Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 3:6; 4:14; 10:23; Revelation 2:25; 3:3). Titus 1:9 *“Holding fast the*

faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." To hold fast is to adhere to. Paul said the reason we need to hold fast to the faithful word was that we may be able to use sound doctrine, i.e., teaching or instruction that is not corrupt to exhort and convince the gainsayer. To exhort is to call for, to comfort. To convince is to admonish, rebuke, reprove, tell a fault. The gainsayer is a disputant, someone who contradicts, someone who speaks against. Paul is saying we need to use the word of God to reprove such false teaching. Hold fast, or stick to the word of God. Sound doctrine can be used to exhort and to rebuke.

There are verses that teach us **to stand**, Romans 5:2 "*By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*", I Corinthians 15:1 "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;*", Galatians 5:1 "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*", Philippians 1:27 "*Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*"; **to fight**, I Timothy 6:12 "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*", II Timothy 4:7 "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith.*". The apostle Peter warned of false teachers and the need to stand against them in II Peter 2:1-3. Many other verses teach the importance of standing against false doctrine.

Let's look at Jude 3-4. Jude tells us how we are to contend as well as for what we should contend. The word contend means "to strive in combat, to struggle as in a battle, fight." We are to contend earnestly; not roughly, not harshly, not bitterly, not unkindly. The mean-spirited, insulting attitude that is

sometimes displayed should not be allowed to enter the household of faith. I have read some debates that seemed to reach the point of nothing but name calling and insulting jabs thrown at one another. The attitude we use in defending the faith against false doctrine will have an influence on the way people receive the truth of God's word. May our contending for the faith be in the right spirit so as to defend the truth while at the same time showing genuine interest and concern for those who are wrong. How unfortunate it is that some defend with the wrong attitude, and in so doing forever close the door to teach their opponent the very truth that can save him.

We are to contend for the faith. Not for Campbellism, or American Restoration movement, or our opinions or hobbies. Contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. The faith is the system of faith, the truth of the gospel of Christ. It seems that Jude is admonishing brethren to hold fast all the principles of Christianity against all opposition. Can we afford to do less? In verse 4 of this book, Jude gives us the reason behind the command of verse 3. The same is happening today.

We have gone about this in several different ways over the years. Debates were (and are) a very effective way to defend the truth. Denominational people do not seem willing to debate now like they were in the past. It seems in the last few years, we have gotten away from debating, and more emphasis is being placed on lectureships. Perhaps this is brought about because we are having to defend the faith from within the body of Christ now. Some of the lectures that are being conducted this year are: "Restoration and Renewal" (FHU), "Let Us Go Forward, Back To The Bible" (ETSOP), "Heaven's Imperative or Man's Innovations: Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ" (MSOP), "Soldiers of Christ" (DLU). Those are just a few of the lectureships for this year.

"Let not error stand, let not truth fall." The ostrich approach to false teaching will not defeat it. We cannot pretend that it does not exist and eventually it will go away. We sing a song "Soldiers of Christ Arise..." We need to practice what we sing. Remember II Timothy 4:7,8.

Jim Day — Revive Us To Stand Against False Doctrine

The contents of this discussion does not assume that there has been a total abandonment of standing against false doctrine. Brethren can be thankful today because truth has been preserved and false doctrine has been eradicated due to the strong stand that some of our brethren have taken. For their strong stand against false doctrine we are ever grateful. We commend those brethren who have labored hard and long as watchmen of the truth. It is the purpose of this discussion to encourage and motivate every Christian to continue to stand against false doctrine.

CHANGES IN OUR SOCIETY

America has changed drastically in the last four decades to say the least. We do not live in the kind of America that our grandfathers did. Our children do not measure things the same way their grandparents did. They do not eat, talk, think, or even perceive things the same way their grandparents did. Since the 50's there has been a movement to change America. This movement has a designed plan to change America's way of eating, talking, acting, thinking, and perceiving. Words like family, right, wrong, truth, and abortion are totally perceived today in a different way than our parents and grandparents perceived them.

The movement to change America has advanced its ideas by what is known as "Deconstruction" and "Reconstruction." They began to "Deconstruct" America by removing God, Christ, and the Bible out of the minds of the American people. This was done primarily by taking God, Christ, and the Bible out of education. This reminds one of what Paul said, Romans 1:28 *"And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;"*. They also changed the way students do math. They changed linguistics, gave words new meanings. One person said, "Because different

people interpret different words to mean different things, meaning has become relative". They are changing the history books of America. Again, someone has said, "Nothing from the past is worth anything at all". All of this change was designed to teach that nothing is absolute but just relative. People are saying today things like, "It depends", "Its only an opinion", or "Who can say what is morality right or wrong?" After the "Reconstruction" began people began to say, "We need to be more tolerant", Don't be so judgmental", Don't be so dogmatic", "You are all right, I am all right." Today in America it is more fashionable to be "Politically Correct" than it is to be absolutely right. The America that our grandparents knew was much different from the America we know today. If things continue as they are now, the America that our grandchildren will know will be much different than the America we know today.

"AS GOES SOCIETY, SO GOES THE CHURCH"

How is all this relevant to our topic and the church today? The "Change Agents" of the secular world are now the "Change Agents" in the church. Ralph Reed said, "The signs of rising religious interest are evident everywhere... Nesting baby boomers are flocking to the churches... returning to their spiritual roots and seeking values for their children" (Politically Incorrect, p.5). People that were tutored in the 50's 60's and 70's are now preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, and members in the Lord's church. Inevitably, many of the secular ideas have come in to the church with them. In the church today we are hearing things like, "Don't be so judgmental", "We need to be open to new ideas", "We need to be more tolerant", "We need to be kinder and gentler", and "Don't be so dogmatic." Sound familiar? These people want to change the church just as their teachers changed America. They want change for just the sake of change. The primary way that change is being brought in the church today is by changing the way the church interprets the Bible. It is called the "New Hermeneutic." The "New Hermeneutic" would allow the Lord's Supper to be taken any day of

the week. It would allow an expanded role for women in the church to serve in the same capacity as men. It would allow the use of Mechanical instruments of music in worship. It would allow change in anything that the church does traditionally. In essence, it would make the church look more like the world than like Christ.

