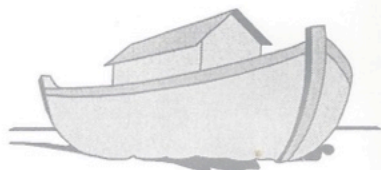


BOBBY DUNCAN'S SERMONS

Eighty-one full-sentence outlines from Bobby's personal file.



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INTRODUCTION

The late beloved brother Bobby Duncan has been widely considered one of the the finest preachers of our brotherhood for many years. Such appreciation for his work was well deserved. His use of the scriptures, and his ability to get directly to the truth and present it precisely, was his skill and his joy. When he passed away he left behind not only many Christians who loved him, but many younger preachers who saw Bob as a wise and faithful mentor.

This book is an effort to help his work continue posthumously. I have carefully selected these outlines out of hundreds from his files to compile this rich book. These were chosen for relevance of topic, variety of topics, and for themes which I personally know were of great importance to him.

As far as I know, these outlines are all original with Bobby; yet while I can be certain about some, I cannot be certain about others. Therefore, if someone finds a piece of their own work here, please consider it first flattering, and second, respectfully unintentional.

These outlines are to be used by Gospel preachers to God's glory. They are in this loose leaf binder for convenience of use. Copy them, use them, grow from them, and improve them with your own insights. Nothing would have pleased Bobby more, and in the use of these outlines, "...he being dead yet speaketh."

Glenn Colley
June 1, 2000

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"A BAKER'S DOZEN WAYS TO DO YOURSELF A FAVOR"Proverbs 12:28; I Peter 3:10-12; John 10:10

Note carefully the words in the following texts:

"In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death" (Prov. 12:28).

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue . . ." (I Peter 3:10-12).

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy . . ." (John 10:10).

Now notice what is said about the life of the wicked:

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21).

The devil would have us believe we deprive ourselves of a great deal of happiness in this life by living for the Lord. He has been successful in brainwashing the majority of people into believing that lie. But these verses being true—and they most certainly are—then we do ourselves a great favor in living by the word of the Lord.

In this sermon I want to mention a baker's dozen ways you can do yourself a favor. (Explain "baker's dozen.")

DISCUSSION**I. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR BY OBEYING GOD EARLY IN LIFE.**

A. Eccl. 12:1-7: "Remember now thy Creator . . ."

B. Solomon had tried everything: Wealth, food, wives, concubines, power, honor, etc. Notice what he concluded: Eccl. 12:13.

C. Song: "What do you hope, dear brother, to gain by a further delay?
There's no one to save you but Jesus, and no other way but
His way."

D. Continuing to delay your obedience to God will cause your conscience to become seared. I Tim. 4:1-2: "Now the Spirit speaketh . . ."

II. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR BY CULTIVATING A PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD WORSHIP.

A. Worship is a privilege, not a chore (Psalms 122:1—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into . . .")

B. John 4:24. Three vital things about worship:

1. Right object—God. We assemble, not to please ourselves, but to pay homage, reverence, honor to God.

2. Right attitude—in spirit. Not merely a form. Just performing certain acts or saying certain words is not enough. Must be done from the heart, the spirit, the inner person.

3. Right acts—in truth. (According to God's word—Jno. 17:17.)

III. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR BY GUARDING YOUR HEART.

A. Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all . . ."

1. New American Standard Bible: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

2. New Berkeley version: "Above all that you guard, watch over your heart, for out of it are the sources of life."

B. Impossible to over-estimate the importance of right thinking (Prov. 23:7—"For as he thinketh in . . .")

C. Luke 6:45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man . . ."

IV. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY LIVING EVERY DAY ONE AT A TIME.

- A. Matt. 6:34: "Take therefore no thought for the"
- B. Do not Live in the future (Jas. 4:13-14).
 - 1. "Can't wait until I get 16." (or 21.)
 - 2. If not happy now, you won't be later, unless change attitude.
- C. Do not live in the past.
 - 1. Forty year-old says, "I wish I were 21." Sixty-five year-old says, "I wish I were 40."
 - 2. At age 85, Caleb was not talking about the accomplishments of his past. He was saying: "Give me this mountain" (Josh 14:12).
- D. Phil 4:11: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have")

V. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY PUTTING THE KINGDOM OF GOD FIRST.

- A. Matthew 6:33. Need to learn this early in life.
- B. One reason some do not believe the Christian life is a happy life is they have tried to serve the Lord half-heartedly. Tried to straddle the fence. Tried to claim the benefits of being a Christian without whole-hearted service to the Lord.
- C. Matt. 6:24 "No man can serve two"
- D. Begin now to put God first in your giving. (Cf. II Cor. 9:7.)
- E. Gal. 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live"
- F. One who puts the kingdom first is really living; those who try to serve God without totally surrendering their lives to him are the most miserable people in the world.

VI. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY FORGETTING SELF AND SERVING OTHERS.

- A. John 13:1-17 Jesus washed the feet of the disciples.
- B. Thinking of self makes one miserable.
 - 1. Problem in the home. Husband and wife should forget selves, and concentrate on making other one happy.
 - 2. Some in the church come unglued because they think only of themselves, and whether or not others are treating them right.
- C. In affluent time such as we enjoy, it is easy for young people to get the idea the world owes them a living. Don't make that mistake.
- D. Do something for someone TODAY. See if it does not bring you more happiness than it does them. That is the reason the "Secret Sister" program is so valuable; it involves people in doing things for others.

VII. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY LEARNING TRUE CONTENTMENT.

- A. Outward circumstances do not determine contentment (Phil. 4:11).
 - 1. Philippians was written from a Roman prison. Instead of bitterness on the part of its author, joy comes through.
 - 2. Jesus said: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth" (Luke 12:15).
- B. Abraham Lincoln said: "Most people are about as happy as they decide to be."

VIII. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY CULTIVATING A PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD WORK.

- A. Gen. 2:15: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." That was before man sinned. Work was not a punishment for sin.
- B. As stated earlier, it is easy for children to grow up without learning to work.. Those who are older had to work when we were growing up. We have mistakenly shielded or children from working. We determined we wanted life to be easier for them. It was easier while they were growing up, but harder after they are grown, for they have not learned the value and the joy of work.
- C. Eph. 4:28 "Let him that stole steal no more"

IX. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY DEVELOPING YOUR TALENTS.

- A. Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of the talents.
- B. So much easier to develop our abilities while we are young.
- C. Not all have the same abilities. I Corinthians compares the church to a body with all its members.

X. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY READING AND STUDYING YOUR BIBLE DAILY.

- A. I Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your . . ."
- B. Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus overcame every temptation by using the word of the Lord.
- C. I Cor. 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you . . ."
- D. Psalms 119:11 "Thy word have I hid . . ."

XI. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY DEVELOPING GOOD HABITS OF PRAYER.

- A. I Thess. 5:17-18 "Pray without cesaing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
- B. Phil 4:6-7 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by . . ."

XII. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY LEARNING TO FORGIVE.

- A. Eph. 4:32 "And be ye kind one to another . . ."
- B. Matthew 6:12 Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we . . ."
- C. Some of the most miserable people are the ones dying of "grudge-itis."
- D. A lack of forgiveness keeps us from being genuinely penitent. One who is genuinely penitent has no trouble forgiving others.

XIII. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR/BY BEING FAITHFUL.

- A. Rev. 2:10 "Be thou faithful . . ."
- B. Always live so as to be able to say: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the . . ." (II Tim. 4:6-8).
- C. Hardships may come, but remember: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is . . ." (II Cor. 4:16-18).

CONCLUSION

Remember: "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death" (Prov. 12:28).

When Jesus wanted to teach a lesson on marriage in Matthew 19, he went all the way back to the very first marriage and based his lesson on that. In studying any Bible subject, there is a great deal to be said for going back to the very first mention of that thing in the Bible, and learning what we can about it in its original form. For example, if you want to know about the grace of God, go to its very first mention in the Bible in Genesis 6:8. See how the word *grace* is used there, and then apply what you learn to the verses in the New Testament which declare that we are saved by grace.

The first occurrence of the word *worship* in the Bible is in Genesis 22:5 in connection with Abraham's offering Isaac as a burnt offering. Genesis 22:1-13 says:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

Let us see from this original use of the word if we can get a clearer understanding of what is involved in the matter of worship. We learn several things from this account. We learn:

DISCUSSION

I. WORSHIP MUST BE BASED ON THE WORD OF GOD.

- A. The only reason offering Isaac was acceptable worship is that God told him to do it.
 1. When he offered Isaac, he was acting on faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).
 2. That's the thing that made Abel's offering acceptable. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4).
- B. What if he had offered Isaac without God's authorizing it? Would be murder.
- C. But suppose he had done something else, like offering a lamb, or sending Isaac away as he had sent Ishmael away?
- D. If it's going to be worship, it has to be what God said. We are not free to worship God just any way we choose.
- E. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).
- F. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).
- G. Fact Abraham might not be able to explain just exactly why things were as they were did not keep

him from doing what God said. Look at Isaac's question.

II. WORSHIP INVOLVES AN ACT OR SOME ACTS.

- A. "I and the lad will go yonder and worship..." (Genesis 22:5).
- B. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promise: offered up his only begotten son" (Hebrews 11:17).
- C. This not something he could sit at home and do in his mind. Not something someone else could do for him.
- D. Worship is not just an attitude. It is "homage paid."

III. WORSHIP INVOLVES A COSTLY PRESENTATION.

- A. In his case, God had said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2).
- B. "And [David] the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver" (II Samuel 24:24).
 - 1. Many people are perfectly content to try to worship God without its costing them anything.
 - 2. But such is not worship.
- C. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).
- D. Not merely the gift of our money, but of our minds, our lips, our bodies.
- E. Abraham could not do what he did on this occasion with the same degree of casualness with which some come here each Sunday. Do not open their mouths to sing. Sleep during the service, etc.
- F. Sometimes people say, "I didn't get much out of the service today." Ask Abraham what he expects get out of the worship as he was going up that mountain. And as he is returning, ask him if he got anything out of the worship.

IV. WORSHIP INVOLVES A SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

- A. "I and the lad will go yonder and worship." He left some things behind that might have been a hindrance to his worshipping the Almighty.
- B. The affairs of life need to be left behind. Problems on the job should be left behind when we come to worship. So should Saturday's football game. Can you imagine that, while Abraham was binding Isaac and reaching for the knife, he was thinking, "I wonder if that spotted cow has had her calf yet"?
- C. Do you suppose he was wondering what Sarah was going to have for dinner when he got home? No! All these things were shut out. He was here to worship God.
- D. Self-interest has no place here. Not a question of everything's going to suit him.
- E. The church at Corinth, with their problems over who prophesied, who led the prayers, who led the singing, would not fit into this kind of worship at all.
- F. This mountain top where Abraham came to worship is God's place. Giving honor and adoration to him in the way he has prescribed is the only thing that matters. Everything else is excluded.

V. WORSHIP RESULTS IN BLESSINGS TO THE WORSHIPER.

- A. "And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast

- obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:15-18).
- B. No doubt Abraham ascended that mountain with a heavy heart, but as he comes back down he has a spring in his step and a song in his heart.
 - C. Another blessing: A greater appreciation for his son.
 - D. Another: He now knows his faith in and devotion to God is strong enough to cause him to do whatever God told him to do.
 - E. Still another: What kind of example did this furnish for Isaac? Suppose someone had said to Isaac years later, "Did your father really have a great deal of faith?" Contrast Lot.
 - F. No man can worship God acceptably, and come away poorer as a result thereof.
 - G. Question: Why did God want Isaac as a burnt offering? Answer: He didn't. He wanted Abraham. And he knew he had him if he was willing offer Isaac.
 - H. How far are you willing to go to obey God?

CONCLUSION

Here is worship. Here is a soul in tune with God, offering up his most precious possession. But not only did he offer a lad, but he offered the soul, the heart, the mind of a daddy.

SOME APPOINTMENTS GOD HAS MADE WITH MAN

Mark 6:1-7

We live in a time when appointments are necessary. If one needs to see a doctor, he must make an appointment. If a woman wants to get her hair fixed, she calls for an appointment. If one is going to get help in filling out his income tax forms, he makes an appointment. If a parent wishes to talk to his child's school teacher, he calls for an appointment.

In Mark 16:1-7 we read about an appointment Jesus made with his disciples:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

The disciples had to be reminded of that appointment. They obviously thought his death cancelled that appointment, but it did not. So Matthew 28:16 says, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." There they saw Jesus, and he gave them what we call the Great Commission.

God has made some appointments with all of us. Notice some of them:

DISCUSSION**I. GOD HAS MADE AN APPOINTMENT TO SAVE THOSE WHO OBEY THE GOSPEL.**

- A. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9).
- B. God does not force anyone to keep this appointment. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9).
- C. But he will suffer the consequences of not keeping it. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thessalonians 1:6-9).
- D. Obedience includes baptism (Acts 10:48; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). One cannot obey the gospel and not be baptized.
- E. God has no appointment to save any except those who obey the gospel.
- F. Sometimes one will ask, "How will I know I'm saved when I obey the gospel?" The answer is that God keeps his appointments.

II. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH EVERY CHRISTIAN IN THE ASSEMBLY.

- A. Hebrews 10:23-25: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."
- B. Some seem not to realize the importance of this appointment.
 - 1. Sleep late on Sunday morning, and then take L. S. that night. (Or go fishing, or to the races.)
 - 2. What an insult it must be to God, for one to take so lightly his appointment with God.

- C. If you wonder why so much is said from this pulpit about the importance of faithful and regular attendance, remember that it is one of God's appointments.

III. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH EVERY CHRISTIAN AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

- A. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).
- B. "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:24).
- C. Lord's Supper to be eaten on first day of every week. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).
- D. Those who eat only once a month, once a quarter, or once a year are not meeting the appointment God has made with them.

IV. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH EVERY CHRISTIAN ON THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK TO GIVE AS HE HAS PROSPERED.

- A. First Corinthians 16:1-2 says, "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."
1. The phrase "as God hath prospered him" means we are to give in proportion to what we receive.
 2. For example, the Jews living under the law of Moses were required to give a tenth.
 3. Certainly Christians should do more than those under the law.
- B. Will a person be lost just for not giving as he should?
1. Rich young ruler (Mark 10).
 2. So far as we know, that was the sin that condemned the rich man of Luke 16.
- C. The widow's mites teach us that all can give (Luke 21).
- D. Since Jesus measures our giving by the amount of our sacrifice, then \$10.00 given by one may be more than \$300.00 given by another.
- E. Our giving must also be done cheerfully and according to what we plan and purpose. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- F. In order for us to keep the appointment God has made with us, we must give:
1. Each Sunday,
 2. According to our prosperity,
 3. According to our plan and purpose,
 4. And cheerfully.
- G. Do you always keep this appointment God has made with you?

V. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH EACH CHRISTIAN IN A SECRET PLACE.

- A. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6).
- B. How many times during the past week have you prayed in secret?
1. If not at all, why?
 2. Do you think prayer makes no difference? If so, then you are accusing God of not keeping his appointments.
- C. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).
- D. "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- E. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:7-11).

VI. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH EACH CHRISTIAN IN HIS CHRISTIAN DUTY.

- A. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).
- B. This includes overcoming temptation to sin. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).
- C. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

VII. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH MAN AT DEATH.

- A. These appointments we have mentioned thus far are optional; you do not have to keep a one of them. But this is one appointment you will keep.
- B. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).
- C. The Bible tells us that Methuselah lived 969 years. But the story of his life ends with these three words: "and he died" (Genesis 5:27).
- D. In First Kings 2:2 King David said, "I go the way of all the earth."
- E. Man may travel to the distant planets; he may find a cure for cancer or for AIDS; he may discover yet more marvelous things than the computers we now use so commonly; But he will never discover a way to keep from meeting that appointment he has with God at death.
- F. That being the case, then doesn't it make sense to prepare for that inevitable event?

VIII. GOD HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH ALL MEN AT THE JUDGMENT.

- A. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).
- B. "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
- C. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).
- D. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).
- E. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12-15).
- F. This appointment at the judgment is another appointment you will keep.

CONCLUSION

Those of us who are Christians, because of our love for you, plead with you to keep your appointment with God in obeying the gospel, in attending the services, at the Lord's table, in giving as you should, in the secret place, in doing your Christian duty.

But no one will plead with you to keep your appointment with God at death, or at the judgment. In view of this fact, all of us should hasten to keep all these other appointments. Then we will not fear death or the judgment when they come.

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR WORSHIP?

Psalms 95:1-2

Psalms 95:1-2 says: "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." This is one of many calls to worship found in the Psalms. (Perhaps the best known is the 100th Psalm: "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.")

Many find worship dull and boring. Some are seeking to change worship to make it more exciting. But we need to remember that we worship, not to please ourselves, but to please God. If you find worship dull and boring, then something needs to be changed. But it is not what we do in worship that needs changing; that is prescribed by God, and God's prescription must be followed (John 4:24). If worship in spirit and in truth is not meeting with your approval, then you are what needs changing.

In order for our worship to be acceptable to God and edifying to us, we should give ourselves a three-fold examination. This examination should be with reference to:

DISCUSSION

I. OUR ACCORD WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS.

- A. This does not mean we should be at peace with sin and error.
 1. Paul wrote: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom 12:18).
 2. But that we should not be guilty of any wrong-doing to any fellow human being.
- B. It means rather that we should be sure our dealings with our fellow human beings are what they should be.
 1. The psalmist wrote: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Ps. 24:3-4).
 2. Jesus said: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).
 3. Jesus said also: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15). ~~One man told me he had quit the church because he could not forgive his brother.~~
- C. Our relationship to others must be right on our part, or else we cannot worship acceptably.

II. OUR HARMONY WITH GOD.

- A. One must be obedient to the gospel of Christ in order to worship acceptably.
 1. II Thes. 1:6-10: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In

- flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."*
2. Ephesians 2:12: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."
 3. Ephesians 2:19-20: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."
- B. Not only must one have obeyed the gospel, but he must be living the faithful Christian life.
1. Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 2. John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."
 3. Matt. 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
- C. One cannot worship acceptably unless he is in the right relationship with God.

III. OUR ATTITUDES.

- A. We must have an attitude of recognition of our own unworthiness.
1. Psa. 51:1-4: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." 5-15
 2. Isa. 6:5: "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
 3. Luke 5:8: "When Simon Peter saw [the miracle of the great draught of fishes], he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."
 4. I Cor. 15:9: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."
 5. Our society is being oriented toward making everybody feel good about himself, no matter how bad he has been. Anything that causes one to feel guilt is taboo. But the gospel of our Lord should cause us to know we are unworthy to be God's children, and were it not for God's marvelous grace, our sins would doom us eternally.
- B. We must have an attitude of gratitude.
1. Luke 17:17: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" 11-19
 2. Jas. 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
 3. I Cor. 4:7: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as

if thou hadst not received it?" This was talking about their miraculous spiritual gifts. But some act that way about all their blessings.

C. We must have an attitude of recognition of God's magnificence and power.

1. Job 26:14, Job had talked about the magnificence of God's creation, and then he said: "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?"
2. Isa. 40:22: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."
3. Isa. 57:15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."
4. Psa. 8:3-4: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"
5. Amos 4:13: "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name."

D. We must have an attitude of recognition of God's holiness.

1. Isa. 6:3: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." W. 1-7
2. Deut. 32:4: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."
3. Rev. 4:8: "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

E. We must have an attitude of recognition of God's mercy.

1. Psa. 103:17: "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."
2. John 3:16 emphasizes God's mercy: "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."
3. Titus 3:4-5: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

F. We must have an attitude of Recognition of God's severity.

1. II Cor. 5:11: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
2. Rom. 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."
3. Heb. 10:31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
4. Heb. 12:29: "For our God is a consuming fire."

G. We must have an attitude of recognition of eternity.

1. Matt. 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the

2. righteous into life eternal."
John 11:26: "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

CONCLUSION

Summary: In order for one to worship, he must honestly be able to pass a three-fold examination: (1) He must be in accord with his fellow human beings, (2) he must sustain the right relationship with God through obedience to the gospel and faithful Christian living, and (3) he must have the right attitude. If one can pass this three-fold self-examination, then, and only then, is he prepared to worship.

If there is something lacking on your part, now is the time to make whatever corrections need to be made.

AVOIDING REGRETS IN LIFE

TEXT: Psalm 51

Intro. 1. Rehearse sin of David with Bathsheba. A reading of this chapter (Psa. 51) has convinced most that it was written after that sin.

2. When it was written is hard to determine.

--Could have been written just after Nathan's parable (tell it) David confessed his sin on that occasion, and perhaps shortly after that he wrote the Psalm. (Vs. 3)--
"My sin is ever before me."

--However, it seems to me that this Psalm was probably written sometime later. the fact that he said, "My sin is ever before me" would indicate that this was something he had pondered for a good long while. He is still fully cognizant of the greatness of the sin which he committed. He was a man after God's own heart (Acts 7). That's not referring to his repentance over the sin with Bathsheba, because it is said in the OT long before the sin was committed. Yet, despite the fact that he was a man after God's own heart, he committed a terrible sin and had to live with the knowledge of that sin for as long as he lived on this earth.

3. He may have written this Psalm when one of his sons was murdered by another one of his sons.

-Or when one of his sons raped his half sister.

-Or when his baby died

-Or about the time he was in battle with his own son, Absalom.

-Or after his son Absalom was slain. "Oh Absalom, Absalom....."

4. I don't know the occasion of writing, but I know the sin David was talking about.

--Didn't refer to sin in the plural, but in singular: "My sin..."

5. David was living with regret because of his sin.

6. "Regret" is not in the Bible, but the thought is there.

--demonstrated in "My sin is ever before me." Just saying, "I am living with regret because of my sin I have committed."

--We ought to live to avoid regret.

7. 2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. (KJV)

--"Sorrow" is used twice here. One which leads to repentance, godly sorrow.

"Repentance" used twice. There is something which is not to be repented of. Some things we do which we never have to regret. Never have to repent. Never have to feel any remorse at all. What a wonderful life if we could look back and say, "I've never done a single thing which I regret." None of us can truthfully say that.

--We all live with some regret, but we all ought to try to live in such a way as

to avoid all the regret we can. For here and hereafter.

7. Luke 16 -- Rich man and Lazarus.

--Rich fared sumptuously. Poor man suffered.

--Observe that while the rich man was in torment he was in a state of remorse and regret. Not only suffering agony from the flame, but also from the fact that he could remember the things which had taken place on the earth. Conscious. Think of what he remembered. Looked back and felt regret. He is still there today, and still regretting. I don't know all that was wrong in his life. Wasn't lost because he was rich. Lost because of sin.

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE WHO HAD REGRETS:

--we need to study these and then make up our minds that we are going to try to live in such a way that we will have no regrets about this day or this week.

1. Adam and Eve.

A. Don't eat of the fruit of the tree. "In the day you eat thereof..."

B. I Tim. 2 -- Eve was deceived in the transgression. Believed a lie. Both of them sinned. Driven out of the garden of Eden. Adam worked by sweat/briars. Pain with childbearing. All of suffering of this world came into being.