Have these "Change Agents" had any impact on the church? Yes! My observation is there are fewer public discussions than what there was at one time. Preachers are changing the style and format of their sermons to sound more like Dobson and Swindol than like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is more fashionable to be "Politically Correct" than to reprove, rebuke, correct, and instruct (II Timothy 3:16).

Brethren we need to continue to stand against false doctrine. The same old wolves are out there, just dressed in different sheep's clothes. If we don't stand against false doctrine our children may worship in a different kind of church than we do today.

NOTES:

REVIVE US TO BENEVOLENCE

Eddy Craft And Wesley Simon

We all must admit that there are times when God's people need reviving. Consider what the Psalmist had to say, Psalms 85:6 *"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"* We all can use a good shot of enthusiasm. We need to be reminded of certain Biblical truths. After we are reminded, we need to put them into practice. The apostle Peter put it this way: II Peter 1:12 *"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know [them], and be established in the present truth."*

There is no area I know of where the church needs to be revived more than in the realm of benevolence. The early Christians made Christianity beautiful by the way that they shared with each other, Acts 4:32 *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any [of them] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."* Think about the good that could be done in the area of evangelism if the world saw that we had this kind of love for one another. Being a member of the Lord's church should be the best insurance policy in the world. How much did the congregation where you attend give in benevolence last year? How much have they given this year? Why do you think God's people give so little in helping others? I want to suggest several reasons why I believe the church is lax in this area of work.

REASONS WHY THE CHURCH DOES NOT DO ANY MORE BENEVOLENCE THAN WHAT IT DOES.

There are many reasons why the church has given up on benevolence to a large degree. We want to notice some of these.

- (1) **Some have developed a mind set in the Lord's**

church that we must be involved in evangelism not benevolence. Those who promote this concept have forgotten that benevolence is to be used to help enhance soul winning. It is hard to try to teach a man the truth if he is hungry. If we show people that we love them, then it becomes easier to teach them. Every act of benevolence, when possible, should be followed up with the intent of leading that individual to the truth. The apostle Paul was thankful when he was the recipient of loving aid, Acts 28:1-2 *"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."* If barbarous people can be this kind, then how ought the Lord's church conduct herself?

(2) **Some have developed the mind set of let the government help the needy.** The first thing many churches do when they hear of some need is to try to find out if the government can help in this case. When we do this, we allow the government to get the credit for being loving, caring and there in time of need rather than the Lord's church. Do we believe the words of Paul when he said, Acts 20:35 *"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."* We ought to work with our hands so we can give to others, Ephesians 4:28 *"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."*

(3) **Some have the mind set that no one is worthy to be helped.** We often look at the needy as being a bunch of bums. We feel this way because of the present day welfare system. We see a lot of people who are truly living off of the government and we are sick of their lazy attitude. We are not to help those who will not work, II Thessalonians 3:10 *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."* We in the Lord's

church are not to promote laziness, but let us not use this as an excuse not to do benevolence. We have heard it said that those who really need help will not ask for it any way. There is probably a lot of truth in this. However, are we trying to look for those who are truly deserving of our help? How long has it been since someone in a business meeting said: "we need to try to find someone to help."

(4) **Some in the Lord's church have the mind set that only certain people can be helped.** We have those who believe that "saints only" can be helped. The Bible teaches otherwise, Galatians 6:10 "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all [men], especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*"; James 1:27 "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.*"; II Corinthians 9:13 "*Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for [your] liberal distribution unto them, and unto all [men];*" I asked a man one time — if a car wreck occurred in front of the church building where he attended and a little child was seriously injured, could he take the child into the church building which was already heated to keep it warm until the rescue squad got there? He said, "no, because the church is to help saints only." They believe that if the church takes one dime out of the church treasury to help a little child, then all the church members will go to hell unless they repent. Many of those who hold this view find themselves helping very few people.

(5) **Some believe that almost every benevolent work is too large for them to tackle.** They have forgotten that the churches can work together to accomplish this deed. The churches of the first century worked together to help the people in need, I Corinthians 16:1-3 "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first [day] of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as [God] hath prospered*

him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by [your] letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." Think of all the benevolent work we could do if we all worked together. I found out a long time ago that one can do almost anything if he gets enough small churches behind it. We need to have the attitude of the apostle Paul, Philippians 4:13 "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*"

(6) Some have the mind set that they need to spend their money on the local congregation. Many congregations must believe that they are in the banking business. They take the contribution week after week and put it in the bank. If they spend any money at all, it will be for the home congregation. But the Bible teaches that we are to help one another, Galatians 6:2 "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*"; James 2:15-16 "*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be [ye] warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what [doth it] profit?*"; 1 John 3:16-17 "*Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*" Brethren shall we be like the rich man in Luke chapter sixteen? Lazarus came desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. However, the rich man seemed to show little or no compassion. Luke 16:19-21 "*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*" We must show more love for our fellow man than what the rich man displayed.