--if they could go back and change what they did, don't you think they would? All of the tears, sorrow, death they brought? How would you like to live with the responsibility of bringing all of these things into the world?

2. The people of Noah's day, Genesis 6

A. Sons of God married wicked women.

B. Every imagination was only evil continually.

C. God brought flood. Eight people left alive on the earth. Entire population was wiped out with the exception of 8 people.

D. Think about the fact that all those people who died in the flood are still living today--not upon this earth but in a conscience existence just like the rich man of Lk 16.

1 Peter 3:18-21 --For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: ¹⁹By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; ²⁰Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by

water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

--They were in prison when Peter wrote, and they are there today.

- They are locked up in that Hadean realm reserved for judgement.

E. You and I can be sure that they are still regretting the sins which brought destruction upon the world in Genesis 6-8.

3. Genesis 13 -- Abraham and Lot.

A. Review text. Abraham feels responsibility for his brother's son. Reared him.

B. Abraham and Lot split. Not problem between them, but between their employees.

C. Abraham offered Lot a choice. Pitched his tent toward Sodom.

D. Genesis 19. See Lot and two daughters. Wife is pillar of salt. They are standing on the mountain with the city of Sodom behind them destroyed. I can just imagine that Lot was recognizing the fact that Sodom, with some of his children, is gone. Wife is gone. Perhaps he thought, "I wish I had never seen the Jordan valley!" "I wish I had chosen another land!"

E. Lot lived to regret a foolish decision he had made when he was a young man and could have still had the right influence over his children so they would be spiritually minded and have their hearts set on things above. But now too late.

--the terrible thing about regret is that you can weep and mourn and cry but you just can't go back.

4. Israel, Numbers 13 -- Israel has grown large, and come out of Egypt thru the leadership of Moses.

A. Send spies into land of Canaan. "The land is as God told us. Milk and Honey. But the people are so big, and we are like grasshoppers..."

B. Joshua and Caleb said "We can do it, our God will fight for us."

C. The people believed the report of the unbelievers. They sat down and cried all night. God thru Moses (14:30-33) said that their children would enter into Canaan, but they would not. Not a one of them, because of their unbelief. 40 years they wandered in that Moabite wilderness.

D. Can you imagine living 40 years with the regret that you did not have enough faith to take God at His word, and do what God said in entering the land of Canaan?

5. Judas Iscariot

- A. One of the 12 hand picked apostles of Christ.
- B. Had a chance to sell the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. More interested in things material than with those things spiritual. How about you?
- C. Before long realized he had made a mistake.

Matt. 27:1-3

--Brought back the silver: "I have betrayed innocent blood!" They didn't care. He tied a rope around his neck, and the other end on a limb, and baled out.

- D. Acts 1 -- He fell down headlong and burst asunder and all of his bowels gushed out.

- E. Peter said "that he might go to his own place"

--Like the rich man of Luke 16, Judas, thru the ceaseless ages of eternity, has regretted the mistake that he made. Yet regretting it could not do away with it. His repentance wasn't repentance in the biblical sense--that which one must do to be forgiven--the Greek word for his repentance simply means "one filled with remorse/sorrow for what he had done."

6. Ananias and Sapphira

- A. Acts 5 -- Review text
- B. "Ye have lied to God."
- C. If the Bible is true, and it is, Ananias and Sapphira for the last 19 centuries have been regretting what they did. It cannot be undone, it never shall be undone. They'll have to regret it throughout all eternity.

7. Rich young ruler. Mark 10

- A. "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
- B. "Sell whatsoever thou hast..."
- C. He was sad at that saying. Walked away.
- D. I do not know a single other thing about this young man-- Never mentioned again in the Bible. And yet I can tell you one thing: This man lived to regret the decision he made.

--I wonder what took place when it came time for this man to die.

--Perhaps he grew old and was pressing his dying pillow. I wonder if he had the chance to reflect upon this incident from his youth when he met the Lord. If he did have that opportunity, I know he regretted the decision he made. And I know that for the last 1900 years he has been regretting turning his back on his best opportunity he'd ever have to serve the Lord. He is continuing to live with regret.

8. Others-

A. Martha in Luke 10-- "Thou are careful and troubled..."

(There are only two occasions on which someone told the Lord to rebuke somebody. In both of these the Lord rebuked the one who requested the act. The other was "Speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." In both of these the problem was with materialistic thinking. --having our minds on things on this earth, not on the things above.)

B. Rich fool Luke 12

--pulled down his barns to build bigger barns -- forgot about the needs of others. Lived to regret it.

C. Demas --II Tim. 4:10

--suppose you could walk into the corridors of hell today and talk to Demas. "Demas, did you make a wise decision when you gave up your relationship with the apostle Paul and the Gospel he preached so you could lay hold on the things of this world? Did you do the wise thing?"

--He'd say, "NO! What a tragic mistake I've made. I've been regretting it for 1900 years!"

--I wouldn't be surprised if the greatest trouble in the church today-- even right here--is the Demas trouble. Overly concerned about the things of this world, and they won't live right. Won't give up their sins. Won't faithfully attend services. Won't give like they ought to give. Won't pray or study their Bibles. Why you can't look at them on the street during the week and tell the difference between them and those who don't even claim to be Christians. Demas problems. You'll regret it.

--You'll never regret living a clean life. Avoiding drinking; smoking; wearing immodest apparel; dancing; cursing; drugs. But you'll regret participating in those things.

--Would to God I had the power this morning to get you to hate the world and love God.

E. Laodiceans -- Revelation 3

--a bunch of lukewarm members of the church. I wonder how many of us fall into that category? But they regret that today. If they didn't repent, they have regretted that for many years.

F. Acts 24 -- Felix "When I have a convenient season..."

G. Acts 26, 28 Agrippa -- "Almost thou persuadest me..."

--Some in this audience would fall into the category with one of these men.

"I'm almost ready to obey; to be restored." But the time never came, so far as we know, for these two men. Question: Do you suppose Felix regrets what he did? Suppose Agrippa, who wouldn't become a Christian, is in heaven today with no

regrets? Or in hell today with no regrets? The Bible being true, they have been regretting for hundreds of years their inability to stand up and do what was right when they had the opportunity.

Conclusion:

1. Purpose of this lesson is two-fold:

A. To get you to live in such a way that you will not have to look back and regret what you did in this life. William Cullen Bryant: "So live, that when..."

Approach thy grave as one who can say, "I have no regrets." Wouldn't that be wonderful to lie down at the end of the way and say that?

Someone might say, "It's too late for that."

B. To remind you that even though no deed in the past can be undone, the guilt of sin can be taken away. Whatever you have done. Complete forgiveness/absolution from every sin.

Once a fine looking man in his 20's walked into my office and said, "I have a problem. I'm a homosexual. Can I go to heaven?" I said, "Do you mean go to heaven and keep living the life you're living?" He said, "Yes." I said, "No you can't." He wanted to see it in the Bible. He said then, "If I stop this and repent and live as God would have me live, can I go to heaven?" I said, "If you will repent of your sin and obey Christ with determination to live as God would have you live, you will start today with a clean slate." Tears ran down his cheeks.

The baptism of Jesus is an interesting occurrence. It has caused some to argue that baptism cannot be for the purpose of obtaining remission of sins, for Jesus had no sins. While it is true that Jesus had no sins, we will see that the baptism of Jesus and the circumstances surrounding it show beyond doubt that baptism is for the purpose of obtaining remission of sins.

While this occasion furnishes the second *voice from heaven* we are considering in this series, it is the first recorded time when God spoke from heaven in the presence of Jesus himself. Think with me about this particular event and the circumstances surrounding it.

DISCUSSION

I. SOME INCIDENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Baptism is peculiar to the New Testament. Some religionists say it was practiced under the O.T.
 1. This assertion is without support.
 2. Washings may have been called "baptisms," but what John practiced originated with John.
- B. The purpose of John's baptism was two-fold:
 1. It was "for the remission of sins." "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).
 2. But look at John 1:30-31: "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." John's baptism was to make Christ manifest to Israel. He did that very thing on this occasion.
- C. John was called "the Baptist" to denote the work he did, and not to identify him with some religious group.
 1. He was never a member of the church Jesus built. He died too soon to be a member of it.
 2. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).
 3. Suppose I were to say that there is not a better volleyball player than Mary in the Junior class, but that all those girls in the Senior class are better than she.
- D. Baptism was considered important by Jesus.
 1. Not merely passing by, but walked, probably, the distance from Galilee to Jordan, to be baptized. A distance of seventy or eighty miles.
 2. Would anyone say he placed too much emphasis on baptism? Sometimes we are told that.
 3. There have always been two attitudes toward baptism. Both of them seen in Luke 7:29-30:
 - a. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John" (Verse 29).
 - b. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Verse 30)
- E. John's reluctance to baptize Jesus is of great significance. But remember, John's baptism was:
 1. A "baptism of repentance." "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).
 2. It was administered to those confessing their sins. "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:6).
 3. And it was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).
 4. On these considerations, Jesus simply was not a proper candidate for baptism. He had no sins for which to repent, none to confess, and none to be forgiven (Hebrews 4:15).

5. But this would put him in the very category of those baptized by denominational preachers. A preacher once told me, "I certainly want to be sure he has been forgiven before I baptize him."
6. John was reluctant to baptize Jesus, for he knew he had no sins. (This is a marvelous testimony to the sinlessness of Jesus.)
7. Then why was Jesus baptized?
 - a. Notice Matthew 3:14-15: "But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."
 - b. Notice the words *suffer* and *N-O-W*. And then the words, "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."
 - c. Exception to the rule.

II. THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN

- A. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17).
- B. Three miraculous manifestations attest to the deity of Jesus on this occasion.
 1. The heavens were opened.
 - a. "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1).
 - b. "And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).
 2. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the bodily form of a dove. All four of the gospel writers mention this, though John does not mention the baptism itself or the voice from heaven at his baptism, he mentions the Spirit's descending upon him.
 - a. Matthew 3:16: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."
 - b. Mark 1:10: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him."
 - c. Luke 3:22: "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."
 - d. John 1:32-34: "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."
 3. The voice from heaven.
 - a. Mark and Luke record the voice as saying, "Thou art my beloved Son..." while Matthew records the words, "This is my beloved Son...."
 - b. Matthew's account shows the voice was heard by those present, and was intended to identify Jesus as the Son of God. No excuse for any of those present refusing to believe in him.
 - c. It is probably the case that the actual wording was as recorded by Mark and Luke.
 - (1) Psalms 2:7 says, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

(2) Hebrews 1:5 quotes this prophecy and applies it to Christ.

- C. "This is my *beloved* Son...."
 - 1. The word *beloved* is from the Greek ἀγαπητός: "beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite" (Thayer).
 - 2. No excuse for a refusal to recognize Jesus as being the Christ.
- D. The phrase *I am well pleased* translates one word (aorist tense of εὐδοκέω) in the Greek text, and the aorist tense demands a single act, that is, not done over and over again or repeated.
 - 1. So this statement does not refer to the fact God is pleased with the way Jesus conducted himself on earth, though he certainly was. It rather refers to some event in the past. Probably the fact that the Father was pleased to find in his Son a solution to the problem of sin.
 - 2. Same sense as in Isaiah 53:10-11: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."
 - 3. What does this say about God's love for man?

III. THE TRINITY

- A. This incident shows there are three different persons which go to make up the Godhead. Brother Guy N. Woods used to say there is one deity, and three persons who possess that deity.
 - 1. God the Father, who spoke from heaven.
 - 2. God the Son, to whom and about the Father spoke.
 - 3. God the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the Son in the form of a dove.
- B. One would have to close his eyes to the facts of the case as here recorded to believe there is only one person who possesses deity, or who is God.

CONCLUSION

This event marked the beginning of what we call the personal ministry of Jesus. It is of such significance, and is surrounded by such glory and majesty, that it is difficult for one to understand how the religious world in general attaches such little importance to the act of baptism.

Matthew 7:13-14 says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." We sometimes hear people say that life is complicated. I suppose in a sense that is true. But in another sense these brief words of Jesus summarize what the will of God is for your life and mine. They lay out the basics of what life is all about, of what life should be.

In these words of Jesus there are suggested at least five pairs of opposites, and in connection with each pair every accountable person must make a choice. Notice them:

DISCUSSION

I. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) BASIC INVITERS.

A. The first, of course, is Jesus.

1. Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. {29} Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
2. If you accept this invitation, there are certain obligations imposed upon you. That is, you must commit yourself to live according to the will of him who died for you.
 - a. Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - b. Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
3. But this is the best life one can live. God created us, he knows us, and he knows what we need to live full and happy lives. Furthermore he loves us, and wants us to be happy. We can rest assured, therefore, that the life of service to Christ is the richest, fullest, and happiest life one can live. Not only so, but when this life is over, those who have accepted this invitation will be given another. It is one that is worded as follows: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

B. The other inviter, of course, is Satan.

1. He is called: *the accuser of our brethren, the deceiver, the evil one, our enemy, father of lies, god of this world, a murderer, the prince of the powers of the air, the prince of this world, the tempter, and the serpent* (among other things).
2. It is he who is responsible for all the sickness, pain, death, sorrow, and heartache that is so much a part of every human life.
3. He is a real person, and he is dead serious about his efforts to destroy all he can. First Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."
4. Do not be deceived into thinking that the punishment for sin will not be as bad as it is pictured in the Bible.

C. Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Which invitation will you accept. You have it within your power to accept or reject either of them. But you must accept one or the other.

II. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) BASIC MESSAGES.

BOBBY DUNCAN'S SERMONS

- A. One is the message of the Bible, God's truth.
 - 1. It can be known. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - 2. It can be understood. Ephesians 3:2-5: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: {3} How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, {4} Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) {5} Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
 - 3. It must be obeyed. First Peter 1:22-23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: {23} Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
 - 4. We are taught to walk in it.
 - a. Philippians 3:16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."
 - b. Second John 6: "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."
 - 5. This message will be the standard by which we will be finally judged. John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
- B. The other message is false doctrine, or false teaching.
 - 1. Many seem to think there is no such thing.
 - 2. Psalms 119:104: "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."
 - 3. Second Corinthians 11:13: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."
 - 4. Second Peter 2:1: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."
 - 5. Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."
 - 6. First John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - 7. What is false teaching? Every teaching that is contrary to the teaching of the word of God.
- C. Do not be deceived into thinking it does not make any difference what one believes.
 - 1. Second Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. {11} And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: {12} That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - 2. Second John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. {10} If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: {11} For he that biddeth him God speed partaker of his evil deeds."

III. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) GATES.

- A. One is the strait gate. (Not spelled *s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t*, though there is a sense in which we might say it is *s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t*.)
1. The Greek στενός is defined as meaning *narrow* or *strait*. The dictionary defines *strait* as meaning, "a narrow passage of water joining two larger bodies of water." It also means "narrow or constricted."
 2. Jesus did not use that word by accident. He used it to emphasize that one does not enter into the way which leads to heaven in just any way he might choose. We have been accused of being narrow for teaching that there is one exclusive way to get on the road that leads to heaven. But Jesus is the one who said the gate is *strait*.
 3. What does that strait gate involve?
 - a. Believing the gospel (Mark 16:15-16). Includes believing Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.")
 - b. Repenting. Greek: "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins" (Thayer). Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Cannot get through the gate that puts one on the way to heaven without repentance. The gate is too strait for it to be otherwise.
 - c. Confessing Christ.
 - (1) Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. {33} But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."
 - (2) Mark 8:38: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."
 - d. Being baptized for the forgiveness of sins.
 - (1) Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? {4} Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
 - (2) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - (3) First Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
 - (4) Galatians 3:26-27: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
 - (5) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. {16} He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 4. There is no other gate, and no other way to pass through this gate.
 5. Note: By doing these things one is saved from all past sins, and is now a member of the church of Christ, God's family.

- B. The other gate is described as being *wide*. It is so wide that we can accurately say it includes all except the strait gate.

IV. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) WAYS.

- A. One is the narrow way.
1. It is hemmed in on either side by the word of God.
 - a. Psalms 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
 - b. Psalms 119:130: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."
 - c. Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: {19} And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."
 - d. Hebrews 8:5: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."
 - e. 2 Timothy 4:1-4: "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; {2} Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. {3} For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; {4} And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."
 2. It is too narrow for any kind of immorality.
 - a. Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, {20} Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, {21} 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."
 - b. It is a way of moral uprightness and faithfulness to Christ and his church.
 - c. Those travelling therein are militant in their challenge to sin and error, to atheism, to abortion, to homosexuality, to denominationalism.
 3. Our text says, "few there be that find it." Are you one of the few?
- B. The other way is the broad way.
1. It includes every way other than the narrow way.
 2. It may seem right. Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

V. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) DESTINIES.

- A. One destiny is life.
1. Jesus is called the bread of life (John 6:35).
 2. He offers to those who will come to him the "water of life" (Rev. 22:17), and the fruit of the "tree of life" (Rev. 22:14).
 3. In John 5:40 he rebuked those who would not come to him that they might have life.
 4. In John 6:68 Jesus is said to have the words of eternal life.

5. Revelation 2:10 promises a crown of life to those who are faithful.
 6. Second Timothy 1:10 says Christ abolished death and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
 7. Matthew 25:46 says the righteous shall go away into life eternal.
 8. We understand this eternal life to be talking about heaven.
- B. The other destiny is said to be destruction.
1. Second Thessalonians 1:9: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
 2. Second Peter 2:1: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."
 3. Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 4. It is not annihilation, but it is destruction.

CONCLUSION

I would emphasize that there are two (and only two) inviters, two (and only two) messages, two (and only two) gates, two (and only two) ways, and two (and only two) destinies.

A choice you must make. To fail to choose is to choose failure. If you do not choose to hear the message of Christ, to enter through the strait gate, to walk the narrow way that leads to life, then you have chosen the broad way to destruction. The fact the vast majority of people who live on the earth will be travelling that way with you will be of no comfort to you when you have come to the end of the way, and you hear those words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

I read somewhere that the best selling prescription drugs in the United States are Tagamet (an ulcer medication, which I believe can now be purchased over the counter without a prescription), Inderal (a hypertensive drug), and Valium (a tranquilizer). It is generally agreed by those in the medical profession that more than half of the hospital beds are occupied by those with psychosomatic illnesses (physical ailments brought on by the way a person thinks).

Most Christians know the Bible teaches we are not to worry. Has this kept them from worrying? In many cases it has not. Christians have been known to be just as insecure as those who have no faith in the Lord at all. Add to this the fact they know they should not worry, and then they worry because they worry.

Jesus deals with this problem in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:24-34):

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

You will notice that the KJV uses the words "take no thought." The ASV says, "be not anxious." Some other translations, including a very fine one by brother Hugo McCord, say, "Do not worry."

The fact the Lord commands us not to worry should be reason enough for us not to worry. But the command not to worry is not an arbitrary command, like the command to be baptized. It is rather a command we would want to obey, even if it were not commanded. Even unbelievers do not want to be filled with anxiety.

In the passage we have read Jesus not only commands that we not be anxious, he tells us why anxiety is inconsistent with faith in God. Unbelievers may talk about the damage done by worry, or the futility of worrying, but they cannot possibly know the peace and tranquility which comes to those whose solution to the problem of anxiety is undaunted faith in God. Notice why the Christian should not be anxious.

DISCUSSION

I. BECAUSE THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN FOOD AND RAIMENT.

- A. Look at the question in verse 25: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"
- B. This question is a challenge to our standard for measuring success.
 1. We measure success by the clothes a man wears, the car he drives, the neighborhood he lives in.
 2. Recently a brother in Christ wrote a book, and the title was something like *How to be a Faithful Christian, Even Though You are Successful*. That sounds like there is a conflict between Christianity and success. I would say that the man who is a faithful Christian is successful.

- C. How much wealth a man may accumulate, how many people may know his name, how much political power he may have commended, how popular he may have been--none of these will matter at all when he is lying cold in his casket. Then his success will be measured only by whether or not he was a faithful Christian.

II. **BECAUSE YOU ARE OF GREATER VALUE THAN THE BIRDS, THE LILIES, THE GRASS.**

- A. Verse 26: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"
- B. Verses 28 & 29: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."
- C. Verse 30: "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"
- D. Is God going to care for his birds, his flowers, his grass, and neglect his children?
- E. So you see, being anxious or worrying, in addition to being a violation of the Lord's command, is not consistent with common sense, if one is a Christian.

III. **BECAUSE BEING ANXIOUS IS AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY.**

- A. Verse 27: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" You know the answer to that, don't you?
- B. Worry, by itself, has never accomplished one thing good. Poem: "Worry never climbed a hill;/ worry never paid a bill;/ worry never dried a tear;/ worry never calmed a fear;/ worry never darned a heel;/ worry never cooked a meal;/ worry never composed a song to sing; actually, worry never did a worthwhile thing."
- C. Somebody has said, "Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but it never gets you anywhere."
- D. Not only is it futile, but it is harmful.
1. Worry is believed to be a leading cause of heart trouble, high blood pressure, stomach disorders, and respiratory ailments. It is now suspected that it also contributes to the growth of cancer.
 2. Dr. Charles Mayo said, "I have never known a man to die from hard work, but many who have died from doubt."
- E. We worry about things in one of three categories:
1. Things that have already happened.
 - a. Can't undo the past. Notice Paul's statement: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).
 - b. If sin is involved we should seek and obtain God's forgiveness, then we must forgive ourselves and go on.
 2. Things which must happen, and are inevitable
 - a. Death, for example (Hebrews 9:27).
 - b. Prepare for the inevitable in the best way possible, and then let it come.
 3. Things which will never happen.
 - a. Some who have studied the matter have said that 85% of what we worry over never happens.
 - b. Ephesians 5:16: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). Life is too precious to waste in worrying.

IV. **BECAUSE ANXIETY IS A MARK OF UNBELIEF.**

- A. Notice the first part of verse 32: "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." The word "Gentiles" is here put for those who have no faith in God.
- B. Being anxious or worrying over material things is what one might expect from those who have no faith. Many years ago Granny Billingsley gave to Lois Ann and me a little ceramic ornament in the form of a bird. On it was engraved these words: "Said the Robin to the sparrow, 'I would really like to know / Why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so.' / Said the sparrow to the robin, / 'Friend, I think that it must be / That they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me.'"
- C. How can I worry, if I really have faith in Hebrews 13:5-6? "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
- D. How can I be anxious, if I really have faith in Philippians 4:6-7? "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (The words "be careful" here are from the same Greek word as "take [no] thought" in Matthew 6. The ASV says, "In nothing be anxious.")
- E. First Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (Words of an old song: "If you trust and never doubt / He will surely bring you out. / Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there." Only a lack of faith hinders our doing just that.
- F. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). What does that say of one who does not enjoy perfect peace?

V. **BECAUSE OUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS OUR NEEDS.**

- A. We often acknowledge in our prayers that God knows our needs better than we do.
- B. Look at the latter part of verse 32: "[F]or your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."
- C. Note that Jesus does not say merely that God knows our needs, but "your heavenly Father." He did not say, "My heavenly Father knows your needs," but "your Heavenly Father."
 - 1. If you knew some need of one of your children, and had the power to supply that need, would you do it? (Not talking about what he might want, but a real need.)
 - 2. Not asking if you would supply a need of one of my children, but of your own.
 - 3. It is my Father, my omnipotent heavenly Father, who knows my needs.
- D. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). What else could I ask? And how could I worry?

VI. **BECAUSE EACH DAY HAS ENOUGH TROUBLE OF ITS OWN.**

- A. Verse 34: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."
 - 1. RSV: "Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day."
 - 2. NASB: "Each day has enough trouble of its own."
- B. In other words, we should live one day at a time.
- C. Thomas Carlyle wrote: "Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand."
- D. In his book, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, Dale Carnegie has entitled the very first chapter, "Live in Day-Tight Compartments."
 - 1. Based on the ability of the captain of certain ships to press a button and--presto--there is

a clanging of machinery, and various parts of the ship are shut off from one another, shut off into watertight compartments.

2. We should not allow our lives to be ruined by what has happened in the past, or what may happen in the future. Live one day at a time.

CONCLUSION

The solution to the problem of anxiety is summed up in verse 33 of our text: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." What this says is, "Put God first in your life, and you won't have anything to worry about."

The word "added" is from a word the Greeks used to designate something thrown into a trade to make a bargain more attractive. What is it that is "added"? Food, clothing, and shelter. Our mistake is in thinking of these as necessities. They are not; they are of secondary importance.

Once we understand this, then our anxieties over these matters will vanish.

Why I Will Attend V.B.S.

I Attend Bible Classes Because

As long as I can remember, I have attended Bible classes. As a child, I am sure I went because of a godly mother, and then later, because of a godly father and mother.

But my reasons for attending Bible classes today are different. I confess the distinct possibility that, had it not been for parents who strongly believed in the importance of attending Bible classes, I would not be attending - would not even be a Christian - today. But my reasons for attending are greater than a habit formed in childhood.

I attend Bible classes because:

Discussion

I It is a Delightful Way to Obey a Scriptural Command

A. II Tim 2:15

"Study

B. II Pet. 1:5

"And beside this, giving

C. II Pet. 3:18

"But grow

D. I Tim. 4:13

"Till I come, give attendance...

E. John 5:39

"Search the Scriptures

II ... Of My Desire to Imitate First Century Christianity
 A. Acts 2:41-47 "Then they that gladly..."
 B. Acts 17:11 "These were more noble..."

III I Have a Son + a Daughter (I love the child at Adamsville + want to encourage them in sp. things)
 A. Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4
 B. Poem: "True Builder"

IV I Like to be With my Brothers + Sisters
 A. Ro. 12:10 "Be kindly affectioned..."
 B. 1 Jn. 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God and everyone that love God..."
 C. 1 Jn. 3:14 "We know that we have passed..."

V I Want to do Good, to abound in Good Works.
 A. Jas. 4:17 "Therefore to him..."
 B. Eccl. 9:10 "Whatever thy hand findeth..."
 C. Rev. 20:12, 13 "And I saw the..."
 D. Rev. 14:13 "Blessed are the dead..."
 E. Rev. 2:2, 9, 13, 19 "I know thy works" (7 times).
 F. Jas. 2:18 "Yea, a man may say, 'Thou hast faith...'"

VI I Want to be Consistent
 A. Tit. 1:16 "They profess that they know God, but in..."
 B.

II I Must Protect + Maintain Good Influence
 A. Mt. 5:13-16 *ye are the salt*
 B. Ro. 14:7 "For none of us"

VIII It Helps Me Keep My Spiritual Temperature High
 A. Rev. 3:15, 16 "I know thy works, that thou . . .
 B. . . ."

IX I Love the Church at Adamsville
 A. I Thes. 1:2 "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."
 B. . . ."

X I Respect the Eldership
 A. Acts 20:28
 B. Heb. 13:17 "Obey"

XI I Want to Keep my Scale of Values Properly Adjusted
 A. Mt. 6:33
 B. If the devil can get me to put X + the church in 2nd place, that's all he wants.

XII I Love the Truth
 A. II Thes. 2:10-12 "And with all deceivableness"
 B. Mt. 5:6

XIII I Love the Lord, & Revere God
 A. Lk. 6:46
 B. Jno. 14:15

XIV I Want to be a Good Example
 A. I Tim. 4:12 "...in word, conv., char., sp., faith, pur."
 B.

XV I Shall Be Judged by the Bible
 A. Jn. 12:48
 B.

Conclusion

15 reasons.

Can you think of one reason one should not attend?

By-Products of the Gospel

- I "Something produced in the making of something else. A secondary result; side effect." - Am. Her. Dict. of the Eng. Lang.
- II Purpose of gospel is that people might be saved from their sins. "And she shall bring a son, and . . ." (Mt. 1:21)
- A. From the guilt of sins (Acts 2:38)
- B. From its practice (Acts 3:26). "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning . . ."
- III Rel. world in general emphasizes the social and moral aspects of the gospel. These are only by-products, or secondary benefits. But let us notice some of these By-products:

Discussion

I Happiness

- A. Not primary purpose of gospel to make people happy here in this life. But happiness is a by-product.
- B. Phil. 4:6, 7 "Be careful for nothing; but in everything . . ."
- C. Will not necessarily keep you from the

hardships + heartaches of life that make people unhappy, but will give you a different view of these, + help you bear them.

W. of Heb. 11:13 "These all died in faith...."

II Good Relationship With Others

A. Ro. 12:18 "If it be possible...."

B. Sometimes not possible. Mt. 10:34, 35, 36
"Think not that I am come...."

C. But the principles of the gospel will make one the kind of person who will generally have a good rel. with others

1. Honesty, fairness, concern

2. Practice of the golden rule.

D. Father + mother, Husband + wife, Sons + daughters (Ex. 6⁵)

III Self-Esteem

A. Not talking about haughtiness or pride.

B. Prov. 16:18 "Pride goeth before...."

C. Jas. 4:6 "God resisteth the proud...."

D. 1 Pet. 5:6 "Humble yourselves in the sight...."

E. But to know we have obeyed God, + he has declared us forgiven of all sins; that we are his children; He will hear our prayers, etc. Gives us a feeling of self-esteem.

F. On the other hand, if one is not live as he should, the gospel will make him have guilt feelings (Heb. 4:12).

IV Good Physical Health

A. Not talking about what some refer to as Christian Science (Mary B. Eddy). Nor to the idea that Jesus died to heal our physical bodies, as some say.

B. But it is a fact that the principles of the gospel are those that make for good health.

1. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20 "What, know ye not...
2. Refrain from drunkenness.
3. Xians do not die with AIDS.

V Material Blessings

A. David Rockefeller. Give 10%; Save 10%;

Invest 10%. Retired as Pres. of Chase Manhattan Bank

B. Not always. But principles.

Conclusion

I. Gospel not do any of these for one who will not submit

II Is it great?

CHRISTIANS ONLY

- I. Some are saying, "We are not the only Christians, but we are Christians only." The idea is that there are Christians scattered throughout the denominational world. Are there Christians in all denominations?
- II. Essential to this study is that we all have in mind the same thing as being designated by the word Christian--one who has obeyed the gospel of Christ, and is living in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament in matters of religious practice, as well as in morals.

DISCUSSION

- I. SOME THINGS WE ARE NOT DISCUSSING.
 - A. Not discussing whether there are honest people, or good moral people scattered throughout the denominations.
 - B. Not discussing whether one may be scripturally baptized by a denominational preacher.
 - C. Not discussing whether it is possible for one, in his private study of the Bible, to learn what to do to be saved, and obey the gospel without ever coming into contact with a preacher who is a member of the church of Christ. Admittedly, this could happen, and, no doubt, has happened.
 - D. Not discussing whether such as the above might have joined one of the denominations. But while such could happen, probably has happened, and may happen again, it doesn't happen all that often, and certainly does not happen often enough to justify affirming, as some do, that there are "sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations." Furthermore, the fact that such may have happened does not justify the charge we are sectarian if we insist that:
- II. IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES THERE WERE NOT CHRISTIANS IN ALL DENOMINATIONS, OR IN ANY DENOMINATION.
 - A. This is admitted by all, for there were no denominations. Those saved were in the Lord's church (Acts 2:47).
 - B. This shows it is possible to be saved and not be in any denomination. Denominational preachers generally agree to this.
 1. Ask preacher of Denomination A: "Do you believe one can be a Christian and not belong to your denomination?" His answer would be, "Yes."
 2. "Does becoming a Christian make one a member of your denomination?" No.
 - C. This is not the same as saying one can become a Christian and not be a member of the church of Christ.

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT DOES NOT TEACH MEN TO JOIN OR FORM DENOMINATIONS.

- A. This also is admitted by preachers in denominations.
- B. This being so, the only reason we have denominations in the world is because men have left the teaching of the New Testament.
- C. The only way one can join a denomination is by leaving the teaching of the New Testament.
- D. Does it not also follow that all denominations will be abolished when all religious people return to the teaching of the New Testament?

IV. THOSE WHO ADHERE TO THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE NOT IN DENOMINATIONS.

- A. One may disagree, but does this not follow from what has already been admitted, i.e., that the N. T. does not lead people to join den.?
- B. One cannot get into a den. while strictly adhering to the N.T.
- C. Not only so, but the denominations, while claiming to adhere to the N.T., do not do so in reference to such matters as:
 - 1. the purpose and place of baptism (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27; etc.).
 - 2. the observance of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7).
 - a. "It is probable that the apostles and early Christians celebrated the Lord's supper on every Lord's day" (Albert Barnes).
 - b. "This is also an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians" (Pulpit Commentary).
 - c. ". . . intimating by this, that they were accustomed to receive the holy sacrament [sic] on each Lord's day" (Adam Clarke).
 - 3. the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship.

V. IF THERE ARE CHRISTIANS IN DENOMINATIONS, THEY SHOULD GET OUT, AND THE SOONER THEY GET OUT THE BETTER.

- A. Should a person remain in a place where he cannot stand for and practice that which the Bible teaches?
- B. Should he be in something one can get into only by leaving the N.T.?
- C. "But," says one, "the church of Christ is a denomination just like all the others." Well, if that is the case, then those of us in it need to get out. If that is the case, then those of us in it have left the N.T., for that is the only way one can get into a denomination.
- D. But the church of Christ is not a denomination, unless it can be shown that we have left the New Testament. Such cannot be shown, therefore the church of Christ is not a denomination.

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A DENOMINATION?

Matthew 16:18

Statement from the editors of *Wineskins*: "Our background and commitment is to the Church of Christ that was born of the American Restoration Movement. Our goal is to move that group closer to the church of Christ revealed in Scripture" (Volume I, Number 1, May 1992).

We hear many references made by those who want to change the church to "our fellowship," or "this fellowship" when they are speaking of the church. Sometimes the church is referred to as "our tradition." As far back as 1973 Lynn Anderson made the pronouncement from the pulpit at Highland in Abilene that the church of Christ is "one big, sick denomination."

That explains why these think they are free to make the changes they are trying to make; denominations started by men are owned by men, and men are free to do with them whatever they wish. God never intended the New Testament to be a guidebook for any human organization.

But is the church of Christ a denomination? If one affirms that it is, then he is morally obligated to tell us why it is. What makes it a denomination?

In this lesson I will show why the church of Christ, the one I am a member of, is not a denomination.

DISCUSSION

- I. **CALLING THE CHURCH A DENOMINATION DOES NOT MAKE IT A DENOMINATION.**
 - A. Some Jews in the first century called the church of Christ a sect, but that didn't make it a sect.
 1. "And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against" (Acts 28:21-22).
 2. They considered the church as being a heretical division of Judaism, but they were wrong.
 - B. Rubel Shelly, in a speech at Centerville, Tennessee on March 21, 1983, said: "I am trying to think my way out of a sectarian spirit. I grew up in the context of one. I learned a sectarian spirit. I breathed a sectarian spirit. I exhibited a sectarian spirit, and I taught a sectarian spirit. I am embarrassed. I am ashamed. I have repented. I am trying to outgrow it."
 1. If brother Shelly has had a sectarian spirit, then I am glad he repented of it. But if by "sectarian spirit," the disposition follow the New Testament and not give aid and abetment to those teaching error, then he is mistaken.
 2. If this makes one a sectarian, then the Apostle of Love had a sectarian spirit. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 1:9-11).
- II. **JESUS ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH, NOT A DENOMINATION.**
 - A. Matthew 16:18
 - B. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

- C. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in y all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).
- D. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:23-27).
- E. No person in New Testament times ever became a member of any denomination, for none existed.
 - 1. Denominationalism, even in its embryonic stage, is condemned in the New Testament. First Corinthians 1:10-13: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"
 - 2. "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" (Philippians 1:27).
 - 3. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:16).

III. FOLLOWING THE NEW TESTAMENT WILL NOT MAKE ONE A MEMBER OF A DENOMINATION.

- A. Many in denominations claim to be following the New Testament. And it is true that much of what they do and how they live is according to the New Testament.
- B. But nobody ever became a member of any denomination by following the New Testament only. No denomination was ever formed by following the New Testament only.
- C. In order to get into any organization other than the church Jesus built, one will have to leave the New Testament.
- D. It will make one a member of the church built by Jesus.
 - 1. Acts 2:47
 - 2. First Corinthians was written to "the church of God which is at Corinth." How did it get there, and how did its members get into it? The answer is in Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
 - 3. Rubel Shelly and Randall Harris, in the book, *The Second Incarnation*, said: "There is neither a set of doctrines nor a series of activities that can guarantee the existence of the church." (p. 62)
 - 4. On the next page they said, "When most of us speak of *the church*, we speak either of some unrealized ideal that is a mere abstraction or of a deficient institution with which we had had personal (and possibly frustrating) experience."
 - 5. Is that what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 16:18? Paul in Acts 20:28? etc.

IV. IF ONE IS A MEMBER OF ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, HE HAS BECOME SUCH BY FOLLOWING SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- A. Were he to come back to the teaching of the New Testament, he would come out of his denomination and be a member of the church of Christ revealed in Scripture.
- B. If brethren Shelly, Cope, and Morrison are members of something that began with the American Restoration Movement, then they got there by following something other than the N.T.
- C. But notice what the Apostle of Love wrote: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

V. NOT ONE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST HAD ITS BEGINNING WITH ANY RESTORATION PREACHER.

- A. I challenge any man to point to one thing that is fundamental to the church of Christ that I am a member of that had its beginning with the Restoration Movement.
- B. Unless it can be shown that some essential element of the church originated with the Restoration Movement, then it certainly cannot be shown that the church began with the Restoration Movement.
- C. Every fundamental facet of the church of Christ can be traced to the New Testament.

VI. NO DENOMINATION WAS:

- A. Purposed from eternity (Eph. 3:10-11).
- B. Prophesied of by O. T. prophets (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-4).
- C. Had the way prepared by John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10).
- D. Promised by Jesus while he was on earth (Matt. 16:18).
- E. Purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).
- F. Established by the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2).

VII. IT CAN ALSO BE SAID THAT:

- A. The Lord never added anyone to a denomination.
- B. Never prayed for the unity of denominations.
- C. Never wrote any part of the New Testament to tell those in denominations how to live and conduct themselves and the affairs of the denomination.
- D. Never promised to take a denomination to heaven.

CONCLUSION

We beg those who may be in some denomination to come out of it, and obey the gospel of Christ, so that the Lord will add you to his church. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-15).

Is the Coming of Christ Imminent?

Much has been written and preached about the immediate coming of Christ. A book published in 1970, The Late Great Planet Earth, by Hal Lindsey was made into a movie. In it the author takes Bible prophecies long ago fulfilled and squeezes their fulfillment into a modern mold, and arbitrarily declares that Jesus will return to the earth during this generation.

In our study we will notice some things the Bible teaches and some things it does not teach relative to the coming of Christ.

Our denial of what Lindsey and others have written about such things as the rapture, the imminent coming of Christ, and the establishment of an earthly kingdom does not mean we do not believe the prophets were accurate; it rather means we believe they were accurate, and that their prophecies were fulfilled in the way, at the place, and at the time the prophets prophesied.

Outline of the theory:

1. Great tribulation under a world dictator.
2. The rapture - 7 yrs.
3. Destruction of this world dictator by a miracle that will cause Jews to be converted.
4. Jesus will establish his Kingdom on earth and reign on the throne of David, with headquarters in literal Jerusalem.

Discussion

I The Bible Teaches That:

- A. Jesus will never set foot on earth again (I Thes. 4:13-17).
- B. When Jesus comes again the earth will be destroyed (II Pet. 3:10).
- C. God's word, not some miracle, produces faith (Ro. 10:17; Luke 16).
- D. Jesus ~~is~~ now reigning as King on the throne of David (Acts 2:29-31).
- E. Jesus will cease to reign when he comes again (1 Cor. 15:19).
- F. The Kingdom of Christ is spiritual + not material (Jn. 18:36).

II Every Prophecy Concerning the Setting up of the Kingdom was fulfilled when the Church was established.

A. Four things Hal Lindsay says ~~would~~ will have to take place before Jesus can become King:

1. Jews would have to be a nation.
(May 14, 1948 David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of a Jewish nation to be known as the State of Israel.)
2. Jews would have to be dwelling in Jerusalem
3. Temple will have to be standing
4. Roman Empire would (will) have to be revived. ~~and be ruling the world~~

B. All four of these were present on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and Peter said Jesus was on the throne of David.

III Other Significant Points.

A. Jesus' statement in Mt. 24:34 ("This generation shall not pass...") is said by these false teachers as applying to the generation (40 year period) which began when the Jews became a nation (May 14, 1948). The forty years ended 3 months ago (May 14, 1988), and Jesus has not returned yet. Furthermore the Dome of the rock stands on the temple site, & Rome is not revived.

- B. The language in the first parts of Mt. 24 Mark 13, & Luke 21 describes events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, & not the final coming of Christ.
- C. There are no signs pointing to the time when Jesus will come again.
(Mt. 13:32; II Th. 3:10;

Conclusion

Is it not good that we can be in the Kingdom of Christ?

He is coming again. We don't know when.

CONFESSION

Romans 10:9-10; James 5:16

The word *confess* is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* as meaning, "to disclose or acknowledge (something damaging or inconvenient to oneself)." It is in this sense that the word is used in such passages as James 5:16 and First John 1:8-10.

The second definition of the word is, "to concede the truth or validity of." This is the sense in which the word is used in Romans 10:9-10 and Matthew 10:32.

This study has to do with the Bible teaching on confession in both of these senses. We will talk first about confessing Christ, and then about confessing our sins.

DISCUSSION**I. ONE MUST CONFESS CHRIST TO BE SAVED.**

- A. This fact is clearly taught.
 1. Romans 10:9-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
 2. Matthew 10:32: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."
- B. To confess Christ is to confess that he is the Son of God.
 1. Matthew 16:13-16: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"
 2. Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
 3. This is doing just exactly what Romans 10:9-10 and Matthew 10:32 say one must do.
- C. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of one who, prior to his being baptized, confessed that he believed that God for Christ's sake had pardoned his sins. That is not a scriptural confession. In fact, it is contradictory to the teaching of Scripture in that one must be baptized in order to be pardoned of his sins. (See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26-27.)
- D. It needs to be pointed out in passing that to confess Christ in the First Century likely took a great deal more courage than it does today.
 1. Such a confession today might cost one his popularity.
 2. But in the First Century it could cost him his life. For example, it is said that Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with some of the apostles, was at age 86 arrested because of his Christianity. Because of his age, the soldiers tried to get him to say the words, "Lord Caesar," and then sacrifice to the gods so his life might be spared. To this he replied, "For eighty and six years have I been thy servant, and he has done me no wrong, and how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" He was then burned at the stake.
 3. Certain ones who believed refused to confess Christ, lest they be put out of their synagogue (John 12:42).

II. CHRISTIANS MUST CONFESS THEIR SINS TO STAY SAVED.

- A. Even though we are Christians, we still sin.
 - 1. Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short [present tense] of the glory of God."
 - 2. First John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and . . . cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the Greek the present tense indicates something presently continuing, and not something done in the past and finished.
- B. Some now are saying that to confess our sins and ask for God's forgiveness is a reflection on the grace and mercy of God.
 - 1. But this verse (I John 1:9) makes our forgiveness conditioned upon our confessing our sins.
 - 2. In Luke 11:4 Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us...."
 - 3. When we confess our sins and ask God's forgiveness, we are acknowledging our dependence upon God's grace.
- C. So long as we faithfully serve the Lord, and that involves confessing our sins and praying for his forgiveness, we remain saved.
 - 1. First John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
 - 2. Even though he sins, the *faithful Christian* is never lost.
- D. If we know of specific sins of which we are guilty, we should confess those specific sins and pray for God's forgiveness. But we must realize also that we might become guilty of some sins without realizing it. This fact we also need to confess and ask God to forgive us.

III. THE BACKSLIDER MUST CONFESS HIS SINS TO BE FORGIVEN AND RESTORED.

- A. Sins known only to God need to be confessed only to God. The purpose of the confession of sin is not to advertise the sin, but to advertise the repentance.
- B. Sins known only to God and one or two other people need to be confessed to God and to one or two other people.
 - 1. If you and your wife have a brawl in the privacy of your home, and you say some things you should not have said, you need not confess that publicly, but to your wife.
 - 2. Boys and girls, if you do wrong to one of your friends at school, you should go to that friend and apologize to him or her.
 - 3. A public confession to the whole church is no substitute for a private apology that needs to be made.
- C. But sins that are generally known must be confessed publicly.
 - 1. As earlier stated, the purpose of the confession is to advertise the repentance. One cannot be restored to fellowship who has not repented, and the only way faithful brethren might know of his repentance is when he confesses his sin.
 - 2. James 5:16: "Confess your faults *one to another*, and pray *one for another*, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
 - 3. First John 5:16 shows the necessity of a public confession on the part of those whose sins are generally known: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
 - a. This declares I must pray for those who sin, but not unto death.
 - b. No sin is unto death which a brother will confess (I John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from . . . unrighteousness.")
 - c. Unless he confesses his sins, how do I know whether or not to pray for him?

IV. CONFESSION MUST ALWAYS FOLLOW GENUINE REPENTANCE.

- A. It does no good for the sinner to confess Christ as the Son of God unless he has repented, that is, decided to give up his sins and obey the Lord.
- B. It is of no benefit for the erring child of God to confess his sins unless he has repented.
 - 1. Simon the Sorcerer was told in Acts 8:22 "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
 - 2. Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." No need to confess or pray unless one has repented.
 - 3. A number of years ago Ray Dutton wrote an article for *Words of Truth* entitled, "Repenting or Reporting." It had to do with this very idea of those who confess their sins, but never quit the sins.
- C. It is never difficult to get one to confess, once he has repented.
 - 1. The alien sinner who repents will gladly confess Christ as the Son of God.
 - 2. The backsliding child of God who repents will gladly confess his sins and ask God and the brethren to forgive him.

CONCLUSION

Have you confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and been buried with him in baptism for the remission of your sins? If not, then why not repent, and then you will gladly confess Christ and be baptized.