(7) Some have the mind set that if we help one person then they will all want help. We will be the first to admit

that benevolence can be abused. However, we cannot stop doing the work of the Lord because some misuse it. If a congregation helps a preacher in a mission field, then word gets out that said congregation is interested in mission work. So, more and more preachers will come to this congregation for help. Will this church stop doing mission work because people respect their reputation for doing great works? Not at all!! Well, when we help people, it is going to be made known. We will develop a reputation as a caring, living and concerned church. We should not be offended when people become convinced that we care and want our help. However, as stated before, if he will not work, then we should not help him. Paul put it this way, I Timothy 5:8 *"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."*

REASONS WHY SOME CHURCHES CANNOT DO MORE BENEVOLENCE.

Some churches cannot do anymore benevolence than what they are doing because the membership will not give as they have been prospered. Why will these members not give any better than what they do?

(1) **They have been taught. I have been taught** *Rust As A Witness*, A book by V P Black on giving and it increased the contribution three to four times larger than what it was. The brethren will do better if taught better!

(2) **Members see money that they are giving is not being used.** So, they see no great need to give more.

(3) **Many members are too materialistic to give as they have been prospered.** John give us this warning, I John 2:15-17 *"Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

(4) **We Have lost our compassion for those who are less fortunate than we.** Jesus said this, Matthew 7:12 *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."* If we were in need, we would want people to help us. So, we should want to help those in need.

WHAT WOULD HAVE TO BE TRUE FOR A MAN TO GIVE AS MUCH AS HE SHOULD.

(1) **He would have to give himself first.** II Corinthians 8:5 *"And [this they did], not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.";* Matthew 16:24 *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* If we give ourselves to God first, then giving will be a joy.

(2) **His giving will have to be planned.** II Corinthians 9:7 *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."*

(3) **One would have to love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind.** Matthew 22:37-39 *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."*

(4) **We would have to love our fellow man.** Matthew 5:43-48 *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you,*

what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more [than others]? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

(5) **One would have to give cheerfully.** II Corinthians 9:7 *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."*

God gave, Christ gave, The Holy Spirit gave. So, why shouldn't we give as well? May God help us to become more benevolent. We leave you with these words, Matthew 6:19-21 *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

NOTES:

REVIVE US IN THE HOME

Keith Cozort & Charles Huff

Keith Cozort — Revive Us In The Home

In Order to have a chance to **revive us in the home** we must be able to determine the problem or problems which have caused the need for revival. To say that the home needs to be revived is a tremendous understatement. The home is under attack from all sides. It is being threatened from without and within. And we wish to notice some dangers (threats) facing the home.

HINDRANCES PLACED BEFORE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HOME

There are basically three classes of adults who hinder the home and our young people, thereby causing the need for us to be revived in the home.

(1) **Non-Christian Adults.** There are a great number of adults who have not obeyed the gospel plan of salvation. Often they have an adverse influence on our young people in the home. Some of these adults will hinder obedience to the gospel plan. By their words and actions they place barriers before our young people. Some of these adults will attempt to influence Christian young people to forsake the Lord. Such is a sorry state of affairs but it is true. Plus, sometimes our young people see the worldly "success" of non-Christians and they desire to follow their course.

(2) **Christians Adults.** Sometimes brethren act no different than those outside the body of Christ. They do the same things they did while in the world spiritually. There are even some who have rejected worldliness (Titus 2:11-12), but they are only "church-goers." By this I mean, 1) They do not teach the gospel plan of salvation to those who are lost (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20). 2) They will not teach those who

are in a saved relationship with their Lord (I Corinthians 14:12). 3) Neither will they "*Visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction*" (James 1:27) which James says is pure and undefiled religion. Plus, 4) some will not attempt to worship God "*In spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). It is sad to say but there are those who are faithful to attend all the worship services, teach Bible classes, visit, etc, but are continually fussing and fighting with one another (cf. James 3). By such behavior they cause others to decide they want no part of any such religion. Some of our young people have seen too much of this kind of "Christianity." They are fed up with the hypocrisy, inactivity, unloving spirit, dogmatic opinions, etc. which they see demonstrated by some members of the church. Certainly we need to be revived in the home.

(3) **Parents.** As strange as it may sound, parents are perhaps the greatest adult problem facing the home. Many do not even attempt to properly train and nurture their children in the ways of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). Seemingly, they fail to understand that merely telling the children something is not training. The training taught in the Bible is such that includes corrective discipline and proper examples to follow. Children often see a double standard, even in the homes of Christians.

AREAS WHERE PARENTS ARE NOT TRAINING THEIR CHILDREN

There are several areas of life in which children are not receiving the proper training in the home. Therefore, we need a revival in the home.

(1) **Proper Home Organization.** The Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the family (Ephesians 5:23). Yet, in many homes the head cannot be found. Imagine a body walking around without a head. Would that body be able to function properly? The wife is to be a submissive partner (Ephesians 5:24; I Peter 3:6). This does not imply that she is to be treated as a slave or is inferior to her husband. She is an active participant in the action of submission. Children are to be

submissive to their parents (Ephesians 6:1). Someone has stated, "In today's home, everything is run by a switch, except the children." Corruption of this order, as taught in the Bible, makes it impossible to properly teach one's child as God intended.

(2) **Necessity of Worship.** Imagine the lessons being learned by children when their parents send them to worship services but are unwilling to attend themselves. Parents should see to it that their children know the importance of worshipping God. In fact, it is more important to see that young people (and older people alike) worship, than it is to see that they attend school regularly, sleep, eat, or go to a concert or sporting activity.

(3) **Moral Living.** The children in our homes need to understand that questionable jokes and stories are unacceptable. They need to be taught that Satan is working to influence their lives by way of television, movies, videos, radio, newspaper, and magazines. He will use every device in his arsenal in order to accomplish his objectives. Parents need to help children avoid "*evil communications*" (I Corinthians 15:33).