Perhaps there is a child of God here who needs to make a public confession of sin. But before doing so you must repent. When you repent, a team of wild horses could not keep you from coming down this aisle to confess your sin and ask for God's forgiveness.

A LESSON FROM DANIEL ON PRAYER

Daniel 6:10

Relate context. Darius decided to divide up the gov't of his kingdom and set 120 princes over it. These 120 would give account to 3 presidents, of whom Daniel was to be one. Because Daniel excelled the others, probably in ability as well as integrity, Darius decided to set him over the entire operation. The other presidents and princes, probably because of envy and jealousy, began trying to find some fault in him. (Maybe they appointed a sub-committee to investigate him, not to determine his fitness, but to dig up some dirt on him.) They could find nothing. (What a compliment!) They concluded: If we find any wrong in him, it will be by making faithfulness to his God wrong. (Again, what a compliment!)

They approached Darius with this proposal: For thirty days no man shall be permitted to ask a petition of any God or man, except of the king. Whoever is found in violation of this decree shall be cast into the den of lions. The king established the decree, and made it official by affixing his signature to it.

Now look at our text for a beautiful lesson on prayer:

DISCUSSION

I. "NOW WHEN DANIEL KNEW THAT THE WRITING WAS SIGNED"

- A. He would abide by man's law so long as it did not interfere with the performance of sacred duty. (Rom. 13:1 "Let every soul be")
- B. But now there is a conflict. His conscience would not allow him to submit to this law of man.
 - 1. Acts 4:19 "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right"
 - 2. Acts 5:29 "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."
- D. Not a matter of Daniel's not knowing the law.
 - 1. He knew the decree and the punishment for violating it.
 - 2. But he knew also the importance of his allegiance to a king more powerful than Darius.

II. "HE WENT INTO HIS HOUSE"

- A. This was a private prayer.
- B. Matt. 6:6 "But thou, when thou prayest"
- C. How much praying do we do in secret? Not nearly enough, I venture to say.

III. "AND HIS WINDOWS BEING OPEN"

- A. This was a private prayer, but Daniel was courageous enough that he did not hide his devotion to God.
- B. He was not praying to be seen, but was not afraid for others to see him pray, even in view of the king's decree.
- C. Nothing we do is to be done for the purpose of being seen of men.
 - 1. Those who do so have no other reward (Matt. 6:1-2).
 - 2. But neither are we to hide our lights under a bushel (Matt. 5:13-16 "Ye are the salt of the earth")

IV. "IN HIS CHAMBER TOWARD JERUSALEM"

- A. Temple of God was at Jerusalem. At its dedication Solomon referred time and again to the fact God's people would "pray toward this place." (See I Kings 8.) That's what Daniel was doing.
- B. Daniel was in Babylon, but he had not adopted the gods of Babylon. (Cf. I Jno. 2:15-17.)
- C. Prayer must be properly directed.
 - 1. Not to Mary or some saint (I Tim. 2:5 "For there is one God and one mediator between")
 - 2. Not to Jesus.
 - 3. But to the Father (Matt. 6:9 "After this manner therefore pray ye")
 - 4. Eph. 3:14 "For this cause I bow my knees unto the"

V. "HE KNEELED UPON HIS KNEES"

- A. The attitude of prayer. Bodily posture in prayer is not dictated, but an attitude of reverence, awe, and respect is dictated. No doubt, this will be reflected to a degree in the posture of our bodies and the language used.
- B. I personally prefer the poetic forms in addressing the Creator of the universe. Thee and thou are expressive of a certain attitude which is not expressed, though present, by you. I am speaking here of a matter of personal preference and taste, and not a matter of right and wrong.
- C. But our attitude in prayer is a matter of right and wrong.

VI. "THREE TIMES A DAY"

- A. The regularity of Daniel's prayer is noteworthy.
 - 1. Some do well to pray 3 times a week, or a month, or a year.
 - 2. Was Daniel's practice to pray 3 times a day. He must have been one of those who believe that prayer avails (Jas. 5:16).
- B. Matt. 7:7-11 "Ask, and it shall be given you"
- C. I Thess. 5:17 "Pray without ceasing."
- D. Phil. 4:6 "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing"

VII. "AND PRAYED, AND GAVE THANKS BEFORE HIS GOD"

- A. Being thankful is an essential to being a Christian, and giving thanks is essential in prayer.
- B. We hear a great deal today about our "felt needs." We really should think more about our heart-felt gratitude for all God's mercies.
- C. And a great portion of our prayers, both public and private, should be expressions of thanks.
- D. How many times do we bow before God and pour out our hearts in expressing our wishes and our needs, but forget to give thanks?

VIII. "AS HE DID AFORETIME"

- A. Praying three times a day was not something new with Daniel. Not something to be used only in time of trouble, distress, or sickness.
- B. Prayer was a part of his life. It should be a part of ours.
- C. Book of Daniel contains only 12 chapters. Besides this verse which tells us something about Daniel's prayer habits, there are recorded no less than four prayers actually prayed by Daniel. He was truly a man of prayer, as the little children sing.

CONCLUSION

Daniel's prayers were effective. In each case of the prayers we read about in Daniel, God answers in a very positive way. That is because Daniel was not only a man of prayer, but one who was determined to conform his life to the will of God. (Cf. Dan. 1:8.)

The Bible clearly teaches there is no use to pray while rebelling against God's instructions. (Prov. 28:9.)

May 19, 1995

DANIEL'S APPEAL TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Daniel 4:27

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. None greater than he, from the human standpoint. He thought his kingdom and all his power was the product of his own ability. Look at verse 30: "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

But God made him to have a dream of a tree whose height reached to heaven and which could be seen from all the earth. The leaves were beautiful, and the fruit abundant. The birds lived in its branches and the beasts found shelter in its shade. He saw a vision of one who came down from heaven and commanded that the tree be hewn down, the branches be cut off, the leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered. But the stump of the roots was to be left, and the dew of heaven was to wet it along with the grass of the field, until seven times passed over it.

Nebuchadnezzar called in his wise men and magicians to tell him the dream and its interpretation, but they could not. Daniel was summoned and called upon to interpret the dream. His first words to the king were: "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." He then proceeded to tell the king that he would be driven from his throne and from the presence of men for seven years. During this seven years he would dwell with the wild animals, and eat grass like an ox, and be wet with the dew. This literally came to pass. His hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails were like bird claws. After seven years he was restored to his throne, and had learned his lesson, namely, "that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17).

But how would you like to have been in Daniel's shoes? How would you go about telling the world's greatest king these things were going to happen to him, and the reason they were going to happen? Here is a real call for diplomacy.

Daniel's summary statement is in verse 27: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." Though written more than two and one-half millennia ago, the principles it sets forth are just as applicable today as the day they were spoken by Daniel.

DISCUSSION**I. HIS PLEA FOR A FAVORABLE RESPONSE ON THE PART OF THE KING**

- A. "O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee"
- B. Ordinarily the prophets were straight forward, and sometimes even harsh. Why this tender appeal on the part of Daniel?
 - 1. Fear of the wrath of the king?
 - 2. His love for the king could have prompted such gentleness.
 - 3. Or his gratitude. After all, the king had raised Daniel to an important position in his court.
 - 4. Or perhaps this was for our benefit--to teach us that, though there are times when scathing rebukes are called for, there are also times when we need to be gentle.

HIS APPEAL FOR THE KING TO BREAK OFF SIN

- A. ". . . break off thy sins"

- B. To "break off" his sins means to quit the practice of sinning.
 - 1. Repentance demands that one cease the practice of sin.
 - 2. Sometimes people want to be baptized, but don't want to repent. Won't do any good.
- C. Notice some passages:
 - 1. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings . . . " (I Peter 2:1).
 - 2. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).
 - 3. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).
 - 4. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).
- D. One of the greatest problems in the church today is trying to hold on to God and sin at the same time.
- E. But just a word about the admonition to "break off" sins:
 - 1. One dominated by sins or nasty habits needs to make a clean break.
 - 2. Next to impossible to quit sin gradually. One who does so is still committing sin.
 - 3. To quit smoking, drinking, committing fornication, cursing, or whatever, just quit cold turkey.

III. **HIS APPEAL FOR THE KING TO REPLACE SIN WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND MERCY**

- A. "...break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor...."
- B. What is the best way to overcome sinful practices? By filling one's life with good, wholesome practices.
 - 1. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:43-45).
 - 2. Brother Gus Nichols used to say, "Suppose you have a bucket full of water, and you want to get all the water out without tilting the bucket over. How could you do it?" The answer, fill the bucket with buckshot.
 - 3. Ill: Man who quit smoking found a New Testament to fit into the shirt pocket where he formerly carried his cigarettes.
- C. Righteousness is treating everyone justly and fairly. Mercy is being kind and tender hearted toward those who are misfortunate.
 - 1. Apparently this would have been a change of policy for the king. Perhaps he had thought, as do some, that their misfortunes were deserved, just as he thought his own power and might as king was the fruit of his own ingenuity.
 - 2. We need to remember that the Lord is mindful of the oppressed. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5).
- D. Being involved in the hurts and needs of thers will help us to be humble.
 - 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

2. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).
 3. "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" (James 1:27).
- E. The only way to overcome the temptations of the devil is to keep ourselves diligently occupied in serving God and our fellow human beings.

IV. WHAT THE RESULTS WOULD BE IF THE KING WOULD HEED THESE ADMONITIONS

- A. "...if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility...." Implies God would decide to withhold the punishment if the king would heed Daniel's admonition and warning.
1. Nineveh was spared when it repented, though God had not promised to spare it. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10).
 - a. They repented, even though no promise was made to them and no admonition to repent.
 - b. No doubt, this is the reason Jesus said: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matthew 12:41).
 2. Even Ahab, through his humility, caused God to delay his judgment. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house" (I Kings 21:29).
 3. Hezekiah gained 15 additional years. "Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake" (II Kings 20:5-6).
- B. To us, God offers pardon if we will repent. And he delays punishment to give us opportunity to repent. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).
- C. Look at the phrase *a lengthening of thy tranquility*. The word *tranquility* means simply the peaceful prosperity of life.
1. The lie which is Satan's most successful tool is the one that says if one obeys God and serves him faithfully, it will diminish the quality of his life. The very opposite of this is true, as is stated here and as is illustrated in this case.
 2. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).
 3. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).
 4. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9:31). Cf. also Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."
 5. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).
- D. The happiest life one can live is the life of faithful service to God. That has always been the case.
1. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, showed us that happiness is not to be found in wealth, power,

- popularity, or the satisfaction of the lusts and desires of the flesh.
2. Notice what he said: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

CONCLUSION

Nebuchadnezzar did not heed the admonition of God through Daniel, just as many today do not pay any attention to the truth which is preached. Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson, but he learned it the hard way, like so many in our own time. Fortunately for him, though he suffered seven years, he later humbled himself and acknowledged God as the one who controls the affairs of men.

Dear friend, if you are not a Christian, there is no doubt that you will one day acknowledge that what I am preaching is true, and the only right course to follow is to "break off thy sins" and become obedient to the gospel of Christ. The only question is, when you acknowledge this, will it be too late? Will you still be on time's side of eternity, or will you have passed beyond the reach of the mercy of God?

Don't you think you should obey God now, so that you might enjoy the "tranquility" that is found in Christ while you live here on earth, and so you can claim heaven as your home when you pass into eternity?

DO YOU PASS OR FAIL?

Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" First Corinthians 13:12 says, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." James 1:25 says, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Looking into the word of God is like looking into a mirror. That is what we want to do this morning as we begin a new year.

You have been given a piece of paper with numbers 1-15 printed on it. Beside each number are the words *yes* and *no*. Don't get alarmed at this. The lesson today will involve fifteen simple questions that can be answered with either a *yes* or a *no*. (No need to write your name on the paper. You already know your name.)

I want to emphasize the fact that I am not going to take up these papers. What you write will be known to you and no other human being. Please do not let anyone, even your wife or closest friend, see how you answer these 15 questions. We simply want to examine ourselves on this first day of 1995, just as the Bible teaches us today. I will simply help you in this examination.

DISCUSSION

I. DO YOU BELIEVE JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD?

- A. Matthew 16:13-18: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
- B. John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
- C. Mark your answer. (Isn't this easy?)

II. HAVE YOU REPENTED?

- A. Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
- B. Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
- C. Matthew 21:29: "He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went."
- D. Repentance is making up one's mind to do right.
- E. Mark your answer.

III. HAVE YOU CONFESSED THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD?

- A. Matthew 10:32: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."
- B. Romans 10:9-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
- C. Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
- D. Mark your answer. (This isn't bad at all, is it?)

IV. HABE YOU BEEN BAPTIZED, THAT IS, IMMERSSED IN WATER?

- A. Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptize into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
- B. Colossians 2:12: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

V. WERE YOU BAPTIZED FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS?

- A. Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
- B. Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
- C. Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
- D. This is the only baptism the New Testament authorizes and the only one God recognizes.

VI. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH JESUS BUILT?

- A. Matthew 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
- B. Acts 2:47: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
- C. Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
- D. If your answer to questions 1-5 is *yes*, the the answer to this is *yes* also.

VII. DO YOU LOVE THE LORD?

- A. Careful how you answer. First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
- B. John 14:15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
- C. Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
- D. Mark your answer. (Wait! Don't quit on me now.)

VIII. ARE YOU FAITHFUL IN ATTENDANCE AT THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH?

- A. Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."
- B. To help answer, perhaps we should ask, "Have you wilfully and negligently missed any services at all? One? If not wrong to miss one, then it is not wrong to miss two. If not two, then not ten; and if not ten, then not 100. The only reason it would be wrong to miss 100 or 100 services is because it is wrong to miss one."
- C. How do you believe God feels bout your faithfulness in attendance? Would he believe you should answer this with a *yes*? Mark your answer.

IX. DO YOU REFRAIN FROM THE THE THINGS OF THE WORLD?

- A. Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
- B. James 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
- C. Dress modestly? (I Timothy 2:9: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest

- apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."
- D. Refuse social drink? (Proverbs 23:29-35: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."
- E. Refrain fro gossip? Other impure speech? Pornography? Dancing?

X. ARE YOU GENUINELY SINCERE?

- A. Matthew 15:8: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."
- B. Joel 2:13: "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."
- C. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

XI. DO YOU PUT GOD FIRST IN YOUR LIFE?

- A. Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
- B. In your attendance? In your giving?

XII. DO YOU PRAY REGULARLY?

- A. James 5:16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
- B. Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
- C. Matthew 7:7-11: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

XIII. DO YOU READ AND STUDY YOUR BIBLE REGULARLY?

- A. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
- B. Second Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
- C. Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."
- D. First Peter 2:2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

XIV. ARE YOU A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN?

- A. Years ago a man came out the door when I had asked this question and said, "Preacher, nobody is perfect." Of course, he is right. But that is not the question. The question is, "Are you a faithful Christian?"
- B. Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some

of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

- C. Matthew 25:21-23: "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."
- D. Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
- E. Don't say, "I don't know." What if I asked, "Are you a faithful wife/husband?"

XV. DO YOU REALLY WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN?

- A. Maybe I should have asked this first. If you had said, "No," then there would have been no need to bother answering the other questions?
- B. But I believe every person here, if he will be honest, will say he wants to go to heaven.
- C. John 14:1-6: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

CONCLUSION

During the past few minutes we have been looking into the mirror of God's word. Have I asked any question that should not have been asked? Remember, only you know the answer you gave. Remember also that we will be judged by the word of God. John 12:48 says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Did you pass, or fail? "Well, I did o.k. I got 13 *yeses* and only 2 *nos*." But wait! Which question can you answer with a *no* and still do all right?

Now, with your being the only one who has seen your paper, would you please circle your eternal destiny if it should be that the Lord came right now? Please don't quit on me. Are you afraid to draw that circle? Remember, no one is going to see that but you. Are you satisfied with what is on that little slip of paper?

Please don't blame me if you are not happy with what is on that paper; I did not put one mark on it.

Now fold your paper up tightly and hold it securely and firmly in your hand as we sing the invitation song. And as we sing, please remember the words of James 1:22-25: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Doctrinal Preaching & Teaching

2no. 6:44, 45

When I was a teen-ager in Jacksonville, AL, the only way we knew to get people into the church was to teach them the truth so they would know they were lost, and so they would know what to do to be saved. When sermons from the pulpit and lessons taught in Bible classes leave sinners ignorant of their sinful condition, and, therefore, satisfied, then something is wrong.

My subject is "Doctrinal Preaching & Teaching."

Discussion

I. The Word Doctrine

- A. Appears in N.T. about 50 times in A.V. More teaching, and A.S.V. often uses Teaching. Every place "doctrine" is used one may substitute "teaching."
- B. "Sound doctrine" 4 times. In each case a marginal note in A.S.V. has "Healthful Teaching."
- C. Always singular when referring to the truth.
 1. "strange doctrines," "doctrines of men," or "doctrines of devils"
 2. But "doctrine of Christ," "sound doctrine," or "apostles' doctrine."

II. What is Meant by "Doctrinal" Preaching or Teaching?

A. Preaching & Teaching that is informative, as opposed to preaching or teaching that is purely motivational, or that admonishes, or reproves, or rebukes, or exhorts, or makes one feel good about himself.

1. There is a need for preaching that accomplishes these latter things.

2. But I fear in recent years this has been done to the neglect of doctrinal preaching.

B. When doctrinal preaching is done, it is hoped that people learn something.

III. Indications We Need Greater Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching

A. Many leave the church & join some denomination

B. Willingness to compromise with DCC & other denominations. Inst. & L.S. on Sat.

C. Members of church who speak in the "speech of Ashdod." (Neh. 13:24).

1. join the church

2. witnessing for Jesus

3. "pastor" for evangelist

4. "good Xians" in denominational world.

5. Even our songs: "Jesus is Coming Soon."

- D. Lack of understanding concerning:
1. necessity of regular attendance (doctrinal)
 2. liberal + scriptural giving (doctrinal)
 3. Evils of gambling (doctrinal)
 4. of dancing "
 5. of immodest dress "
 6. of drinking "
 7. of pornographic movies, T.V., magazines, songs
 8. of fornication + adultery "
 9. of divorce + remarriage "
 10. May think "doctrinal" is limited to things that distinguish us from denominations, but these things are doctrinal, as well as spiritual + moral.

E. Horror of one saying in judgment: "I came to hear you preach, & you let me leave w/out knowing I was lost, & needed salvation."

IV. II Timothy 3:15-4:4

A. Most comprehensive statement about the Bible.

1. Ps. 119 perhaps says as much - but in 176 verses.
2. Ps. 19: 7-11 - most beautiful passage about Bible
3. But this most comprehensive

B. Says the Bible is:

1. simple - "and that from a child"
2. Knowable - "thou hast known"
3. Holy - "the holy scriptures"
4. Powerful - "which are able"
5. sagacious - "to make thee wise"

6. produces salvation - "unto salvation"
7. produces faith - "through faith"
8. Changes relationships - "which is in Christ Jesus"
9. Inspired - "All scri. is given by insp. of God."
10. Beneficial - "And is profitable"
11. Doctrinal - "for doctrine"
12. Reproving - "for reproof"
13. Correctional - "for correction"
14. Instructional - "for instruction"
15. Righteous - "in righteousness"
16. Perfect - "that the man of God may be perfect"
17. All inclusive - "thoroughly furnished"
18. Good - "unto all good"
19. Practical - "works"
20. Eternal - "I charge thee...."
21. Preachable - "Preach the word"
22. Seasonless - "Be instant in season...."
23. Rebuking - "reprove, rebuke"
24. Exhortational - "exhort"
25. Evidence of God's patience - "With all long suffering"
26. Healthy - "Time will come when not order and"
27. True - "Shall turn away... from the truth"

Conclusion

Why preach anything else?

When preacher steps into pulpit, it matters little if he knows what Norman Vincent Peale, Chas. Swindall, or for that matter, our own brethren. But he needs to know what the good book says.

DOES GOD HEAR A SINNER'S PRAYER?

Acts 10:30-31; John 9:31

Acts 10:30-31 says, "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." This was some ten years after the church was established, and yet Cornelius had never even heard the gospel of Christ. Yet the angel said to him, "Thy prayer is heard." Does God hear a sinner's prayer? He did in the case of Cornelius.

Now look at John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." Does God hear a sinner's prayer? This verse says he does not.

Notice some things we need to keep in mind as we study the question, "Does God hear a sinner's prayer?"

DISCUSSION**I. MANY WORDS HAVE MORE THAN ONE MEANING**

- A. The word *works* means one thing in Ephesians 2:8-9 and something different in James 2:24. Are sinners saved by works? No, if you use the word *works* to mean deeds of merit as it is used in Ephesians 2:9. Are sinners saved by works? Yes, if you use the word *works* to mean acts of obedience as it is used in James 2:24.
- B. The word *tempt* means one thing in Genesis 22:1 and something different in James 1:13. Does God tempt man? If you use the word *tempt* to mean to solicit to do evil, as it is used in James 1:13, the answer is no. But if you use the word *tempt* to mean to test or prove, as it is used in Genesis 22:1, then the answer is yes.
- C. The word *hear* has more than one meaning. It means:
 1. To perceive sound by the ear. In this sense God hears us even if we curse, or lie, or blaspheme. In this sense God hears the prayer of the most wicked, else how could Proverbs 28:9 be true: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"?
 2. To listen to attentively. A parent says to a child, "Do you hear what I'm saying to you?"
 3. To listen to with favor; give consideration to: "Lord, hear my plea."
- D. Also the word *sinner* is used in different ways. While the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* gives only three words in defining the word *sinner* as "One who sins," I hardly think that is adequate, for that would mean God never hears any prayers.
 1. Christians sin, but I hesitate to call them sinners.
 - a. I sometimes drive nails, but that does not make me a carpenter.
 - b. I may replace a faucet washer or a light fixture, but that does not make me a plumber or an electrician.
 - c. I do sin, but that does not make me a sinner in the sense John 9:31 uses the word.
 - d. Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That implies clearly that we are no longer sinners.
 2. There are God-fearing sinners.
 - a. Those who are seeking to do the will of God, but who have not had the opportunity to hear the gospel taught in its purity and simplicity.
 - b. Cornelius was in this category. Acts 10:1-2 says of him, "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

- c. Saul of Tarsus was in this category. He lived in all good conscience (Acts 23:1). His prayer on the Damascus Road, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was immediately answered, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be..." (Acts 9:6). God told Ananias, "Behold, he prayeth."
 - d. A person who is prejudiced and will not listen to the truth, no matter how devoutly religious he might be, does not fit into this category. Cornelius was seeking the truth and obeyed it when he heard it. So also of Saul.
3. There are wicked sinners. Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."
- a. Those who turn their ear from God's word, even though they might be devoutly religious people.
 - (1) To the religious leaders of his day Jesus said in Matthew 13:15, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - (2) What about the religious people of our day who close their eyes, their ears, and their hearts when one shows them the truth concerning the plan of salvation, the church, or scriptural worship?
 - b. Those who are immoral. First Peter 3:12: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."
 - (1) Sign a few years ago in front of Charlie's (a topless bar and adult entertainment center): "Pray For Our Troops In The Gulf War."
 - (2) Wicked people often pray when they get into trouble, but their prayer is an abomination to God (Proverbs 28:9). That means his prayer is detestable or loathsome to God.
4. There are people who once were Christians, having obeyed the gospel of Christ, but who have turned back to the beggarly elements of the world. Galatians 4:9: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"
- a. These are in a worse condition than if they had never known the way of righteousness. Second Peter 2:20-22 "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
 - b. Certainly the prayer of such a person is abomination.
 - c. But if such will genuinely repent, will confess his sins, and will pray for forgiveness, God will pardon him. First John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (This is not the alien sinner, but one who became a Christian by obeying the gospel and then became unfaithful.)