(4) **Modesty.** Often modesty is not taught in our homes even though it is taught in the Bible (I Timothy 2:9-10; Titus 2:3-5). Immodesty is wrong. Those who are taught to dress properly in the home will dress modestly in public. The brethren in American Samoa have a saying that I wish more members of the church in the U.S. would take to heart. It says, "Modesty is **not** determined by the humidity." Fathers could stop the immodesty problem immediately by being the head as God intended, putting their foot down, and standing up for God's standard of decency.

OTHER AREAS WHERE PARENTS OFTEN FAIL

Finally, there are some areas where parents need to actively labor if we are to achieve a revival in the home.

(1) **Proper Entertainment.** It is tragic that many parents blame the church for "losing our young people." In reality, they are blaming the church for failing to do what the parents should have been doing from the start. It is not the responsibility or

obligation of the church to provide entertainment for our young people. This is the work of the home. When parents hand over money, keys to the car, etc. in order to get rid of the children, problems will arise. Yet, many brethren have no idea where their children go, or with whom, when they exit through the front door.

(2) **Spend Time With Our Children.** Generally, we are too busy with "important" things like work, golf, fishing, etc. Then mother is often not home so the children are left to take care of themselves.

(3) **Give Children Christian Parents.** When we fail to give our children parents who are Christians, we deprive them of a great blessing which God intended them to have. Our hearts are made to bleed for those children whose parents are not in Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). How many of these boys would have made great elders, deacons, teachers, and preachers if mother and father had both been Christians? How many of these girls could have been wives of such men and teachers themselves if only they had the influence of a pair of Christian parents when they were growing up.

Parents, adults, young people, if we are to have a revival in the home, each of us must shoulder our responsibilities. Otherwise it is doomed to failure!

Charles Huff — Revive The Home

I recently heard of a man whose thesis for his masters degree was titled "TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARENTING." His work on this paper was so great that his professor and other close friends encouraged him to publish it. His first printing sold like hot cakes, later on he married and in a short while became the father of two children. About ten years later he published his work again but this time titles it, "TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARENTING." When the second printing sold out in about five years, he published it again under the title, "TEN HELPFUL HINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARENTING." Of course this story was told for humor, but does it not also express a lot of truth? Someone observed that by the time we really learn the art of successful parenting, we are through. Perhaps this is why most of us who are grandparents have so much expertise. A gospel preacher, friend of mine, tells that during his early years as a preacher, in fact during his first local work, he really delivered a masterful sermon about raising children. Of course this was in the honeymoon years of his marriage before he and his lovely wife became parents. As he was "shaking out" the congregation, an older sister, in her sweet wisdom, advised him to be sure and put that date on his outline and to preach it again in ten years. He said, "I have never preached that lesson again."

Solomon the wise wrote: Proverbs 22:6 *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* While this is the general rule, it is not always the case. Another clear example of this principle is David's observation concerning God's providential care over his children. Psalms 37:25 *"I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."* David had never heard the story of Lazarus (Luke 16:20), nor met those saints from the Maccabbean period who Hebrews 11:37-38 *"wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) [who] wandered in deserts, and*

[in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth." It is the general rule that those who follow after the righteousness of God, set forth in the Scriptures will have, "...*all sufficiency in all things...*" (II Corinthians 9:8), yet many faithful children of God throughout the world suffer lack of many material needs, even today. Thus when we have a child who chooses to go his own way instead of the way we have taught him, it does not always mean that we as parents have been a complete failure. Every individual has personal responsibility (Romans 14:12).

Throughout the pages of inspiration we have the examples of many families. Some we observe had children who faithfully followed Jehovah, and others of them had children who were great disappointments. Adam and Eve reaped the effects of their own disobedience in the tragic murder of their righteous son, Abel, by his wicked brother, Cain. God said of faithful Abraham, Genesis 18:19 *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."* Yet much heartache developed in the family of Abraham's son, Isaac, when one of the twins, Jacob, (the supplanter) cheated and deceived the aged Isaac to bestow the birthright and the blessing on him, because the other twin, Esau, had no appreciation for it and sold it for a mess of venison stew. Then Jacob married the beautiful Rachel, for whom he worked earnestly for seven years, however, in the deal, received her sore eyed sister as his other wife. From these marriages along with a couple of handmaidens there were born to Jacob twelve sons and a daughter. Ten of his sons were guilty of kidnapping and conspiracy to murder the favorite younger son, Joseph.

Later in Israel's descendants, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, so displeased God that fire from heaven consumed them and they died before the Lord. In reference to this event (Leviticus 10:1-2), have we ever contemplated the sorrow and heart-break this must have caused the faithful Aaron and the mother of these disobedient sons? Later on we learn of the devout couple, Elkanah and Hannah, who had no children.

Their prayers and supplications were heard by Jehovah and Samuel was born to them. Samuel was dedicated to the Lord and Hannah always made him a coat each year and came to see him. Even in his youth, God used Samuel to deliver a rebuke to Eli that his wicked sons were desecrating the temple of God and committing fornication with the women who came there to worship. Although Eli tried to warn them, this thing so displeased the Lord that he punished Israel with their defeat by the Philistines, the death of Hophni and Phinehas, and the capture of the Ark of God in one day. The news from the battlefield so overcame the aged Eli that he fell over backward, breaking his neck, and he too died the same day.

In the book of Judges we read of a man named Manoah who, *"...intreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God; which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born... And Manoah said, Now let Thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?"* Judges 13:8,12. What a beautiful attitude for the parents of a newborn child. Yet, what a tragedy this child turned out to be. Samson is called by some, "God's Delinquent." His parents absolutely spoiled him rotten. What Samson wanted, Samson received. Even though Samson was a mighty man of physical strength, his moral fortitude was weak and his life met a tragic end.