II. ALIEN SINNERS ARE NEVER SAVED DIRECTLY IN ANSWER TO PRAYER

- A. The prayers of Cornelius played a part in his eventually learning the truth and obeying the gospel to be saved, but his salvation was not given directly in answer.

- B. The prayers of Saul played a part in his eventually learning the truth and obeying the gospel to be saved, but his salvation was not given directly in answer to prayer.
- C. Thousands of pamphlets distributed by religious people encourage lost sinners to pray what those pamphlets refer to as the "Sinner's Prayer." and it goes something like this: "Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You shed your blood, died and arose from the grave for me. I now ask you to forgive my sin and to come into my heart and life as my personal Saviour. Give me your gift of eternal life in Heaven. Help me now to live for You, and thank You, Lord Jesus, for saving me. These things I pray in Your name. Amen." (From a pamphlet distributed by the Landmark Baptist Church, Haines City, Florida.)
 - 1. There is not a line in your Bible that teaches alien sinners that or any other prayer.
 - 2. Proverbs 28:9 would apply to those who pray such a prayer while ignoring what the word of God teaches sinners to do in order to be forgiven.
 - 3. The prayer of the publican in Luke 18:13 ("God be merciful to me a sinner") is sometimes cited as an example of the so-called "Sinner's Prayer." But the publican was living under the law of Moses. Furthermore he was Jew and in covenant relationship with God. He did not occupy the position of an alien. If he corresponds to any living under the New Testament it would be the backsliding, penitent child of God that we just discussed.

III. WHAT ARE ALIEN SINNERS TO DO IN ORDER TO BE SAVED?

- A. They are to do what Cornelius and Saul of Tarsus did.
- B. That is also what the people on Pentecost did (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8), the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8), Lydia (Acts 16), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16), the Corinthians (Acts 18), and the twelve men at Ephesus (Acts 19).
- C. All of these heard the gospel of Christ, believed it, repented, confessed Christ, and were baptized for the remission of their sins.

CONCLUSION

First Peter 3:12: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

If you want God to hear your prayers, then obey his will.

DSGDMEAN

DOES GOD MEAN WHAT HE SAYS?

(Matthew 16:21-23)

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Peter had a problem with what the Lord said. It was not a problem of understanding, but a problem of accepting what the Lord said as being true. In other words, he simply did not believe the Lord meant what he said. Jesus rebuked Peter telling him: "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Brother Hugo McCord's translation puts it this way: "You are not thinking about the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter's attitude is one which has characterized certain people from the beginning of time. God's will to them has been clearly stated, but they simply do not believe God means what he says. Notice with me some examples of those who did not believe God meant what he said.

DISCUSSION**I. EVE DID NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID.**

- A. You remember the account. God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).
- B. Eve knew what God had said. She told the serpent what God said: "And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:2-3).
- C. Yet Paul tells us in First Timothy 2:14 that she was deceived. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."
 - 1. She certainly was not deceived about what God said. She knew he had said death would come to them if they ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
 - 2. She was deceived by the devil into thinking God did not mean what he said.
 - 3. To her, it just did not seem reasonable that God would punish her and her husband for such a simple thing as eating the fruit of a certain tree. She thought God did not really mean what he said.
- D. Did God mean what he said to Adam and Eve?

II. THE PEOPLE OF NOAH'S DAY DID NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID.

- A. God had said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7).
- B. But God did not bring the flood until he had warned wicked man, to give him the opportunity to repent.
 - 1. Noah is called a "preacher of righteousness" (II Peter 2:5). He obviously preached and warned the people of what God had said would happen.
 - 2. First Peter 3:18-20 says it was by the Spirit that "he [Noah] went and preached unto the spirits in prison." That is, the spirits were in prison (in hades) at the time of Peter's writing,

but the preaching took place "when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing."

3. This preaching probably went on for 120 years, according to Genesis 6:3, which says, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."
- C. But did the people believe God meant what he said?
 1. No. Only Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives believed God meant what he said.
 2. Why didn't they believe what God said. Perhaps they had never seen rain. At least they had never seen anything like Noah was warning against. It just did not seem reasonable to them.
- D. But did God mean what he said?

III. LOT'S WIFE DID NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID.

- A. When God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he said this to Lot and his family: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (Genesis 19:17).
- B. Now notice what verse 26 says: "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."
 1. Was God's word unclear? Was it obscure? Was it imprecise? No. The words "look not behind thee" are abundantly clear.
 2. Could there be any question that this commandment came from God? No. They had already seen enough to confirm the fact that these men were from God.
 3. Then why did Mrs. Lot look back? It can only be because she did not believe God meant what he said. After all, what harm would it do? Yes, God said it, but could he really mean it when he said not to look back?
- C. I ask you: did God mean what he said?

IV. THE MAN THAT GATHERED STICKS ON THE SABBATH DID NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID.

- A. Numbers 15:32-36: "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that [gathered sticks] upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses."
- B. Had God spoken with reference to this matter?
 1. Yes. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).
 2. Not only that, but "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day" (Exodus 35:3).
- C. Evidently the people clearly understood what God had said, for they were the ones who were disturbed by the man's gathering sticks.
- D. This man knew what God had said, but thought God didn't mean it. After all, what harm could there be in gathering a little firewood on the Sabbath day?
- E. Did God mean what he said?

V. UZZAH DID NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID.

- A. God had given instructions with reference to transporting the furniture of the tabernacle. With reference to the ark of the covenant, he had said, "And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the

sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them" (Exodus 25:14).

- B. God had also said in Numbers 4:15, "they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die."
- C. Shortly after David became King, a decision was made to fetch the ark from the house of Abinadab, where it had been since the days of the judges. They set the ark upon a new cart that was being drawn by oxen. Two men, Uzzah and Ahio, were driving the new cart. The oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark. He died. (Recorded in II Sam. 6:1-7 and I Chron. 13:7-10.)
- D. What Uzzah did seems innocent enough, doesn't it? Surely God did not mean "they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die."
- E. What harm could touching the ark possibly do?
- F. But God meant what he said.

VI. **NADAB AND ABIHU DID NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID.**

- A. "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:1-2).
 - 1. "Which he commanded them not" means it was an unauthorized fire.
 - 2. The ASV says, "which he had not commanded them."
 - 3. God had given them instructions with reference to the fire they were to use. Probably the fire from the brazen altar (16:12). They chose to use some other.
- B. Perhaps they reasoned that it really could not make any difference which fire they used. After all, fire is fire.
- C. But God meant what he said. Notice verse 3: "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."
 - 1. The idea is that God will be glorified either by our doing what he commands, or by his punishing us for our refusal to do what he says.
 - 2. Nadab and Abihu refused to glorify God by keeping his word faithfully, so God was glorified by showing the punishment which comes to those who high handedly sin against him.

VII. **SOME TODAY DO NOT BELIEVE GOD MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.**

- A. All accountable people have sinned.
 - 1. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).
 - 2. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).
 - 3. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).
 - 4. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
 - 5. Because they have not become guilty of the gross sins of immorality, such as murder or adultery, some simply refuse to look on themselves as sinners in need of salvation. Does God mean what he says?
- B. All accountable people are lost, if they have not obeyed the gospel.
 - 1. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).
 - 2. "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21).
 - 3. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

4. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thessalonians 1:6-9).
 5. But people do not really believe God means what he says, or they would (1) obey the gospel, and (2) they would try to convert their friends and neighbors.
- C. Baptism is the point at which the sinner is saved, and those who are not baptized are not saved.
1. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).
 2. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).
 3. Baptism puts one into Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).
 4. Baptism washes away sins. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).
 5. Baptism saves. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21).
 6. Despite all this, people still do not believe one has to be baptized to be saved. They know what God's word says, but they do not believe God means what he says.
- D. Worship, in order to be acceptable, must be in spirit and in truth.
1. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).
 2. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).
 3. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).
 4. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).
 5. But the general idea is that it really does not matter how one worships. He may add instrumental music, take away the weekly observance of the Lord's supper, and in general do whatever pleases him in worshiping God. Why? Is it because he does not know what God said about the matter? No! But because he does not believe God means what he says about the matter.
- E. Women are not to have roles of public leadership over men in the church.
1. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Timothy 2:11-12).
 2. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Corinthians 14:34-35).
 3. There is little question about what God has said or about its meaning. But some are convinced

God does not mean what he says.

F. Christians must not forsake the assemblies.

1. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).
2. The only thing it would take to destroy the church would be for all to stop attending.
3. The only reason it would be wrong to quit altogether is because it is wrong to miss one service.
4. But some think God does not mean what he says.

G. Christians must give according to prosperity.

1. "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" (I Corinthians 16:2).
2. "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love" (II Corinthians 8:8).
3. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7).
4. Still some give only token contributions, thinking God does not mean what he says about giving.

H. The only way for the erring to be restored is by repentance, confession, and prayer.

1. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:8-10).
2. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).
3. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (I John 5:16).
4. Still some think they can be forgiven of their unfaithfulness without confessing. (A private trespass requires only a private confession.) But God means what he says.

CONCLUSION

These are just some of the areas in which many people are deceived into thinking God does not mean what he says. The Judgment Day will provide for them a very startling revelation, when they learn God really does mean what he says.

We should be of the same disposition as Paul, when he said, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25).

"So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told" (Acts 27:25 RSV).

(To these could also be added such things as what God says about Marriage, Modest Apparel, Strong Drink, Murder (abortion), etc.)

Does One Sin When He Chooses Not to Assemble With the Saints to Worship?

Intro: Not dealing with those who cannot come. Cannot does not mean physical impossibility (Sick; mother leave sick baby; Shift work).

Talking about those who, as a matter of choice & preference, do not come.

In connection w/shift work - No trouble with one's having to work, but - pay. & choice?

Yes, it is a sin. A Dozen Reasons:

Discussion

- I. Demonstrates Contempt for Spiritual Things
 - A. Ro. 8:1 - "There is therefore..."
 - B. v. 6 - "For to be carnally..."
 - C. Gal. 6:7-8 - "Be not deceived"
 - D. "If Christianity were illegal..."
- II. Involves Choosing Not to Do a Known Good
 - A. Jas. 4:17
 - B. Ever hear anyone say not good to go?
- III. Choosing Not to Give & Receive Needed Encouragement
 - A. Heb. 10:24-25
 - B. New convert - ask what one thing help be faithful
 - C. 1 Co. 14:26 - "Let all things be done unto edifying"

IV. Is a Violation of an Explicit Command

A. Heb. 10:25

B. For one who misses once "forsake" the assembly?

C. Wrong to miss 100 times because wrong 1st time

V. Contributes to Ignorance

A. Hos. 4:6

B. II Pet. 1:5 - "And beside this"

C. II Pet. 3:18

D. Imagine 2 15-yr-old boys are bapt. One comes once a week. One four times.

1. 1st year one leaves 52, the other 208.

2. If live to age 70, 1-2860, other 11,440 (8.5%)

3. Stand side by side at judgment

VI. Sets bad example

A. I Tim. 4:12 - "Let no man despise..."

B. "A little girl with shining eyes
Her little face aglow..."

C. Ro. 14:7 "None of us liveth"

III. Discourage the Faithful -

A. Even Paul was discouraged. But - Ac 28:15

B. Encouraging to have regular & faithful attendees

VIII. Dim One's Christian Light

A. Mt. 5:13-16

B. Bro. Murry Walker -

IX. Demonstrates Priorities Not Properly Arranged

A. Mt. 6:33

B. What neighbors think? Children?

C. Even if not sin, attitude is a sin.

X. Appear to God Personally & Directly

A. All sins are against God, but some indirectly.

B. Mt. 22:37

C. First 4 of Ten Commandments.

D. Man picked up sticks (Num. 15)

E. Nadab & Abihu (Lev. 10)

F. Ananias & Sapphira (Ac. 5)

XI. Sins According to Plan & Purpose

A. Faithful Xian sins, but he plans not to.

B. Jezebel

C. Ro. 13:14 - "Make no provision"

XII. Only Thing Would Take to Destroy Church from face of earth.

Conclusion
Rep.; Conf. (publicly); and Pray

Feeling & Preaching
Q & A

Encouraging Facts

Much to cause anxiety & concern. Especially at this moment the threat of war in Saudi Arabia. Add to this the sickness, pain, and death that brushes all our lives from time to time. Dwelling on these may cause us to become despondent.

Would like to mention for your consideration some facts we would do well to remember. Remembering these will help us avoid worry, bitterness, or despondency.

Discussion

I. Fact #1: "There is a God in Heaven." (Dan. 2:28).

A. Gen. 1:1

B. Heb. 11:6

C. John Greenleaf Whittier: "God is and all is well."

D. J.S. Fezris in Beautiful Isle of Somewhere wrote:

"Somewhere the sun is shining, / Somewhere the songbirds dwell;

Hush, then, thy sad repining, / God lives and all is well."

E. "God's in his heaven - / All's right with the world." - Robt. Browning
(But only for those who are his children.)

I. Fact #2: "The most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men." (Dan. 4:17).

A. ("And giveth it to whomsoever he will.") - (Rest of verse.)

B. Prov. 14:34 - "Righteousness exalteth a nation"

C. Ps. 33:12 - "Blessed is the nation whose God"

1. Not say, "Blessed is the nation who has most troops"
2. Most tanks, most guns, most nuclear warhead
3. Superior air force.

D. Josh. 7 - Israel, with a superior army, was defeated at Ai because of their disobedience.

E. II Kings 17 - Israel was overcome by Assyria and taken off into captivity because of sin.

F. II Kings 24 & 25 - Judah carried away into Babylon because of her rebellion against God.

G. God has blessed America. America is not grateful, else its sins would not grow worse & worse with each passing year. For the salvation of our souls, we need to be a penitent, thankful, righteous people; but also for the welfare of our nation.

~~Our God is a God of Mercy~~

III. Fact #3: "The Lord thy God is a merciful God." (Deut. 4:31).

A. Jer. 3:12 - "I am merciful, saith the Lord."

B. II Chron. 7:14 - "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble...."

C. Merciful & merciless are next to each other in the dictionary, but poles apart in meaning.

D. Isa. 55:6-7 - "Seek ye the Lord while...."

E. God's mercy depends on our repentance & submission to his will.

IV. Fact #4: God will never leave nor forsake his children.

A. Heb. 13:5 - "Let your conversation be without"

1. When Jill was 3 or 4 we had to take her to emergency room. I said: "Don't be afraid. I will not leave you for a minute." Nurses wanted me to leave. I said: "I'm sorry. I can't leave. I gave my word, and my credibility with my daughter is at stake."

2. God can't leave me or forsake me. He gave me his word. I might leave him, but he cannot leave me. (Heb. 6:18).

B. Mt. 6:33 -

C. Phil. 4:19 - "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

D. Eph. 3:20-21 - "Now unto him that is able"

Conclusion

Comforting to know, especially now, that:

1. There is a God in heaven

2. The most High abith in the Kingdom of men.

3. The Lord our God is a merciful God.

4. Our God will never leave us or forsake us.

But comforting only if you are his child.

Eternity

Is. 57:18

Introduction

- I This the only verse in the Bible containing the word eternity.
- II Eternity + Despair are two words which man may never comprehend in this life.
 - A. Certain statesman, on his death bed, said to his physician: "Sir, you have not the remotest conception of the meaning of the word 'despair.'"
 - B. Also very difficult to comprehend the real meaning of "eternity."
- III Our lesson will be centered around 7 basic points:

Discussion

- I Man Will Live Again After His Earthly Existence
 - A. Eccl. 12:1-5 "goeth to his long home"
 - B. Mt. 17:1-3
 - C. Jn. 14:1-3
 - D. II Tim. 4:6-8
 - E. I R. 16:19-31

II The Journey to Eternity is Certain

- A. Eccl. 12:7 "Then shall the dust"
- B. Don't know exactly how, but Lk. 16:22 says Lazarus was "carried by the angels."
- C. How many will go in the next 10 yrs.? 5? 1?
- D. May fly into space, split the atom, find a cure for cancer, but never change the law that says, "man goeth to his long home"

III Physical Death is the Point at Which One Begins his Journey to Eternity.

- A. Heb. 9:27
- B. "And the mourners go about the streets"
- C. Two attitudes toward death:
 - 1. Rich man in Lk. 16
 - 2. Paul in II Tim. 4:6-8
- D. When a Christian dies
 - 1. Like leaving old house + moving into new
 - 2. Rev. 14:13
 - 3. I Thes. 4:13-18
- E. Why some old Lion friends say: "I am just patiently waiting for the Lord to call me home."

I Eternity is Man's Long Home

A. Eccl. 12:5 "man goeth to"

B. When leave this earthly existence - never return

1. Man + wife live together 50 or 60 yrs. but

2. Mother may weep over death of a child, but

3. Mother may say "goodbye" to son - may never see her alive again.

4. You live in a world you may leave any day, + without a moment's notice; + when you leave, you will never return.

C. How long?

1. Patient goes to hospital for 21 days, when been there a week, just has 14 days left.

2. Student to college for 4 yrs. etc.

3. Prisoner sentenced to 10 yrs. etc.

4.

The late T. B. Larimore in illustrating the length of eternity said,

"We may number the leaves of all the trees of all the earth through all the ages, and multiply that number by the number of blades of grass that have grown on the earth since the earth was made, then multiply that by the grains of sand upon the earth, and multiply that by the number of drops of water in existence; then let each unit in that final, inexpressible product represent ten thousand ages, and all the time represented by that wonderful combination of units, each unit representing ten thousand ages, is inexpressibly small in comparison with eternity, and may be deducted from eternity millions and billions and trillions of times and eternity would bestill the same awful, boundless, limitless, fathomless, inexpressible thing it was before." ³

- V Judgment Day is the Announcement Time
- A. Hard for some to believe the judgment is real
 - B. Act 17:30, 31
 - C. Mt. 25:31, 32
 - D. Heb. 9:27
 - E. Is real, & this where Jesus will pronounce eternal destinies

- VI There Are But Two Dwelling Places in Eternity
- A. Heaven
 - 1. new
 - 2. "Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" - beauty
 - 3. no death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain
 - 4. God shall wipe the tears from our eyes.
 - 5. No sea, no night, no separation
 - B. Hell
 - 1. Lake that burns with fire & brimstone
 - 2. everlasting fire
 - 3. the second death
 - C. Left
 - 1. Lake that burns w/ fire & brim...
 - 2. Second death
 - 3. everlasting fire

Right

A beautiful city
live with God
no sorrow, death, crying

I There is a Way to be Saved

A. Jm. 14:6

B. Ac. 4:12

C. Must obey him (Hch. 5:8, 9; Mt. 7:21; Dal. 3:26, 27).

Conclusion

I

Many years ago, a twelve year old boy worked on a farm in order to help support his mother. He would work hard from Monday morning through late Saturday afternoon, and about dusk dark he would start from the farm to his mother's cabin. He went down a road and had to go through a big woods. It was always dark on Saturday when he would come to the woods, but that boy would call out through the woods, "Mother, are you waiting for me?" From across the woods, the mother would answer, "Yes, Son, I am waiting. Walk on down the road into the valley of the forest and I will meet you there." The boy would be as brave as possible and he would walk on down the country road and through a part of the woods and into the valley. There mother would meet him and she would take him by the hand and they would go home for the weekend.

II

"Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile.

"What am I bidden, good folks?" he said;
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar." "A dollar." Then, "Two!"
"Two dollars! and who'll make it three?"

"Three dollars, once. Three dollars, twice!
Going for three?" But no!
From the room far back, an old gray haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow.

Then, wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody, pure and sweet
As the caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer
In a voice that was quiet and low
Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars! and who'll make it two?
Two thousand! and who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once! Three thousand, twice!
And... Going... and Gone!" said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand
What changed its worth?" Swift came the reply,
"The touch of the master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
Who is battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,
A game, — He travels on.
He's going once! He's going twice!
He's going — and almost gone!

But the Master comes! and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul, and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand!

— Anonymous

Nov. 5, 1995 A.M.

Mtng Mt. Harmon

FACEFACT

FACING THE FACTS

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for some people is to face the facts. A parent who wants his child to make perfect grades in school may have trouble facing the fact that the child is not capable of making perfect grades. May even refuse to face the fact, and blame the teacher. A father who has his heart set on watching his son play as starting quarterback on the football team may have trouble facing the fact that his son is not that good. He may not be willing to admit that fact, and even blame the coach. It is hard for some people to face the fact they are not as young as they used to be, not as strong, can't do all the things they once could. It is not easy for any of us to face the fact that we must die and leave this world behind.

In this sermon I want us to think about some facts we must all face. Yes, I know it may be difficult for us to face these facts, but they are real facts, and the sooner we face up to them the better.

DISCUSSION**I. THE DEVIL WANTS YOU TO BE LOST IN HELL FOR ETERNITY.**

- A. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).
- B. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).
- C. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" (Acts 5:3).
- D. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Corinthians 2:11).
- E. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

II. THE DEVIL WILL GET WHAT HE WANTS WITH THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE.

- A. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).
- B. This is true, not because people have no choice, but because the majority choose to give themselves as slaves to Satan.
 - 1. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18).
 - 2. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden because they chose to do Satan's bidding.
- C. If you are lost, you will have nobody to blame but yourself.
 - 1. You may point to the faults of others, and others may have influenced you in the wrong direction, but you have a choice.
 - 2. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).

III. GOD WANTS TO FORGIVE YOU OF YOUR SINS.

- A. To fallen Israel God said through his prophet: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).
- B. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).
- C. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11).
- D. Jesus gave his life so you might be forgiven. "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" (John 3:16).
- E. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).
- F. First Timothy 2:4 says "[God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

IV. LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY IS NEVER EASY.

- A. Governor Felix of Caesarea thought a time would come when it would be convenient to serve the Lord. To Paul he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). But no convenient season ever came. It never does.
- B. Doing right sometimes even creates more problems.
 - 1. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:34-37).
 - 2. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).
- C. It is easier if we choose our companions wisely. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Corinthians 15:33).
- D. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).
 - 1. Does not mean the Christian life is an easy life. But it is not galling and chafing.
 - 2. However, it does involve a yoke and a burden.
- E. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).
- F. Hard times we have as we live the Christian life will help us grow and mature.
 - 1. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).
 - 2. Song: "Yield not to temptation,/For yielding is sin./Each vict'ry will help you/ Some other to win."
- G. No doubt, Hell will be populated with people who were planning to do right when it got easy
- H. No one will ever live successfully the Christian life until he learns that the Christian life is a life of sacrifice. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

V. OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS ALWAYS THE RIGHT WAY.

- A. Right and wrong are not determined by:
1. What is appealing to the fleshly desires. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).
 2. What merely seems right from the human standpoint. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).
 3. Conscience. It was never intended to be a guide. "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).
 4. The majority. We have already noticed Matthew 7:13-14. If right were determined by majority, Noah would have been in error. So would all the faithful prophets of the Old Testament. So would Christ and his apostles.
 5. Parents or other relatives. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37-38).
 6. Religious leaders.
- B. What is the standard of right and wrong? (Are you aware of the fact that the vast majority of college-age young people do not believe there is such a thing as an absolute standard?)
1. What was the standard of right and wrong in Eden? Was it absolute?
 2. What was the standard of right and wrong when Lot and family left Sodom? Was it absolute? (Gen. 19:17: "look not behind thee." The verse 26: "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.")
 3. Look at Numbers 4:15: "And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation." Now look at Second Samuel 6:6-7: "And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."
 - a. What was the standard of right and wrong?
 - b. Was it an absolute standard?
 4. What was the standard of right and wrong in Leviticus 10:1-2? "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." Was it an absolute standard?
- C. God's word is an absolute standard of right and wrong. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).
- D. Three things all of us need to remember:
1. It is always right to do right. That is not to say that no bad things can come from doing right.
 2. It is always wrong to do wrong. That is not to say that no good ever comes from wrong-

- doing.
3. God's word is always the standard of right and wrong.

CONCLUSION

The last fact I will mention which we all need to face is this: Not one of us has the promise of tomorrow. "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:13-17).

Yesterday is gone forever; tomorrow may never come. Today is the only day you have. That is why, if you have not done so, you should obey the gospel of Christ today.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIANITY

The word *fundamental* suggests something that is an essential part. Sometimes in religious circles we forget to distinguish between those things that are incidental, those that are important, and those that are essential or fundamental. This lesson has to do with some fundamentals of Christianity. Not THE fundamentals, for there are some I will not talk about, such as the nature of God, the incarnation of Jesus, and the atoning power of the blood of Christ. These are all fundamental, but they are on God's side. I will be discussing the things that are fundamental on our part.

As I talk about the fundamentals of Christianity, please understand that by Christianity I mean that system of religion established by Christ and for which he shed his blood. Hundreds of religions have been started since then, and many of them refer to themselves as being Christian religions. The truth is that not one of them was set up by the authority of Christ, and not one drop of his blood was shed to bring a single one of them into existence.

What are some of the *Fundamentals of New Testament Christianity*?

DISCUSSION

I. BELIEF IN THE DEITY OF JESUS

- A. Many acknowledge Jesus as a great man.
 - 1. John 3:2: "The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."
 - 2. Woman at the well: "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19).
 - 3. Matthew 16 some thought he was Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, or one of the prophets.
- B. Must believe him to be the Son of God.
 - 1. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).
 - 2. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).
 - 3. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).
 - 4. Matthew 3:17 and 17:5: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- C. This is a fundamental of Christianity.

II. BELIEF IN THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

- A. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17).
- B. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).
- C. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Corinthians 2:10).
- D. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Corinthians 2:13).

- E. "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:2-5).
- F. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:37).

III. RECOGNITION OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

- A. Practically every question underlying present-day denominational division is a question of authority, and not of interpretation.
 - 1. For example, any Catholic priest will tell you baptism was immersion at first, but it was changed by the authority of the Pope. If NT your authority, baptism is a burial; if the Pope, then sprinkling and pouring just as good.
 - 2. But some not accept the authority of the Pope accept spr. and Pouring. Why? Scholars agree bapt. was immersion in the NT. But sanctified common sense will tell you that a few drops is just as good. So if NT your authority, baptism is a burial, but if sanctified common sense, then spr. and pouring just as good.
- B. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).
 - 1. Why have Lord's Supper every Sunday? Because of the authority of the Scriptures.
 - 2. Why not have inst. music in worship? Because of the authority of the Scriptures.
- C. A recognition of the authority of the Scriptures is fundamental.

IV. MEMBERSHIP IN THE LORD'S CHURCH

- A. I am talking about the church we read about in the New Testament.
- B. Jesus purchased it with his blood (Acts 20:28). "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
- C. He gave himself for it, that is, to bring it into existence (Ephesians 5:25). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."
- D. There is no Christianity separate and apart from the church. Acts 2:47 shows the saved are added by the Lord to his church. The church is a fundamental.
- E. Please be sure you do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that membership in some humanly devised church is essential. In fact Jesus said, "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).
- F. The church we read about in the New Testament was:
 - 1. Purposed by God through all eternity (Ephesians 3:10-11).
 - 2. Spoken of by the Old Testament prophets (Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44)
 - 3. Promised by Jesus while he lived on earth (Matt. 16:18).
 - 4. Prepared for by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:3)
 - 5. Established with the power of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-47).
- G. Membership in this church is a fundamental of Christianity.

V. SCRIPTURAL WORSHIP

- A. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"
- B. 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."

- C. Careful reflection upon O. T. will reveal two things:
 1. God has always given detailed instructions with reference to worship
 2. He has always seriously punished those who took his instructions lightly
 3. Genesis 4 (Cain and Abel) and Leviticus 10 (Nadab and Abihu) are examples of this
- D. Scriptural worship is a fundamental of Christianity

VI. **GODLY LIVING**

- A. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).
- B. Not enough just to be right with reference to religious activities. Must live right.
 1. Romans 12:2 still says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 2. James 4:4 still says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
 3. Galatians 5:19-21 still says, "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."
- C. We need to remind ourselves often of what is said in:
 1. First Timothy 5:22: "Keep thyself pure."
 2. First Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication."
 3. Second Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts."
- D. Peter tells us how to do these things: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:5-11).
- E. Living pure and godly lives is a fundamental of Christianity.

VII. **THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL**

- A. If the seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11) then the only way to produce the church is by planting the seed.
 1. It makes no difference how well the ground may be prepared, fertilized, and watered, unless the seed is planted, there can be no harvest.
 2. The programs of the church may be ever so many and so good, but without the teaching and preaching of the word, souls cannot be saved.
- B. Second Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
- C. 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."

- D. Without the preaching of the word there can be no true Christianity. It is fundamental.

VIII. THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

- A. Paul said, "I am set for the defence of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17).
- B. The truth is under constant attack. It always has been. Jude 3 says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
- C. Many of the New Testament books were written to refute error.
- D. The attitude we should have toward error is set forth in Second John 10-11: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

IX. OBEDIENCE TO GODS PLAN OF SALVATION

- A. Two important facts with reference to
 - 1. God has the right to stipulate the terms of pardon
 - 2. God has done so
- B. Yes, sinners are saved by grace. But salvation is conditional.
- C. Sinners are saved by grace when they humbly bow in submission to the will of God and obey his commandments.
 - 1. Hear (John 6:44-45)
 - 2. believe (John 8:24)
 - 3. repent (Acts 17:30)
 - 4. confess (Romans 10:9-10)
 - 5. be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16)
- D. Hebrews 2:9 tells us Christ tasted death for all men by God's grace. Hebrews 5:9 tells us Christ save those who obey him.
- E. Obedience to God's plan of salvation is a fundamental of Christianity.

CONCLUSION

These nine things we have named are fundamental. If we leave off a single one of them, then we have lost the right to call ourselves Christians.

THE FUTURE IS PREDICTABLE

As I announce my subject this morning I want you to know that I do not believe in astrology, "the pseudo science which claims to foretell the future by studying the supposed influences of the relative positions of the moon, sun, and stars on human affairs" (Webster).

Isaiah speaks ironically when he says, "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee" (Isaiah 47:13).

When I say the future is predictable, I simply mean that in the natural world, because of what has happened in the past, we can predict what is going to happen in the future. For example, we can predict that the leaves will be turning brown and falling from the trees, the weather will get colder and colder, and then it will begin to get warm again, and the flowers will blossom, and the grass will turn green. From what we know of the past, the future is predictable.

In a small Arkansas town many years ago some men were sitting on a bench outside the local general store. One said, "The Bible says the time will come when you can't tell the seasons except by the budding of the leaves." Another said, "I don't believe that is in the Bible." About this time they saw a preacher, brother George DeHoff, walking toward them. They stopped him, and asked him where in the Bible they could find that statement. Immediately, brother DeHoff responded, "Genesis 8:22," and walked on down the street. When they had obtained a Bible, they read, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Brother DeHoff had cited a reference which taught the very opposite of the man's "chimney corner" scripture.

Notice with me seven important predictable facts. WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH:

DISCUSSION

- I. **THERE WILL BE A BATTLE BETWEEN THE WORKS OF THE FLESH AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.**
 - A. "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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Galatians 5:19-22).
 - B. This will endure until the Lord comes from heaven. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 1:7-8).
 - C. When he comes again he will reward every man according to his works. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6).
- II. **NO NEW CHURCH OR SPIRITUAL KINGDOM WILL BE ESTABLISHED WITH HEAVEN'S AUTHORITY.**
 - A. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19).

- B. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).
- C. The one built by Jesus was purchased by his blood (Acts 20:28).
- D. All the saved are in it. "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).
- E. Daniel prophesied of it: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).
- F. Every other church that shall ever be established on this earth will be without divine authority, and will be "rooted up." Matthew 15:13: "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

III. NO NEW PLAN OF SALVATION WILL EVER BE ISSUED FROM HEAVEN.

- A. The one Jesus gave will be effective as long as the world stands. (Mark 16:16).
- B. Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
- C. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

IV. NO NEW REVELATION WILL COME FROM HEAVEN.

- A. The revelation of the gospel is complete.
 - 1. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).
 - 2. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3).
- B. One who gives an additional revelation is to be accursed. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

V. NO NEW ACTS OF WORSHIP WILL EVER BE AUTHORIZED BY HEAVEN.

- A. God has authorized:
 - 1. singing: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).
 - 2. praying: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).
 - 3. preaching or teaching the word of the Lord: (Acts 2:42).
 - 4. eating the Lord's Supper: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).
 - 5. contributing: "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" (I Corinthians 16:1-2).
- B. No others are authorized.
 - 1. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 1:9).

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. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4: 1-4).

VI. NO LITERAL REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH.

- A. When he comes again, the earth will be burned up. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3:10).
- B. When he comes again, he will end his reign. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 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. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:19-26).

VII. NO CHANGE IN THE FACT THAT PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE TO DIE, AND THEN SOON BE FORGOTTEN.

- A. When the unsinkable Titanic made her maiden voyage from Southampton on the way to New York, and struck an iceberg, and sank. 832 passengers and 685 crew members died. Among those drowned were 50 prominent citizens of Belfast in Ireland. The city of Belfast mourned their loss, and erected a bronze plaque listing the names of those fifty people. In 1972, exactly 50 years later, Joe Nesbit, the gospel preacher working with the church in Belfast, copied the names from that plaque, and read the list on Sunday morning to the congregation. He asked if anyone present recognized any of them. No one did.
- B. Solomon said the memory of the dead is forgotten. "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten" (Ecclesiastes 9:5).
- C. But it is predictable with certainty also that a righteous man will be remembered forever. "Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance" (Psalms 112:6).
- D. Not by his fellow human beings, but by God. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).
- E. Now look at verse 17: "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."
- F. Furthermore, the author of the book of Hebrews says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10).

CONCLUSION

Yes, the future is predictable. Some might call it judging, but the Bible says that the obedient will be saved and the disobedient will be lost. Your future is predictable, if you are, or if you are not a Christian.

SOME THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM GENESIS

Romans 15:4

Our text says: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The things "written aforetime" were those things written in the Old Testament. We are not living under the law contained in the Old Testament (Col. 2:14-16). But the O. T. is just as much the word of God as the New. And Romans 15:4 says we can learn from it.

As I began to think about this subject, I realized there are so many things to be learned from the Old Testament that I could never talk about all of them in one sermon. So I decided to limit the subject to some things learned from Genesis. But still the subject is much too broad. I shall be able only to touch the hem of the garment as I mention some of the many things we should learn from this first book in the Bible.

DISCUSSION**I. FROM GENESIS WE LEARN ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF ALL THINGS**

- A. One of the basic questions asked by men of every age and nationality is, "Where did I come from?" Genesis answers that question (Gen. 1:1).
- B. The speculations of the evolutionist are without scientific basis.
 - 1. We sometimes hear people talk about the "science of origins." There is no such thing, for the scientist cannot tell us about origins; the Bible can and does.
 - 2. Evolution is unproved, unprovable, unscientific, and unprofitable.
- C. Young people need to be impressed with the fact that the only way to know about the origin of man is to learn from Genesis.
- D. No doubt, one of the reasons people have come to act like animals, is they have become convinced they are animals. What do you expect?

II. FROM GENESIS WE LEARN GOD'S PLAN FOR MARRIAGE

- A. After God had created the man, he said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen 2:18).
- B. God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he took one of his ribs, and from that rib he made a woman.
 - 1. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (2:23-24).
 - 2. Four thousand years later Jesus referred to this incident and quoted this very verse in teaching those of his day God's plan for marriage.
- C. Man has forsaken the plan, but God's plan has not changed.
 - 1. The plan is one man for one woman for life. Not one woman for one woman, or one man for one man.
 - 2. God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, and not Annie and Eve.
- D. God permits divorce and remarriage for one cause, and only one cause (Matt. 19:9: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

III. FROM GENESIS WE LEARN ABOUT SIN

A. We learn what it is.

1. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (2:16-17).
2. Man sinned when he violated God's law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4).
3. One might also sin by doing nothing (Jas. 4:17).

B. We learn the deceptive nature of it.

1. The old serpent convinced the woman she would not die, as God had said she would.
2. Heb. 3:13: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
3. II Cor. 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

C. We learn the disastrous consequences of it.

1. Adam and Eve were driven from Paradise, and brought upon all their children and grandchildren the sorrow, anguish, heartache, and pain associated with death and mortality.
2. They did not pass on to their children the guilt of their sin, as some claim.
 - a. Ezek. 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."
 - b. Isa. 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
 - c. Matt. 18:3: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."
 - d. Matt. 19:14: "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."
3. But they passed on to their children the disastrous consequences of their sin.
 - a. Children of the drunkard do not inherit the guilt of their father's drunkenness, but they suffer the consequences of it.
 - b. So of the murdered, the thief, the fornicator, the drug addict, etc.
4. But the most terrible consequences of sin is talked about in Mark 9:43-48: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

'Pattern Theology'

IV. **IN GENESIS WE LEARN OF GOD'S PURPOSE TO SAVE MAN THROUGH CHRIST**

- A. No, we do not learn all about it in Genesis, just as we do not learn all there is to know about these other things we have mentioned.
- B. But it is hinted at in Genesis 3:15, when God said to the serpent: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."
- C. It is referred to again in Genesis 12:2-3: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
- D. Several other references to God's great Scheme of Redemption may be found in the book of Genesis, but one very impressive one is in Genesis 49:10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."
- E. If we did not have the rest of the Bible, we would not know the meaning of these verses, but against the background of the whole Bible, these verses are rich in meaning.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is a book designed to teach us how to live. It tells us about sin and about salvation. It is obvious from the account of the sin of Adam and Even that one is separated from God by sin when he hears, believes, and obeys a lie. The way back to God and into his fellowship is to hear, believe, and obey the truth. First Peter 1:22-23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Obedience to the truth involves

ASHAMED

GOD IS NOT ASHAMED

Hebrews 11:16

The idea of one's being ashamed of the name of God or of Jesus Christ is an idea developed in many songs that we sing. One such song says, "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord, / Nor to defend His cause; / Maintain the honors of His word, / The glory of His cross."

The word *shame* means, "A painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness, or disgrace." A person should *be ashamed to be ashamed* of the name of the Lord. In Mark 8:38 Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." That does not mean that Lord will have a sense of guilt, or unworthiness, but a sense of having been disgraced by the one who has been ashamed of him.

It is necessary, therefore, that we never be ashamed of the name of the Lord--never feel embarrassed to let people know of our faith in the Lord and of the fact we are Christians. Romans 1:16 says, "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."

But Hebrews 11:16 says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." More important than whether I am ashamed of the Lord is whether the Lord is ashamed of me. The verse we have just read tells of some concerning whom it is said that God was not ashamed to be called their God. What was it about them that caused the writer to say such a thing?

DISCUSSION**I. THEY WERE MEN AND WOMEN OF FAITH**

- A. Need to know what faith is. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). ASV says, "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Faith is belief that is based on sufficient evidence. Not a "leap in the dark."
- B. Where does it come from? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). True faith is belief based on the testimony of the word of God. That is reliable and sufficient evidence to support any belief.
 1. Verse 4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."
 2. Verse 5: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."
 3. Verse 7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."
 4. Verse 8: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."
 5. Verse 11: "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

6. Verse 20: "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."
 7. Verse 21: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."
 8. Verse 22: "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."
 9. Verse 23: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."
 10. Verse 30: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."
 11. Verse 31: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."
- C. The point in every case is that faith apprehends as a reality that which has not been revealed to the senses. Faith rests upon that reality, acts upon it, and is upheld by it in the face of all that seems to contradict it. The key is verse 27: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he [Moses] endured, as seeing him who is invisible."
- D. God is not ashamed of those who take his testimony, embrace it, act upon it, and rest in it, with the same degree of certainty as if they had already seen the thing promised come to pass. God is not ashamed to be called their God.

II. THEY WERE OBEDIENT TO HIS COMMANDS

- A. Not a person in the list in Hebrews 11 whose faith accomplished anything separate and apart from obedience.
1. Abel (4)
 2. Noah (7) Cf. Genesis 6:22: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."
 3. Abraham (8) Cf. James 2:21-24: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."
 4. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell..." (30) Cf. Joshua 6.
- B. They were obedient to the arbitrary commands of God--commands which, from the standpoint of human ingenuity, had no connection at all with the blessing which was desired.
1. Verse 17. Abraham offered Isaac. Why did God command such? And how would God make good his promise? But he obeyed anyway.
 2. Verse 28. The keeping of the Passover is mentioned. How could the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts have anything to do with whether the firstborn in a house lived or died? And why did God give such foolish (from the human standpoint) instructions?
 3. Verse 30. The walls of Jericho fell. All that marching seems a waste of time and energy. How would it help? And why didn't God just knock down the walls with a tornado? But they obeyed.
 4. Verse 32 mentions Gideon (Old Testament Gideon). Judges 6-7. God certainly gave him some strange orders, that cause him to start out with a small army of 32,000 to go against an army of 135,000. Send home all who are afraid. Is that wise? Then send home all but 300 men. I know, from a human standpoint that is not wise. But he had faith that cause him to obey anyway.
- C. This is the kind of people concerning whom it can be said that God is not ashamed to be called their God.

III. **THEY WERE NOT TIED, HEART AND SOUL, TO THIS WORLD**

- A. Verse 9: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."
 - 1. Look at that word *sojourn*. Means "to dwell beside, as one who is not a citizen."
 - 2. Notice also that it says "dwelling in tabernacles." That's what you do when you go to the river to fish a few days. You are just there temporarily. That's the way these people looked upon their earthly existence--just temporary.
- B. Verse 13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."
 - 1. They had their hearts set on the promises of God, and not on any material possessions.
 - 2. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
 - a. If you visit a foreign country you may exchange your money for foreign currency, but likely not all of your money. Just enough to get you by while there.
 - b. Stranger and pilgrim. That's the idea here expressed.
- C. We are not to be of this world.
 - 1. First 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."
 - 2. Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 - 3. James 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
- D. God is ashamed of those who are so tied to this world, but he is not ashamed to be called the God of those who have their hearts set on his promises.

IV. **THEY WORSHIPED GOD FAITHFULLY**

- A. Verse 4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."
- B. Verse 7 mentions Noah. Now look at Genesis 8:20: "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."
- C. It is said that Abraham could be trailed by the smoke of his altars.
- D. Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."
- E. God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who faithfully and regularly worship.

V. **THEY WERE UNSELFISH IN GIVING THEIR POSSESSIONS TO GOD**

- A. Abel. Noah.
- B. Look at Abraham's gift in Genesis 22.
- C. First Corinthians 16:2: "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."
- D. Second 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."

- E. God is not ashamed to be the God of those who liberally and cheerfully give.

CONCLUSION

The people we have talked about were real people, not fairy tale characters. They were not sinlessly perfect individuals; they had their weaknesses and made their mistakes, just as you and I have and do. But their faith in God was implicit. They obeyed him without holding anything back. They were not tied to this world, but had their hearts set on a city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." They were faithful and regular in their worship to God. And they practiced good stewardship by giving to God of those blessing God had bestowed on them. They are now gone from this earth, but one day they will stand before the Judge of all the earth, and he will say to them something like this: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. My Father welcomes you into the portals of glory forever, because he is not ashamed to be called your God."

I will be standing there too, and so will you. What will he say to me? What will he say to you?

FOURTH

THE GOD OF THE FOURTH GENERATION**(GENESIS 15)**

Bobby Duncan

Genesis fourteen tells of Abraham's going to do battle with the four kings which had defeated the five kings and taken Lot captive. He had defeated those kings with their armies. This emphasizes two things: (1) the wealth of Abraham (318 armed servants), and (2) the fact that God was with him. Perhaps Abraham was now wondering if those four kings would regroup and attack him. That may be why God says, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

If the events in this chapter occurred immediately before those recorded in chapter sixteen, it had been ten years since the original promise was made to Abraham.

This chapter contains a renewal or restatement of the promise, along with certain particulars with reference to the development of a nation and the inhabiting of a land by that nation. Notice some of the valuable lessons we can learn from this chapter.

DISCUSSION**I. GOD'S MESSAGE WAS COMMUNICATED BY SPEAKING.**

- A. "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1).
- B. God did not communicate with Abraham by causing him to have certain feelings, or certain experiences, but by speaking words to him.
- C. This has always been God's method of communicating his message to man.
 1. That is how God made Adam and Eve to know certain fruit was forbidden (Genesis 2:16-17).
 2. That's how Noah knew he was to build an ark (Genesis 6:14).
 3. Other passages which emphasize this point are Second Samuel 23:2; Nehemiah 9:30; First Timothy 4:1-4; Revelation 2-3 (the letters to the seven churches); and Ephesians 3:1-4.
- D. Phrases such as "the word of the Lord," "God said," "the Lord said," "the Lord commanded," "the Lord spake," "God spake," "the Lord hath spoken," and "thus saith the Lord" occur more than 1600 times in the Old Testament alone. Where is the passage that says one "felt led" or "felt moved" to do something, or that the Lord "laid it on his heart" in some way other than speaking to him?
- E. In communicating his message to the masses, it has always been the case that God would select some person or persons, reveal his will to him or them through his Holy Spirit, and then inspire him or them to speak to the masses.
 1. This is how it was in Noah's day (I Peter 3:18-22).
 2. This is the way it was during the period of the law (Nehemiah 9:30).
 3. This is the way it was during the apostolic period (John 16:13; 14:26).
 4. In our own time God's inspired spokesmen are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John,

Paul, Peter, James, and Jude.