Romans 15:4 *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.";* 1 Corinthians 10:11 *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."* With all the examples both positive and negative given to us in the Scriptures, why do we too have some children who remain faithfully devoted to God, and others who fall away from the faith and deny their godly upbringing?

May I quote from an article by Wayne Jackson? "My son was raised in the church. We taught him the Bible. As a youngster he sometimes helped to serve the Lord's Supper. He

even gave talks occasionally. After he was in college awhile, something changed. He began to question the teachings of the Scriptures. Now, he professes no faith at all. What happened? This is a story I have heard over and over across the years. Many of our youngsters are losing their faith. Why is this? Perhaps there is no simple, single reason; however, it may be sufficient to observe that one of the causes of this growing defection among our young adults is the fact that for years they were operating on borrowed faith."

Brother Jackson further observes that a lack of training and fortification of personal faith by neglecting the teaching of Christian evidences and a thorough grounding in the Bible contributes to the loss of our children to Satan. Psalms 127:3 *"Lo, children [are] an heritage of the LORD: [and] the fruit of the womb [is his] reward."* According to W. E. Vine, "heritage" means "to assign a portion." As parents, God assigns to us a great and awesome responsibility. Jacob called his children, "God given" (Genesis 33:5). God gives us a stewardship to manage our children, Ephesians 6:4 *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* We cannot begin this training too soon. We need to instill in our children the respect for authority. This begins with parental authority. We need to teach them to obey us and faithfully administer proper punishment when they disobey. This training will later transfer to respect for the authority of God and His word, respect for school authorities and civil authorities. This is the ideal, this is the way God would have us to train them. This is the way we hope they will turn out.

The undeniable, heart-breaking facts are that all of our children do not turn out the way we planned, trained, prayed, begged, pleaded, and hoped they would. Jesus told of a family who had a "prodigal" son (Luke 15). Ezekiel reproves Israel for the use of the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He wrote, "As I live," says the Lord God, *"You shall no longer use this proverb in Israel"* (Ezekiel 18:2-3). Then the prophet goes on to set forth

personal responsibility for the ultimate outcome of our life. He said if a righteous man "...begets a son who is a robber or a shedder of blood...He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him...The soul who sins shall die, The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, not the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18). Those of us who have raised children who are faithfully serving God rejoice together. And those of us who have raised children who have turned away from the church and Jesus their Savior weep for them and pray that God will bring them to their senses and to repentance so that they will not forever perish.

For sure, we must apply the same standards to our own wayward children that we do to others. Perhaps, because of our disappointments and a sense of guilt that we have somehow failed them and the Lord, we are tempted to be angry and harsh with them because they ought to know better. Please let us apply Paul's admonition to Timothy in our efforts to bring them back to Jesus. II Timothy 2:23-26 "*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all [men], apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And [that] they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*" Never cease to patiently teach and fervently pray for our children, no matter how old they may be, or how far away they may have gone. God will hear and answer our prayers.

REVIVE MORALITY

Jerry R. Brown and Clayton Winters

Jerry R. Brown — Revive Morality

Society in this country is facing a moral dilemma and has been in regression from a Biblical standard of acceptable moral behavior for many years. That which was considered unspeakable and unacceptable a few years ago is now advertised in magazines, produced for home videos, and commonly shown in movie theaters and on television movie channels. Standards of behavior once condemned by society are now every day events. Moral codes of sexual activity once considered as sinful in both the sight of God and man are now practiced as a freedom of choice. Lifestyles in marriage that once were the only acceptable patterns of the man-woman relationship and the parent-child relationship are now becoming exceptions to the standards used to establish the homes in this society. Sexual fornication, pornography, R-rated movies, child abuse, homosexuality—these are well-known terms that affect the moral behavior of the world, this country, local communities, and the Church.

The following statistics and statements emphasize the moral degradation of this country.

- 1) Every 47 seconds a child is abused.
- 2) Every 67 seconds an unwed teen-age girl gives birth to a baby.
- 3) More than one million teen girls become pregnant each year: 69% of these girls are not married.
- 4) 50% of all babies are projected to be born to unwed mothers by the year 2000.
- 5) Every day 40 teen-age mothers give birth to their third child in the state of Arizona.
- 6) In 1993 there were 121 births to teen-age mothers in Laurel County, Kentucky, with 50% of these births to unmarried girls.

- 7) In 1995 statistics reveal that 2.5 million teen-agers are infected with sexually transmitted diseases.
- 8) In 1991, 73% of all movies produced in this country contained immoral, sexual content.
- 9) Average Americans see 50 R-rated movies each year at movie theaters, on videos, or on a television movie channel.
- 10) Afternoon soaps on television portray immoral sexual behavior in acts of fornication, adultery, broken marriages, and dating activities as every day happenings acceptable in most communities.

Statements such as these cause Christians to search for the causes of such behavior in this country. One of the causes of immoral behavior is the widespread use and influence of alcohol in the lives of both adults and teens. While under the influence of whiskey, beer, wine, or other strong drinks, many adults and teen-agers will submit to sinful immorality that could and would be eliminated if alcohol had not been involved. The following statistics from USA TODAY, March, 1992, illustrate the influences that alcohol has on the behavior, moral attitude, crimes, and activities of the American people.

- 1) 72% of aggravated assaults are alcohol related.
- 2) 70% of sexual abuse, including rape and incest, involve alcohol.
- 3) 54% of all violent crimes are alcohol related.
- 4) 50% of all murders involve the use of strong drink.
- 5) 50% of all spouse abuse are alcohol related cases.
- 6) 40% of child abuse deaths are alcohol related.