II. GOD CONFIRMED HIS MESSAGE TO ABRAHAM.

- A. Verse 8: "And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"
- B. While God expects us to be people of faith, he has never expected his people to believe a message that is unconfirmed.
 - 1. That is why the term "blind faith" is erroneous.
 - 2. Hebrews 11:1 says (in the KJV): "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The word ἐλεγχος 'evidence' is defined by Thayer as meaning, "a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested."
- C. Moses asked God for a means of confirming his message to Israel and Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-9).
- D. The Law of Moses was confirmed by thunders, lightnings, thick cloud, voice of a trumpet, smoke, quaking of the mountain, the death of any who touched the mount (Exodus 19:10-25). Notice verse 9: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD." Notice: "believe thee for ever." The law did not have to be confirmed each time it was read. Once was enough.
- E. Miracles in connection with the revelation of the New Testament were for the purpose of confirming the word (Mark 16:15-20; Hebrews 2:1-4).
- F. The man of God who cried out against the altar at Bethel lost his life because he traded a confirmed message for an unconfirmed one (I Kings 13).
- G. Many today trade a confirmed message (the New Testament) for an unconfirmed message (some imagined special revelation, or some human doctrine).

III. THE LAND PROMISE HAS ALREADY BEEN FULFILLED.

- A. "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites" (Genesis 15:18-21).
- B. "Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous" (Nehemiah 9:7-8). Note: "hast performed thy words."
- C. If every fleshly descendant of Abraham in the world should leave Palestine, never again to return, the land promise has been fulfilled.
- D. If every fleshly descendant of Abraham in the world should move to Palestine and remain there until Jesus comes again, it would have nothing to do with the promise

God made to Abraham to give his seed that land. That promise has already been kept.

IV. **WICKED NATIONS WILL BE DESTROYED WHEN THEIR INIQUITY IS FULL.**

- A. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16).
 - 1. It seems the Amorites were so numerous in the land of Canaan that their name is put here for all the people in that land. While the inhabitants of Canaan were wicked, they had not yet reached that point at which nations pass beyond the reach of God's mercy and are destroyed.
 - 2. Commenting on this verse, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown say the following: "The statement implies that there is a progress in the course of sin and vice amongst nations as well as with individuals, and that, although it be permitted, by the tolerant spirit of the Divine government, to go on with impunity, it will at length reach a culminating point, where, in the retributions of righteous Providence, the punishment of the sinner, even in this world, is inevitable."
 - 3. Adam Clarke says: "From these words we learn that there is a certain pitch of iniquity to which nations may arrive before they are destroyed, and beyond which divine justice does not permit them to pass."
- B. "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up" (Daniel 8:23).
- C. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:13).
- D. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (I Thessalonians 2:16).
- E. "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" (Matthew 23:32).
- F. I wonder how much more iniquity it will take for our country to fill up its measure?

V. **THE BIBLE RECORD IS RELIABLE.**

- A. Here it is said that the seed of Abraham would be afflicted in a strange land four hundred years (15:13). That is the same figure Stephen used in Acts 7:6. It is not unusual to round off large numbers to the nearest hundred. That is probably what is done in both of these places.
- B. Exodus 12:40-41 says, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."
- C. But the skeptic finds a problem: the genealogies listed in Exodus 6:16-20 cannot allow for more than 352 years. This passage, along with First Chronicles 6:1 and 23:6-13, reveals the following:
 - 1. Kohath, son of Levi and grandfather to Moses, had already been born when Jacob moved with his sons into Egypt (Genesis 46:11). If he had just been born at the time, and if he sired his son Amram the last day of his life, then

- Amram was born no later than 134 years after the entrance into Egypt, because Kohath lived only 133 years (Exodus 6:18).
2. Amram lived 137 years. He was the father of Moses. If he sired Moses the last day of his life, Moses was born no more than 272 years after Jacob and his sons moved into Egypt ($133 + 1 + 137 + 1 = 272$).
 3. Moses was eighty years old when Israel came out of Egypt (Exodus 7:7). Add this to the 272 years and the total is 352. That is the maximum.
- D. What is the answer?
1. Some say there were skips in the genealogies. I see no reason to think so.
 2. The answer is in reckoning the four hundred thirty years from the right time to the right time. (The 400 years is a round figure, with the actual total being 430 years.) In Galatians 3:17 Paul tells us when to begin counting and when to stop: "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." So the time to begin counting is when God made the promise to Abraham.
 - a. Abraham was 75 years old when he entered Canaan and the Lord appeared to him to promise Isaac (Genesis 12:4-7).
 - b. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born (21:5).
 - c. Sixty years later Jacob was born (25:26).
 - d. Jacob was 130 years old when he went into Egypt (47:9).
 - e. Add it up: $25 + 60 + 130 = 215$. Subtract that from the 430, and you have 215, the actual time spent in Egypt.
 3. In Exodus 12:40-41, the Septuagint Version has "in Egypt and Canaan." So also does the Samaritan Pentateuch.
- E. Isn't it amazing how the Bible clarifies the Bible?

CONCLUSION

These are certainly not all the lessons we could glean from this marvelous chapter. I hope these will be helpful to us all.

INDWELL

THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:13

There is likely no Bible subject upon which there is more confusion than the subject of the Holy Spirit (often referred to in the KJV as the Holy Ghost). Not only is this a subject about which so many people are in error, but there are likely more different errors with reference to this subject. (When I use the word *error* I simply mean it is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, the standard of what is true and what is error.)

In introducing the subject of the Holy Spirit, it needs to be pointed out that the Holy Spirit is a person, just like Jesus Christ is a person, and just like God the Father is a person. Notice the personal pronouns used in John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."

In this study I invite you to consider with me four different areas in which the Bible teaching on the Holy Spirit is misunderstood, not because the Bible is obscure or ambiguous, but because some have been careless and reckless in their interpretation of the Bible.

DISCUSSION**I. THE MIRACULOUS WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

- A. It is not a question of whether miracles were performed in the first century. All who believe the Bible know miracles were performed.
- B. Are miracles being performed today? The answer is no. The reason some have difficulty in understanding that miracles have ceased is that they have not made a point of learning from the Bible the purpose of miracles.
- C. The purpose of miracles was to effect the revelation and confirmation of the New Testament.
 1. Revelation is the distinct work of the Holy Spirit.
 2. God the Father is the Great Architect, the Great Planner of the Scheme of Redemption. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10-11).
 3. God the Son came into the world to execute that plan. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).
- D. Some passages which emphasize the Spirit's work in revealing the gospel:
 1. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13).
 2. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).
 3. "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:2-5).
 4. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Corinthians 2:10). Now look at verse 13: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;

comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

- E. But remember that any revelation from God has to be confirmed. God never has expected man to believe an unconfirmed message. Notice passages that show miracles were to confirm the gospel it was being revealed:
1. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mark 16:15-20).
 2. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:1-4).
 3. Example: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did" (Acts 8:5-6).
- F. When the New Testament was completed and confirmed, the miracles ceased. They had served their purpose. No need for the Father to plan over and over the Scheme of Redemption; no need for Christ to come down from heaven again to die on the cross. Those works are done. And the revelation and confirmation of the gospel is done once for all.
- G. Those who claim miracles are being performed today are inadvertently attacking the completeness of the New Testament as we have it, and they are suggesting more evidence is needed to make the N.T. reliable.

II. THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. There are numerous references to the Spirit's dwelling in the Christian in the N.T. We need to examine the Bible to see what this means.
- B. Perhaps it will help if we also observe that there are also numerous references to the fact that God dwells in the Christian.
1. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (I John 4:12).
 2. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (I John 4:15). If this means God literally dwells in my body, then it must also mean I literally dwell in the body of God.
 3. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I John 4:16).
 4. "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (I John 3:24). (No doubt this refers to the miraculous powers they possessed which guaranteed or confirmed the authenticity of the gospel they had obeyed and which they preached. Notice this says both God and the Spirit dwelt in those Christians.)
- C. Christ also dwells in the Christian.

1. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). (This also says the Christian dwells in Christ. Literally?)
 2. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love..." (Ephesians 3:17). So that's how it is; by faith.
 3. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). Christ dwells in me as his word dwells in me. So of God, and so of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Why some understand that God and Christ dwell in the Christian through the influence of the word, but think the only way the Holy Spirit can dwell in them is literally, I do not know.

III. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

- A. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).
1. So far as I know, all who believe the Bible also believe one must be following the leadership of the Holy Spirit in order to be pleasing to God.
 2. But an important question needs to be answered: How does the Holy Spirit lead?
 3. Some mistake their own subjective feelings for the leading of the Spirit.
 4. Some think whatever they do they have been thus led by the Holy Spirit.
 5. Some try to interpret their experiences as messages from the Spirit. "What is the Lord trying to tell me?"
 6. Some their hunches or their urges. "Whatever the Lord lays on your heart." "I was led to do so-and-so."
 7. If the Spirit of the Lord led in such ways, one could never be sure of the will of the Lord for him.
 8. Preachers claiming the direct leadership of the Spirit preach contradictory doctrines.
- B. How does the Holy Spirit lead? By speaking words. Always been that way.
1. Early morning of time: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (I Peter 3:18-20).
 2. Notice how God got Abraham out of Urr: "Now the LORD had *said* unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). Didn't just cause him to have certain feelings.
 3. During the Mosaic Age: "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands" (Nehemiah 9:30).
 4. "The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (II Samuel 23:2).
- C. Has always been the case that God communicated his mind to the masses by selecting some one or some few, sending his Spirit upon that one or those few for the purpose of inspiring them. They in turn delivered the word of God to the masses.
1. These incidents we have noted show that to be the case.
 2. Also look at the prophets of the Old Testament.
 3. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, James, and Jude were selected by the Lord to be his spokesmen to the masses during the age in which we live. He inspired them with his Holy Spirit, and they wrote the New Testament. When we are following the teaching of the New Testament we are being led by the Holy Spirit.

4. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (I Timothy 4:1).
 5. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).
 6. Each of the letters to the seven churches contains a line which says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."
- D. The message of God to man is all contained in the Bible. He has not other message for us.

IV. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- A. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).
1. It is probable that the word *Spirit* in this verse refers, not to the Holy Spirit, but to the following after spiritual things instead of fleshly things.
 2. Nevertheless, one who is being led by the Holy Spirit will be so doing, and his life will be characterized by the things here called "the fruit of the Spirit." (Singular. The fruit of the Spirit is one fruit, characterized by all these qualities.
- B. Notice these qualities individually:
1. love--this is $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$, which means that love that one chooses to have, and which is sometimes defined as active goodwill.
 2. joy--the Christian (one being led by the Spirit) is a happy and joyful person. If you are miserable, then you are not following very closely.
 3. peace--Thayer says the word here means "exemption from the rage and havoc of war." What a way to describe the tranquil state of the Christian. He also uses the words *security*, *safety*, *prosperity*, and *felicity*. Reminds one of Paul's statement in Phil 4:6-6: "Be careful of nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
 4. longsuffering--means patience, steadfastness, endurance, faithfulness in hardship
 5. gentleness--also translated "kindness" and "goodness." In one of his poems, Edgar A. Guest had these lines: "Let me be a little kinder,/ Let me be a little blinder/ To the faults of those around me,/ Let me praise a little more."
 6. goodness--means uprightness of heart and life
 7. faith--means conviction. One who lives according to what he believes is right. Some know the truth, but have not the courage to stand for it.
 8. meekness--means submissiveness. Not weakness, or cowardice. The idea is that the meek person is totally submissive to the will of God. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3). But Moses was not weak or cowardly.
 9. temperance--means self control, and refers to one who is the master of his own desires and passions. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27).

CONCLUSION

God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit have framed, executed, and revealed the great Scheme of Redemption. We are the recipients of the bountiful mercy and grace of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But salvation has never been forced on anyone; it is a matter one must choose.

HOW MAY I KNOW A THING IS RIGHT?

The last verse of the book of Judges says, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). We are living in a time much like that, and the popular view in our society is that that is the ideal situation. We are even told that what is right for one may not be right for others. (I am not talking about what is expedient.)

Is there a way to know whether a thing is right or wrong? Is there an objective standard by which our actions are measured, which will tell us without fail, and which is always correct? In other words, how may I know a thing is right?

DISCUSSION

I. NOT BY MY OWN SUBJECTIVE FEELINGS

- A. "I know I am a Christian. Know I have been forgiven. Know I have a relationship with the Lord."
- B. Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

II. NOT BY WHAT SEEMS RIGHT

- A. "I can't believe God will condemn a person just because he has not been baptized." "Was sprinkled and not immersed." "Used a piano in worship."
- B. Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
- C. First Corinthians 1:18-25: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."
- D. Those who substitute their own wisdom for the word of the Lord have always erred.

III. NOT BY THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO MAY BELIEVE OR PRACTICE IT

- A. "How can you be so bold as to say all those people are wrong?"
- B. "There can't be anything wrong with wearing shorts, public swimming, going to the dance, or social drinking. Everybody's doing it."
- C. Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
- D. Noah and his family were in the minority.
- E. Public opinion turned against Christ.
- F. True Christians were in the minority in the first century. Why should we expect it to be different today?

- G. A thing is not determined to be right or wrong by the few or the many who accept it.

IV. NOT BY THE MORAL EXCELLENCE OF THE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IT

- A. "How can you say sprinkling for baptism is not right. Don't you know Mother Teresa was sprinkled?"
Or, "Look at all the good works these people are doing. How can you say they have not obeyed the gospel of Christ?"
- B. Would the same kind of argument not prove it is not necessary to believe in Christ? What about the Jew who is morally excellent? Maybe even certain athiests?
- C. There are many morally excellent people who have never submitted themselves to Jesus Christ.
- D. Some morally excellent people who are blinded to the truth by their own religious prejudice.
1. Matthew 13:15 "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 2. Moral excellence will not save
 - a. Romans 3:10; 3:23; Eccl. 7:20; Isaiah 53:6
 - b. Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:1-2

V. WHAT GOD SAYS IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW A THING IS RIGHT

- A. Acts 17:11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
1. They did not go by their feelings
 2. Try to see if it coincided with their own wisdom
 3. Count noses to see how many would accept it
 4. Ask what kind of people were embracing this doctrine
 5. They simply consulted the word of the Lord
- B. Psalms 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
- C. Psalms 119:130: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."
- D. Psalms 119:128: "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."
- E. Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
- F. Deuteronomy 4:2: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
- G. Revelation 22:18-19 "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

CONCLUSION

Have you allowed the word of the Lord to be the Standard by which you governed your life? If not, will you beging to do so now? You will never have reason to be sorry.

If you do not do so you will most certainly regret it for an eternity.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT WIELDS AN INFLUENCE IN OUR LIVES

Romans 8:14

That the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) wields an influence over the lives of men and women is agreed by all Bible believing people. But a failure to understand how this influence is wielded has led to error and confusion in the religious world. This failure to understand the manner in which the Holy Spirit works is at the root of practically every false religion, including some of the errors among those in the church of Christ.

This failure to understand how the Spirit operates does not come about because the teaching of the Bible on the subject is obscure. It comes about rather for two reasons: (1) a failure to consider carefully all that the Bible teaches about the subject, and (2) listening to the pronouncements of those who are led by their own subjective feelings rather than the word of God.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn from the Bible how the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) wields an influence over men and women today.

DISCUSSION**I. THE IDEAS OF MEN**

- A. Oral Roberts said God told him he would call him home if he did not raise eight million dollars by the end of March 1987. Pat Robertson, according to an article in *Christianity Today* (August 7, 1987), was critical of Oral's pronouncement, calling it a "fund raising tactic," evidently doubting that God told Oral that. Pat, on the other hand, claimed he was in the presidential race "in response to the clear and distinct prompting of the Lord's Spirit." Some questions:
 - 1. When did God become so materialistic, as to demand \$8 million?
 - 2. Why did he not call Oral home?
 - 3. Why would Pat question the authenticity of Oral's communication from God? Could it be he knew God had never really spoken to him in such a way?
 - 4. Why would the Holy Spirit demand that Pat get into the presidential race and then allow him to lose?
- B. Why has God never spoken to me like that?
 - 1. I try to serve him.
 - 2. I study his word daily, often arriving at my study as early as 5 or 5:30 A.M.
 - 3. I am a prayerful man. Why has God not spoken to me like that? Or to you?
- C. The idea that the Holy Ghost leads us by our feelings, or our urges.
 - 1. David Wilkerson, in his book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, claimed this kind of guidance.
 - 2. A barber in Selma, Alabama was cutting my hair, and telling me he had accepted the "revelations" of Joseph Smith as being inspired. He knew he was right because of the way he felt. "Burning feeling in my chest."
 - 3. Preacher in a place where I preached in a meeting said when the idea came into his mind to go and make a visit to a certain person, it was actually the H.G. who planted that idea. I asked him if he ever went to make the visit, and found the person not to be at home? He confessed he sometimes did.
 - 4. "I feel led to do so-and-so," or, "Give whatever the Lord lays on your heart."

- D. The idea that the Holy Ghost speaks to us through our experiences. When an unusual thing happens, we sometimes hear someone say, "God must be trying to tell us something."
- E. The idea that the Holy Ghost gives some special guidance to help us understand the Bible.
 - 1. If that were true, then it seems one would never come to misunderstand a single passage, but would have perfect understanding of every passage in the Bible.
 - 2. If that is the case, then how do we account for the fact that different people with the same Holy Spirit leading them in their study will arrive at different interpretations of the same passages?
 - 3. A revelation that requires a revelation to understand is no revelation at all.
- F. The idea that the Lord speaks through certain signs, such as the man in Jasper whose son was injured in a go-cart accident, and who saw the face of Jesus in the grain of a wooden door in the hospital waiting room. (The next week end that man won a bass tournament, according to the *Daily Mountain Eagle*.)
- G. All of these ideas strike at the basic and fundamental truth that the Bible is the complete and all-sufficient revelation of the will of God to man.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A SPEAKING SPIRIT

- A. This was true during the early morning of time, the Starlight Age of the earth, the Patriarchal Age.
 - 1. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (I Pet. 3:18-19).
 - 2. God did not try to get those people of Noah's day to repent by causing them to have certain feelings, or urges, or experiences, or by seeing visions, but by speaking to them.
- B. This was true during the Moonlight Age of the earth, the Mosaical Age.
 - 1. "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands" (Nehemiah 9:30).
 - 2. The phrase, "the word of the Lord" occurs 153 times in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. God's communication to the people was by speaking.
 - 3. David wrote: "The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (II Samuel 23:2).
 - 4. Peter said in Acts 1:16: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."
- C. It is true during the Sunlight Age, the Christian Age in which we live.
 - 1. I Corinthians 2:10: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (verse 13).
 - 2. Ephesians 3:2-5: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

3. I Timothy 4:1: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."
4. Seven letters to seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3 each contain the admonition, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

III. ALL CONVERSIONS CAME AS A RESULT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S SPEAKING

- A. In Acts 2, the word *speaking* in all its forms is used eight times, the word *hear* six times, the word *word* four times. In all there are more than 20 references in this one chapter to the speaking, hearing, or receiving the word which was preached. There was no direct operation of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
- C. Acts 8:5: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."
- D. Acts 8:35: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."
- E. Acts 9:6: "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Acts 22:10: "And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."
- F. Acts 10:6: "He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Acts 11:14: "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."
- G. Acts 16:13: "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Verse 14 says that "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."
- H. Acts 16:32: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."
- I. Acts 17:11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
- J. Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
- K. Acts 19:5: "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
- L. In the book of Acts alone there are 188 occurrences of some form of the words *speaking*, *preaching*, and *hear*. There is not one reference to the Holy Spirit's leading anyone to obey God in any other way than by speaking or preaching.

IV. THE WORD, NOT A DIRECT OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, IS WHAT SAVES

- A. Psalms 19:7: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Not a direct operation.
- B. Psalms 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
- C. Psalms 119:130: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."
- D. 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."

- E. That is why Jesus commanded that the gospel be preached to every creature (Mark 16:15).
- F. That is why there are no Christians, no believers in Christ, where the word of God has not been preached.

V. **THE SPIRIT OPERATES IN CONVICTION AND CONVERSION OF SINNERS**

- A. But he operates through the word. The word is the instrument he uses. Ephesians 6:17: Ephesians 6:17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
- B. Whatever the Bible teaches the Holy Spirit supplies to save sinners, the Bible also says the word supplies it. (See passages under IV above.)

CONCLUSION

If you are not a Christian, a child of God, and you are waiting for the Spirit to move you, then listen to this: Revelation 22:17 says: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

I WILL

The expression "I will" is found 197 times in the New Testament. It always introduces a statement of ~~intent~~ ^{desire} or purpose. All of us, in order to live life successfully, must live according to purpose and plan.

As we have just crossed the threshold of a new year, I would like for us to notice some of the "I will"s of the New Testament. We will notice that some of them are very firm and very meaningful. Others are stated very lightly, or, in some cases very foolishly.

Notice with me some of these passages containing the words, "I will." (We will not take the time to notice all 197 passages.)

DISCUSSION

I. THE "I WILL" OF IMPULSE

- A. "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." (Matthew 8:19)
 - 1. Look at the Lord's answer: "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20)
 - 2. This man had good intentions, but it seems the Lord knew he was speaking impulsively, and without knowing what all is involved in service to the Lord.
- B. How many people are that way!
 - 1. Decide on the spur of the moment to be a Christian without ever realizing that Christianity demands one's life
 - 2. Do all right until called on to give up some pleasurable practice or to make some real sacrifice.
- C. Jesus wants us to know serving him is not a bed of roses. *There is a price to pay.*

II. THE SELFISH AND FOOLISH "I WILL"

- A. "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods." (Luke 12:18)
 - 1. Selfish because he thought only of himself
 - 2. Foolish because he left God out of his plans
- B. The most miserable people in the world are the ones who think only of themselves.
 - 1. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)
 - 2. Must deny self to follow Christ.
- C. The most foolish people in the world are those who plan their tomorrows without including God in their plans.
 - 1. "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not

what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:13-15).

2. Do you include God in your plans for the New Year?

III. THE "I WILL" OF POLITICS

- A. "I will therefore chastise him, and release him." (Luke 23:16). "And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." (Luke 23:22).
 1. If no fault in him, why chastise him?
 2. Trying to please the people
- B. One of the greatest problems of God's people down through the ages has been the fact some of them were more interested in doing the will of men than of God.
 1. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:43).
 2. Many church members are too concerned about pleasing men, even some preachers.
- C. The change movement in the church is based on the idea we should try harder to make the church more appealing to the people. "The 'I will' of politics."

IV. THE "I WILL" OF REBELLION

- A. "He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went." (Matthew 21:29). In this case it was "I will not."
 1. How ugly and unseemly for children to respond to their parents in such a way!
 2. Some of us here today who might never grown up if we had talked to our parents the way this lad did to his father, and the way some young people do their own parents.
- B. Young people, rebellion is a terrible sin.
 1. "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22-23). *Under the Law - rebellious child stoned*
 2. To be rebellious is not a sign of maturity or of intelligence.
- C. Rebellion is ugly in more mature people also

V. THE "I WILL" OF DOUBT

- A. "The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:25).

1. Had not Jesus told them he would be raised from the dead? Why not believe he had been raised?
2. Thomas here earned for himself the name of "Doubting Thomas."
- B. Do we doubt what the Lord has told us?
 1. About prayer? *Mt. 7:11-13*
 2. About taking care of us? *Heb. 13:5*
 3. About our difficulties and hardships? *Ro. 8:28*
- C. Paul's statement: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Acts 27:25)

VI. THE "I WILL" OF CONVENIENCE

- A. "Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." (Luke 18:5)
 1. He had no fear of God and was not interested in pleasing any man, but did what he did because it was convenient to do so.
 2. Some are much more interested in convenience than in conviction.
- B. What he did was right, but he did it because it was convenient.
- C. Some go to church, but for all the wrong reasons?

VII. THE "I WILL" OF OVER CONFIDENCE

- A. "But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all." (Mark 14:31)
- B. It is good to be confident that we will do right. But there is such a thing as being over confident, that is, confident to the extent we let our guard down.
 1. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)
 2. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27)

VIII. THE PROVISIONAL "I WILL"

- A. "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." (Luke 9:61)
 1. I will follow thee provided there are no hindrances or sacrifices.
 2. Following you will have to be down on the list of priorities.
 3. Look at the Lord's reply: "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).
- B. Sometimes people say they will follow the Lord, "If..."

THE "I WILL" OF SUBMISSION

- A. "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39).
- B. Jesus would do the will of God even if it cost him his life, and it did.
- C. When one learns the importance of doing the Father's will and the value of eternal life, he will have no trouble submitting to the Lord.

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X. THE "I WILL" OF NO RESERVATIONS

- A. "And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." (Luke 10:35)
1. Notice: "whatsoever thou spendest...."
 2. Gave him a blank check--Carte Blanche (cart blānsh)
- B. That is what we must give the Lord.
1. He has all authority.
 2. We must decide to do his will, whatever it may be..

XI. THE "I WILL" OF REPENTANCE

- A. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19).
1. No reservations
 2. No provisions or demands would he make
 3. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." From "give me" to "make me."
- B. When one truly repents and comes to the Lord his attitude will be "Lord, make me what you want me to be."

CONCLUSION

What are your plans for 1998? Surely you have given some thought to that question?

If you are not a Christian, then say, "I will arise and go to my Father," and mean it.

1.

IMAGINATION

Ezekiel 8:12

"Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth." The word *imagery* used here refers to the imagination.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Notice the important part played by the imagination in determining whether or not we will be pleasing to God. Like the elders of Israel, we go apart from the world, and, because no one knows what we are thinking, we think it makes no difference.

We all know how children can imagine things. Sometimes have imaginary playmates, or an imaginary dog. Imagine a broom is a horse, etc. This building we now sit in was once in the imagination of certain ones. Architect, etc.

We must be careful what thoughts we allow to play in our minds. Because of the secrecy of it, the imagination can be dangerous. Must be careful what scenes we allow to pass before us.

DISCUSSION**I. THE PRODIGAL SON AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE IMAGINATION WORKS.**

- A. At first he imagined what the far country would be like.
 - 1. But it was not altogether like he imagined it.
 - 2. That is the way it is when we imagine how pleasant sin is going to be, but it does not turn out that way. (Adam and Eve, Judas, etc.)
 - 3. Young people, you need to control your thoughts. Your imagination can lead you down a road that goes deeper and deeper into sin and ruin. (Ted Bundy said that pornography led him to do what he did.)
 - 4. If prodigal son had imagined the hog pen, he never would have gone away.
 - 5. If young people who have allowed themselves to think about the pleasures of sin will also imagine the terrible consequences of sin, they will not go into sin--the heartache, drug addiction, alcohol addiction, AIDS, prison, the electric chair, etc.
- B. But notice also the imagination at work in getting the prodigal son back home.
 - 1. He thought about how it was at home, and how it could be with him.
 - 2. One will never do right until he thinks right.
 - 3. Proverbs 4:23 "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

II Cor. 10:5 "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

II. DAVID IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE DANGER OF THE UNCONTROLLED IMAGINATION.

- A. II Sam. 11 David saw a beautiful woman, and allowed his imagination to paint a picture of his committing adultery with her.
 - 1. Easy to see from this incident why Jesus said, in Matt. 5:28, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
 - 2. It is so dangerous because it is in secret. We would not think bad thoughts if others were reading our thoughts.
- B. After he had committed adultery, he wanted to hide his sin, and so he imagined a way to do it. He painted a picture of Uriah's being put in the front lines so he would be killed.
- C. His imagination did not paint a picture of the consequences of his sin:
 - 1. a little baby's dying
 - 2. his own son's raping his daughter
 - 3. one of his son's murdering another one
 - 4. this same son's rebelling against his father and trying to take over the throne, and being killed in battle
 - 5. If he had allowed his imagination see these, he never would have committed the sin to begin with.
- D. In Psalms 51:10 we see his repentance expressed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." In other words, "Clean out my heart, and help my imagination to paint the right kind of pictures, and not those that will lead me to ruin."

III. THE GOLDEN RULE DEMANDS USE OF THE IMAGINATION.

- A. Imagination should not be thought of always in connection with evil.
- B. 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."
 - 1. How can I treat you as I want to be treated unless I first imagine how I would want to be treated?
 - 2. I must stop and paint a picture in my mind of how I want to be treated.
- C. Contrast that with I John 3:15 "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."
 - 1. Here is one that has done some harm to you. You know you, as a Christian, cannot pull his hair out, or knock his block off.
 - 2. But neither can you allow these things to happen in your mind. There is the danger we might just be wishing some of these bad things would happen to him.
- D. Matt. 5:44 "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."
 - 1. See the difference?

2. If I begin to see in my imagination bad things happening to my enemies, then I need to get down on my knees and pray, "Lord, help me change the scene, and paint a different picture."

IV. HOW ARE YOU USING YOUR IMAGINATION?

- A. In connection with the church?
 1. pure, separated, clean?
 2. distinct and different from the world?
 3. Can you envision it as described in Ephesians 5:26-27? "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
 4. People who love one another?
 5. People who are united?
 6. People who are concerned about the lost? The Needy?
- B. In connection with your own spiritual growth and development?
 1. Do you paint a picture of your praying more?
 2. Studying the Bible more?
 3. Being more diligent in attendance?
 4. Being more concerned about the lost?
 5. More sacrificial in your giving?
- C. Do you ever imagine yourself in heaven?
- D. Do you ever think about the judgment?

CONCLUSION

If you are not a Christian, can you not see yourself surrendering your life to the Son of God, and having forgiveness of every sin ever committed? See yourself as a sinner, going into the water to be baptized so that every sin will be washed away?

Or if you have been unfaithful, can you not visualize the Lord knocking at the door of your heart, and saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Then can you see yourself in that final day hearing the Lord say, "I died for you, and you faithfully served me while on earth. Enter thou in to the joys of the Lord."

Let your imagination paint a picture of you doing the will of God, and then let that picture be the thing that you do this morning.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR GOSPEL MEETING

In the minds of some, gospel meetings are no longer important. They are a waste of time. Some are indifferent toward them completely. Any gospel meeting is doomed to failure when we do not pray for its success, when we do not promote the meeting, and when we neglect to attend the services of the meeting.

True, meetings generally do not generate as much interest in a community as they did before the days of television, when we would often have to put chairs in the aisles to accommodate the crowds. But this does not mean meetings are not important. *"He must be saying some good things."*

Notice with me seven good reasons why our gospel meeting is important.

DISCUSSION

I. THE SCRIPTURES WILL BE EXAMINED

- A. It is always good to read the Scriptures. First Timothy 4:13: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."
- B. We are commanded to study. Second Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
- C. Notice the words of the psalmist in Psalm 1:1-2: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."
- D. We cannot be free from the shackles of sin without a knowledge of the truth. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
- E. Second Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Our gospel meeting will give us an opportunity to do this.

II. THE SON OF GOD WILL BE EXALTED

- A. In First Corinthians 2:2 Paul declared, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."
- B. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) Peter proclaimed Christ to the people.
- C. Acts 8:5: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."
- D. Jesus commanded that we preach the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This meeting is in response to that commission.
- E. If we do not preach the gospel to a lost and dying world, it will not be done. *Civic clubs won't do it. March of Dimes. Amer. Cancer Soc. Boy Scouts. Amer. Legion. Denominations.*

III. SIN WILL BE EXPOSED

- A. Sin is the blight of our nation, from the slaughter in Columbine High School to the drug related crimes in Birmingham, Alabama.
- B. It is sin that separates man from God. Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
- C. It is sin that brings about man's condemnation. Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
- D. God's people must oppose and expose all sin. Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

IV. SATAN WILL BE ENCOUNTERED

- A. Satan will be doing everything he can to make our meeting a failure. He will be pleased if he can cause members of the church to feel it is not important, not attend, not participate.
- B. Let us do as James commanded in James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

V. SAINTS WILL BE EDIFIED

- A. Every child of God needs to be edified or built up. Speaking to elders in the church Paul said, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).
- B. Assembling ourselves together as we will be doing in this meeting is a wonderful way for us to exhort and edify one another. Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

VI. SALVATION WILL BE EXPLAINED

- A. Because of sin, man needs salvation. That is his greatest need.
- B. God desires the salvation of all. First Timothy 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." *cf. II Pet. 3:9*
- C. By the grace of God salvation is made available to all. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
- D. The devil has done a good job of confusing the minds of people with reference to the plan of salvation. Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
- E. Only by obeying the pure gospel of Christ can one be saved. 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." *Men preach a perverted gospel.*
- F. In our meeting the gospel plan of salvation will be proclaimed in its purity and in its simplicity. *Some things in life are too good not to share.*

VII. SINNERS WILL BE EXHORTED

- A. It is in order for us to exhort sinners to be saved. Second Corinthians 5:11: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
- B. Jesus exhorted the lost to come to him. Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
- C. Acts 2:40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

CONCLUSION

Our gospel meeting is of supreme importance. Place it at the top of your list of priorities. Pray for it! Participate in it! Be present for every service.

If you are lost, do not wait for the meeting to start to get on safe ground. You may die before another week passes.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

(Arguments made in favor of)

I. "IT JUST IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT TO GOD."

- A. Is God sovereign?
- B. Was the forbidden fruit that important?
- C. Was the worship of Abel that important?
- D. Was the worship of Nadab and Abihu that important?
- E. Where in the Bible does one learn that how we worship is not very important?

II. "IT IS MENTIONED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT."

- A. Is this an admission that the N. T. does not authorize it?
- B. If it was right to use it in O. T. times, was it because the O. T. authorized it?
- C. Would you try to prove it right by the O. T. if the O. T. did not mention it?
- D. If authorizing it in the O. T. meant those living under the O. T. could use it, then what it it take to mean those living under the N. T. could use it?
- E. Can we engage in other religious practices authorized in the O. T. but not in the new, such as: burning incense, offering animal sacrifices, sabbath keeping, and stoning those who violated the sabbath?

III. "THE BIBLE NOWHERE SAYS NOT TO USE IT."

- A. Are you willing to say we may have in worship whatever the Bible does not specifically forbid?
- B. What about counting beads, burning incense, praying to Mary?
- C. What about steak and potatoes on the Lord's table?
- D. Did God tell Nadab and Abihu, "Thou shalt not use strange fire"?

IV. "YOU HAVE PIANOS IN YOUR HOMES."

- A. Are you saying whatever is right at home is right in our worship?
- B. Is it right to kill, cook, and eat a chicken at home?
- C. Is it right to have biscuits and jelly on the table at home?
- D. Is it right for families to sing songs such as "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph," and "Hello, Dollie" at home?

V. "PLAYING A PIANO IN WORSHIP IS JUST LIKE USING A PITCH PIPE."

- A. Are pitch pipes used to play music?
- B. What are people doing who use a pitch pipe? What are people doing who use a piano?
- C. Can one sing without pitch? Does the Bible tell us where to get the pitch?
- D. What kind of music is made when people use a pitch pipe? What kind does the New Testament authorize?
- E. What kind of music is made when a piano is used? What kind does the New Testament authorize?

VI. "NEITHER ACCOMPANIED NOR UNACCOMPANIED SINGING IS AUTHORIZED IN CORPORATE WORSHIP."

- A. Is this saying that we do not have to have authority for what we do in worship?
- B. Where is the singing of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 to be done?
- C. What congregation is under consideration in Hebrews 2:12?

VII. "IT IS VERY UPLIFTING AND INSPIRING, AND I LIKE IT."

IS IT RIGHT FOR WOMEN AND TEEN-AGE GIRLS TO WEAR SHORTS IN PUBLIC?

I Timothy 2:9

INTRODUCTION

- I. Define the subject.
 - A. One may say, "If it wrong for the women to wear shorts, then it is wrong for the men." Not here to argue that point this morning. This is not where the question lies at the moment. For the moment we are talking about women and teen-age girls.
 - B. By "wearing shorts in public" we mean wearing shorts, bathing suits, gym shorts, tennis shorts, or like garments in the presence of those of the opposite sex who are not members of her own family. *(Also cheerleader + majorette uniforms.)*
 - C. When we say, "Is it right," we mean is it in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament concerning the behavior of children of God. *Not a matter of some hang of a preacher.*
- II. It is either right or wrong. It cannot be both or neither. It is one or the other.
 - A. If it is right, then My mouth should be stopped, for I have been preaching that it is wrong, and such makes me a teacher of doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1-4).
 - B. If it is right, then all of our wives and children can wear them, including my wife and daughter, and the wives and daughters of our elders.
 - C. If it is not right, then those of you who have worn them must quit doing so, and having repented of doing wrong, confess your sins and pray for forgiveness.
 - D. If it is not right, parents who have allowed their daughters to wear them need to repent, stop their daughters from wearing them, and confess your sins so that all may know of your repentance with reference to this matter.
 - E. I am tired of preaching against sin over and over, only to see some of the best members of the congregation treat the preaching as if it were nothing more than the ravings of a cantankerous ignoramus or the pronouncements of the devil himself.
- III. NOW LET US SEE IF WE CAN SETTLE THE MATTER ONCE FOR ALL FOR ALL HONEST CHRISTIANS. IS IT RIGHT OR WRONG?

DISCUSSION

- I. WOMEN ARE COMMANDED TO ADORN THEMSELVES IN MODEST APPAREL (I Timothy 2:9). *In like way 2:10*
 - A. Definition of modesty in Websters New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Second Edition (Unabridged). Only definition number 3 will fit the passage.
 - B. Now since the definition of modest is "not displaying one's body," and since shorts do display one's body, one cannot obey I Timothy 2:9 and wear shorts.
 - C. If shorts do not display one's body, what kind of attire did Paul have in mind? And what would it take to be immodest?
 - D. If you knew the Lord himself were to visit your house today, would you feel modestly attired if you were in shorts? Would you feel comfortable for your daughter to be in shorts?
- II. THERE IS DANGER IN A LUSTFUL LOOK (Matthew 5:28).
 - A. I realize that Jesus is warning the looker upon a woman against lusting, but is there not in this a warning also for those who invite lustful looks by the way they expose their bodies?
 1. For example, David looked upon Bathsheba and lusted. But was Bathsheba guiltless? She was taking a bath in full view of the king's palace. *II Sam. 11*
 2. Women and girls who wear shorts are inviting and encouraging lust.
 - B. One may say: "Only the wicked will lust, and they are going to lust regardless of how ladies dress." This conclusion is wrong for two reasons:
 1. David lusted after Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11), and he was called "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22; I Sam. 13:14). (Incidentally, it was the lust of the eyes that led eventually to adultery and murder.)
 2. Jesus statement in Matthew 5:28 would not be made concerning a wicked rebro-bate. What matter if such an one commits adultery in his heart.

C. Modern day examples of lust provoked by indecent exposure

1. Statement from Paul Harvey.
2. Article a few years ago in newspaper about a boy who rang the doorbell or knocked on the door of the house where his brother lived. He wound up raping and murdering his brother's wife who came to the door. In his own words, he was aroused to do what he did when she came to the door "just standing there in her shorts."
3. A few years ago a pleasure yacht was hi-jacked on the high seas. The newspapers told of the incident, and reported that the ladies on board immediately all went to their cabins and dressed in clothing that covered their bodies more completely. Why? *in the '60's. The Santa Monica.*
4. Statements that can be overheard where a group of men or boys are talking when a girl or woman in shorts passes by. This is true whether observing the majorettes marching before the band, the cheerleaders, or just one that happens to walk by.
5. *"Doesn't bother me" (1. Too young 2. Too old 3. Ignorant 4. Not normal 5. Lying*

III. SOME FALSE IDEAS ABOUT IMMODEST APPAREL.

- A. "People see so much nakedness these days that they just really don't pay any attention to it anymore."
 1. You are wrong about that. One might eat so much apple pie for so long that it would be difficult for him to get hungry enough to want a piece of apple pie. Or he may ride a roller coaster so often that the thrill is gone. But God did not make us that way with reference to the passions aroused by seeing the bodies of the members of the opposite sex. Had he done so, it would spell tragedy for most of our marriages.
 2. Besides, if such is the case, why do the majorettes and cheerleaders wear their brief uniforms, even in the dead of winter?
- B. Parents sometimes think: "But my daughter is just a child. Certainly she could not be the object of lust."
 1. Certainly not for you, but does she look like nothing more than a child to one who does not know her quite so well?
 2. A lady told me this once about her daughter who was a majorette. I said, "Yes, she is your baby. But her body is more mature than many women's are when they get married."
- C. "Wearing shorts is just a matter of style." What if it became stylish to go completely naked? Would that make it right for Christians to do so?
- D. "I don't want my children to be odd balls or misfits."
 1. I would not insult my child by implying that in order for him or her to be accepted he must engage in those things that are wrong. I believe there is still something appealing about one who is conscientious and pure.
 2. Furthermore, God's children are taught not to conform to the world (Romans 12:1,2; James 1:27; I John 2:15-17; James 4:4.). Your problem is that you are having "Demas" trouble (2 Timothy 4:10).
 3. In connection with this very thing, the more who stand for what is right, the less cause there is for any to be thought of as odd balls or misfits. But every time a Christian woman or girl puts on a pair of shorts to wear in public, she is making it more difficult for those who have enough conviction to refuse to do so. Think how much moral support and strength Daniel received from the knowledge that there were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who were also standing up for the right.

IV. SOME SCRIPTURES WHICH DEAL WITH IMMODESTY IN AN INCIDENTAL WAY.

- A. Adam and Eve made aprons of fig leaves sewn together (Gen. 3:7), and yet they considered themselves as being naked (v. 10). God also considered them naked and made them coats of skins to "clothe" them (v. 21).

- B. Vashti the queen of Ahasuerus refused to parade herself to be looked upon by the princes and nobles of all the provinces of Persia (Esther 1). There is no indication she was asked to disrobe before them. She was a heathen queen, but possessed more modesty than some Christians of our day. Yes, she lost her queenship, but preserved her good name down to this day.
- C. When Jesus cast out the legion of demons from the wild of man of the Gadarenes, it is said that the people saw him "clothed and in his right mind." (Mark 5:15). Those under the insane influence of the devil will go partly or altogether unclothed; but the noble influence of Christ will sober one and cause him to wear clothes.

CONCLUSION

- I. I rest my case. Wearing shorts in public is not right. It is wrong. Those who have been guilty of doing so must repent, confess, and pray for forgiveness. Parents who have encouraged their daughters to wear such must do the same thing.
- II. Your forgiveness depends upon your repenting and confessing. The example you have set will be understood as your endorsement of the sin until you let it be known that such is not the case by a public confession. Furthermore there is no need to pray for forgiveness of a sin that you will not confess (1Jno. 5:16).
- III. Some may say, "Preacher, there is nothing you can say that will change my practice with regard to this matter." But, my brother or sister, it is not a matter between you and a gospel preacher. It is a matter between you and God.

JAMES 5:14-15

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

-- James 5:14-15

DISCUSSION

- I. It is worthy of note that there is no record in the New Testament where this was practiced, though there are a number of case of those who were sick and even died.
 - A. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, but never did what James said in these verses (II Cor. 12:7-9).
 - B. Timothy had some stomach trouble, but never did what James said (I T. 5:23).
 - C. Epaphroditus was "sick nigh unto death," but what James enjoined was never practiced.
 - D. Trophimus was left by Paul at Miletus sick (II T. 4:20), but nobody did what James said do.
 - E. Dorcas was sick, and even died, but nobody did what James enjoined (Acts 9:37).
 - F. If this injunction of James was something to be generally practiced, how do we account for the fact that we never read of its being practiced?
- II. This passage obviously is talking about miraculous healing. Several things suggest this, and a few demand it.
 - A. Those sick were to call for the elders. Why the elders? Elders would be those who represented the church and who would likely be miraculously endowed.
 - B. The thing that would save the sick is said to be "the prayer of faith." Not the anointing with the oil, though that was commanded.
 - C. It is said that "the Lord shall raise him [the sick person] up." It does not say, "perhaps," "maybe," or that he will likely improve and feel better. It says, "the Lord shall raise him up." That was the nature of miraculous healing in the N.T.
 - D. "If it is miraculous, what is the purpose of anointing with oil?"
 1. True, oil was sometimes used in treating some ailments, but of what value would anointing with oil be in others, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, or cancer?
 2. It may be symbolical, but I don't know.
 3. I do know, however, that in some cases of miraculous healing, those healed were anointed with oil. For example, Mark 6:13: "And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."
 4. Could the command to anoint with oil be an arbitrary command, like washing in the pool of Siloam (John 9), or washing in Jordan (II K. 5), or marching around Jericho (Josh. 6), or being baptized? Each seems to be of the nature so that it could be symbolical.
- III. It should be remembered that miraculous powers were not given for the purpose of

healing the sick. Those who had miraculous gifts might have the gift of healing, but the purpose of the gift of healing was not to heal the sick; it was to confirm the word.

- A. Whatever James here enjoins, its purpose was to confirm the word.
- B. This is the only book of the N.T. written by James.
- C. James was not an apostle. Some other writers of the N.T. also were not apostles: Mark, Luke, and Jude.
- D. James had written some strong and stinging statements.
 - 1. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." -- James 1:13-15
 - 2. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." -- James 1:22
 - 3. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." -- James 1:26
 - 4. "But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?" -- James 2:6
 - 5. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." -- James 2:10
 - 6. About the sins of the tongue. --chapter 3
 - 7. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." -- James 4:4
 - 8. About the sins of the rich. --chapter 5
- E. Some might tend to reject James's epistle, saying it was not inspired. Isn't that the way one normally tries to get around what the Bible teaches?
- F. James prescribes a means of confirming the word he writes to them. That is, by doing as he directs, a miracle of healing would be performed. This would confirm the truthfulness of his epistle.

IV. One may say, "But how do we know those elders had miraculous powers?"

- A. I think most of them did, but it has nothing to do with what James writes to them.
- B. It was James, not the elders, whose epistle may have stood in question. Is this epistle inspired? They would know when they had followed the instructions in 5:14-15.
 - 1. If the sick were raised up