Many counselors believe that the use of alcohol causes teens to compromise their moral standards and their behavior in general. In April, 1995, a report was published concerning the use of alcohol by the students in grades 9-12 of a typical high school in a rural area of Kentucky. This report concluded that the results of a survey conducted in the 1993-1994 school year were very typical of most counties in eastern and southern Kentucky. The following results should cause alarm as to the

activities of many teen-agers.

- 1) 75.5% of all high school students have tried some form of alcohol.
- 2) 55.5% of these students have been drunk at one time.
- 3) 37% of these students have been drunk during the last year.
- 4) The most common source of securing alcohol was from the home bar.

If alcohol does have an effect on moral behavior, then local communities need to be concerned when 75.5% of the teens in the high school of the community are under the influence of some kind of alcoholic drink. Possibly, this is an indicator that gives a good reason for the increasing number of teen pregnancies each year. If this behavior is a part of the lives of youth, does this not suggest the increasing problems that will exist in the adult population under the same influence?

During this writer's career as a public school teacher, school administrator, college instructor, and as a minister, many personal experiences have served as examples of moral dilemmas of the person considered to be the average citizen. The following statements from those who have faced problems with immorality will serve as illustrations.

- 1) "I am seventeen, and I am pregnant. How am I going to tell my parents?" This ended in a marriage, the birth of a child, and a divorce. Immorality ruined several lives.
- 2) "I am married and have a five-year-old son, but I am gay. The young man with me is my lover. A relationship with my wife makes me sick to my stomach. I also think that I have AIDS. Where do I go from here?" This ended in hospitalization, tests for the AIDS virus, a divorce, and a continued homosexual relationship.
- 3) "I was sexually violated when I was a child by a trusted relative. I have never told anyone else before. The older I become, the more difficulty I have in sleeping. What do I do about my problem?" This ended in the girl doing nothing, and she continues to suffer the consequences of the

childhood immoral experience.

- 4) "My father is sexually abusing my younger sister. She is scared, and our mother does not know. Should I tell my mother in order to protect my sister and maybe myself?" This ended in a confession to the mother, a divorce, a child who received counseling, and an unwanted pregnancy with a birth of a child.
- 5) "I am guilty of sexual fornication. I know this is a sin. Will God forgive me if I repent?" This ended in repentance, prayer, rededication to God, and marriage counseling. The marriage is still intact.
- 6) "I am married and have children. I am having a sexual relationship with a co-worker. I do not know whether to try to save my home or continue my relationship. What should I do?" This ended in a broken home as well as serious problems for everyone involved. This case of infidelity has destroyed the lives and future happiness of many innocent people.
- 7) "I am a good husband and father until I start drinking. I then abuse my family and often seek the comfort of another woman. How can I change?" This ended in total abstinence, forgiveness, and a happy home. Alcohol was the entire problem.
- 8) "I am a high school junior, and I have been drinking every night for three years because both my parents work at night. I think I have become an alcoholic. When I am drinking, I am dangerous to myself and to my girlfriend. We get sexually involved almost every time we are together. Where do I find help?" This ended in counseling, but the drinking has continued and so has the immoral conduct.

Many other cases could be used as examples, but these should be adequate to prove a point. Sexual immorality exists among all age groups and takes many different forms. The only answer to the immoral problems in this society is to revive morality according to the Scriptures, God's way. Fornication, sexual abuse of children, homosexuality, marriage infidelity, pre-marital sex, pornography, alcohol use and abuse, and other

immoral sexual activities are all condemned as sins by God in His Inspired Word. Each Christian should be aware of the problems of immorality and then daily study the Word of God and follow its teaching.

Statistical information for this article were taken from the following sources:

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Clayton Winters — Biblical Morality

The Bible is the Spirit-inspired compass in all religious matters (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Implanted in the heart, it produces conception and a new birth (Luke 8:11; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:22,23). Through it we are nurtured and strengthened (Acts 20:32; 1 Pet. 2:1,2), and by its precepts we shall be judged (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12-15). In a world of darkness, it is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105); to a lust-crazed world, it offers the purest and most sensible rules of conduct ever known to man.

And how badly we need this! In our present society, standards of morality have been trashed. Modern merchants of debauchery trumpet: "You pass this way but once, get all the gusto you can"; "If it feels good, do it"; "If it's a problem, kill it"; "If it's vulgar, say it"; "If it's holy, profane it"—and the beat goes on. A contemporary commercial asks, "Isn't it about time for some real food—at McDonalds?" We paraphrase this by asking, "Isn't it about time for some real morality—from the mind of our Creator?"

MORALITY UNDER THE PATRIARCHY

For the chosen seed of Abraham, the Patriarchal (father rule) Age was in effect from Adam's fall until the Law from Sinai; for the rest of the world, it would continue until the revelation of the gospel by Peter to the household of Cornelius. Under this system man received no codified or written law. The sparse revelation received from God evidently was communicated through natural means, and the fathers (hence the term *patriarchy*) or heads of households (Gen. 3:8-19; Gen. 6:5-13; 12:1-3; 18:1,9). As evidence of this, note the following Scriptures: Romans 5:12,13 "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law*"; Romans 2:14,15 "*For when the Gentiles, which*

have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another"; Romans 1:19,20 *"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"*; Acts 14:16,17 *"Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness".*

One might wonder, then, how there could be a moral code during a period when there was no written will of God and very little revelation of any sort from Him, especially of a moral nature. Indeed, there are many things which natural revelation could not supply: the nature of redemption, the eternal destiny of man, how to become a Christian, or how to worship God. But certain moral standards are not in this class. An illustration or two will help us to see this. A community of people may easily discern naturally that rape, murder, theft, child abuse, or desecrating the sanctity of the home are wrong—immoral. Even the most dense husband can soon learn that it is wrong to brutalize his wife or starve his children. Looking at standards in another way, communities soon learn that to survive they must help each other in times of catastrophe or dire need. In fact, people in every part of the world, whether exposed to Biblical teaching or not, have learned the moral dictums (that is not to say they always practice them); and in this way, those living under the Patriarchy determined a proper moral standard, and were held amenable to it. Romans 2:12-16 *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles,*

which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel".

MORALITY UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW

The ten commandments form basically the constitution—the heart—of the Old Testament. Yet, in a very real way, all ten have to do with morality. A brief survey of these should enlighten us to this truth.

(1) *"Thou shall have no other god's before me."* Idolatrous worship consisted of some of the most morally bankrupt rites on earth, a description of which would be embarrassing to write about. Yet Jehovah God was holy and expected His people so to be (Lev. 11:44). His habitation was holy (Exodus 15:13); even the spot where He made an appearance became holy (Exodus 3:5). It is true: men try to become like that which they worship and adore. For this reason, Israel could not serve a holy God while holding an immoral idolatrous concept.

(2) *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."* Idolaters were so entwined in lasciviousness and sensuality that even their gods were often imaged in vulgar forms. Large reproductions of sexual organs were paraded through the street and adored. God, by this commandment, cut loose His people from such indecencies.

(3) *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."* Even God's name was holy (Psalm 111:9) It was never to be used in connection with that which was vulgar or indecent.

(4) *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."* In part, a commandment protecting right relationships, and merciful behavior. Slaves, even brute beasts, were recipients of this proper moral conduct (Exodus 20:9-11).

(5) *"Honor thy father and thy mother."* From time immemorial, exposure of those who had become old and

dependent was practiced (how sad it is that the essence of the practice has been revived in our time). A holy God could not condone such an unholy practice.

(6) "*Thou shalt not kill.*" The sanctity of life was protected.

(7) "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" The sanctity of the home and marriage relationship was protected. It was a holy union that God expected to be kept inviolate.

(8) "*Thou shalt not steal.*" Property rights were protected.

(9) "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*" A person's individual rights and reputation were protected.

(10) "*Thou shalt not covet.*" Heart-sins, the very inception of evil, that eventually leads to all kinds of immoral behavior were forbidden (James 1:14,15; 1 John 2:15-17).

The Old Testament abounds with examples of right moral conduct which God bound on His people; but, then, one would not expect otherwise with the great moral constitution upon which the nation was built. In fact, this law has served as a pattern for untold numbers of nations as they labored to build kingdoms founded on principles of righteousness and equity.

MORALITY UNDER THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMY

In His sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7), Jesus set the tone for conduct in both human and divine relationships. (1) Murder, abusive language, and tensions that alienate people have no place among the saints of God (5:21-26); (2). Adultery, so destructive to a happy home, cannot be tolerated, not even in the secret recesses of the heart (5:27-32). (3) Lies and False oaths are prohibited (5:33-37). (4) So is retaliation (5:38-42). (5) Even kindness and prayer for one's enemies is enjoined (5:43-48). In this same vein the list continues through the following 2 chapters. It can be easily said, and without fear of contradiction, that this famous sermon sets the highest standard on earth for morality and right living.

The New Testament epistles set the moral tone for Christianity, normally in lists, both positive and negative. Observe just a few of these: Romans 1:29-32 "*Being filled with all unright-*

teousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them"; I Corinthians 6:9,10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"; Galatians 3:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"; Ephesians 5:3-5 "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God". Positive attributes of righteousness are emphasized with equal force in the New Testament writings: Galatians 5:22,23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"; Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"; Romans 12:9-21 "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil;

cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good".

The Bible declares, Proverbs 14:34 "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*". The hour is near midnight; isn't it time we got back to the standard of Bible morality?

NOTES:

REVIVE PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Clarence Howard

GETTING OUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

- Textbook 1.02*
1. One of man's major problems is that he neglects the important for the urgent. Man often finds that primary matters are secondary in his life. Matters that are secondary are often primary! We must learn to put first things first. Those who succeed in this life are those who have their priorities straight.
 2. In the Sermon On The Mount, our Lord told us to put first things first. Matthew 6:33 *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"*.
 3. I would like to begin this lesson by taking a detailed look at our text. The word "but" is used to denote a contrast between seeking that which is material and that which is spiritual in nature.

I The word "seek" is a command verb. It is also a present tense verb. Literally, "I command you to keep on seeking".¹ The word "seek" means, "to aim for, to strive after, to set your heart on, to look for, to search, to pursue, to endeavor to obtain, or to seek earnestly and intensely". It is a word that points to an obligation.

II Consider the word "first".¹ The word first points to "that which is of primary importance".² It is a word of "emphasis and order".³ It is used by Christ in the general context to get man away from his dependence on things.⁴ Man certainly is not being asked here to totally isolate himself from the things of the world. Some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good!

III Christ said that we are to seek first the Kingdom of God. This is the object of our search.¹ The word "kingdom" means "power, sovereignty, or the rule of God".² Nothing is more important than allowing the God of heaven to rule and reign in

human hearts.³ The kingdom of God is the church of the living God.^a Jesus uses the terms kingdom and church interchangeable in Matthew 16:18-19.⁴ The kingdom of God is not of this world, (John 18:38).^a It is not material in nature, (Romans 14:17).^b The kingdom of God is within men.^c It is not something that comes with observation, (Luke 17:20-21).^d The kingdom of God is a place where God's will is done on earth, as it is in heaven, (Matthew 6:10).

III The kingdom of God should be sought because of its worth.

¹ It is described as a treasure hidden in a field or a pearl of great price.² In Christ's two verse parables, we learn that the kingdom is worth any sacrifice to be a part of, (Matthew 13:44-46).

V The kingdom should be sought because of its indestructibility. ¹ The gates of hell cannot prevail against it, (Matthew 16:18-19). ² It cannot be destroyed or moved, (Daniel 2:44; Hebrews 12:28-29).

VI The kingdom should be sought because it is a realm of spiritual safety. ¹ I Corinthians 15:24 *"Then [cometh] the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"*.

Note also that we are commanded to continually seek "righteousness". Some manuscripts leave out the word God. Thus they read, "seek ye first the kingdom". Many have concluded that it should read, "seek ye first the kingdom's righteousness". That may or may not be. I do know that we are commanded to seek righteousness.

VII We are not commanded to keep on seeking man's righteousness. ¹ Our righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight, (Isaiah 64:6). ² Our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, (Matthew 5:20). ³ Man's attempts to make himself right cannot work, (Romans 10:1-3).

⁴ The text says that we are to seek first "His righteousness". We must seek His way of doing and becoming right. Psalms 119:172 say's *"My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments [are] righteousness"*. ⁵ Seeking God's righteousness means that we keep his commandments or do his will. It means that we follow his plan of salvation.

6. If we will obey these commands, the text says, "...all these things shall be added unto you".⁷ We are talking here about food, drink, clothing, shelter, or the basic necessities of life, (Matthew 6:22-26; 28,32).⁸ Note the word "shall".⁹ It does not mean maybe or perhaps, this word points to the certainty of the promise.

10. If we will give God first place in our lives and live as he wants us to live, all these things will come to us as a matter of course.

~~VIII~~ Secondly, we must point out that in the spiritual realm, other things are often first. Many people put their business or their work before the kingdom of God. They would not dare to miss a day's work, but think nothing of forsaking the kingdom. We must work,² (Ephesians 4:28, II Thessalonians 3:10), but the kingdom should be number one in our lives.³ A rich business tycoon was dying, he grasped the hand of his son and said, "you are holding the hand of the world's greatest failure". His son replied, "no dad, you have made millions", the dying father said, "but I left Christ out of my life" (see Luke 12:15-21).

~~5~~ Closely akin to this is wealth. The accumulation of wealth is far more important than the accumulation of righteousness for many. Solomon said, Ecclesiastes 5:13 "There is a sore evil [which] I have seen under the sun, [namely], riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt". The whole world is not worth one soul, (Matthew 16:26).

Pleasure is a major enemy of the kingdom of God. Hebrews 11:25 tells us that the pleasures of sin last only for a season. Those who give themselves to pleasure are dead while they live, (I Timothy 5:6).

6. Righteousness is often exchanged for ease and convenience. We are blessed to live in such a society as ours in America. But is the machines that we have to make life easier and more convenient are not viewed from a proper perspective, they will become a curse. Blessings are curses if they pull us away from the kingdom of God. Amos 6:1 "Woe to them [that are] at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, [which are] named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel

came!" This verse certainly has application to many today.

6. It is tragic to think that in addition to what we have already mentioned, people are putting preeminence, love of self, and darkness, along with love of country before the kingdom of God, (III John 9; II Timothy 3:2; John 3:19).

TY Finally, what does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God?

1. It means that one will undergo a radical transformation such as the new birth to enter the kingdom, (John 3:3-5) ● We are talking about obeying the Gospel, (II Thessalonians 1:8) ● We are talking about becoming a Christian or a new creature, (Acts 11:26; II Corinthians 5:17).

2. Seeking the kingdom first means staying in the kingdom,

1. Luke 9:62 "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God". We desperately need staying power in the kingdom, Revelation; 2:10 "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life". Jesus also said, Matthew 24:13 "He that endureth to the end, same shall be saved".

3. Putting righteousness first means living for the kingdom.

a. Living for the kingdom includes four basic things: First, ① consistency — we must have Christians who are not flashes in the pan, here today gone tomorrow, (Revelation 3:5) ② Secondly, there must be authenticity — probe all you wish, try all you like to find hypocritical flaws, and you search in vain. Christians who have real impact are those who are real to the core, (Matthew 6:16; 7:1-5; I Peter 2:1) ③ Thirdly, we need Christians who are unselfish — those who help the kingdom most are those who care for themselves the least. They notice our needs and are honestly concerned about our welfare, (I John 3:17-18).

④ Fourthly, the kingdom needs children of God who are tireless — it needs people who will not quit. The cause of righteousness needs people with relentless determination. Regardless of the odds and unconcerned with the obstacles, these Christians labor for the expansion of the kingdom of God. Paul is a prime example, (II Corinthians 11:23-28).

⑤ Putting the kingdom first means preaching the kingdom. We need more like Philip. He preached Christ, preaching Christ included preaching the good news about the kingdom, (Acts 8:5-

12).

concludes.

Our text is telling us to give God first place. It says that we are to live as he would have us to live. It asks us to put our whole confidence in things eternal, for they are permanent. It demands that we concentrate our attention and our services upon God and his promises, knowing that being doubleminded is an impossible course to pursue, (James 1:18; Colossians 3:1-2).

Do you need to become a Christian? If you are yet in sin you do. It is a matter of primary importance. It is your most urgent and pressing obligation. Why not put first things first and enter the kingdom of God? Believe in Christ, (Romans 10:9-10). Be baptized, (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). Fellow Christians, are you putting first things first? Are your priorities straight? Have you left your first love? Repent! This matter must be taken care of before your soul is lost! (Revelation 2:4-5; II Peter 2:20-22).

NOTES:

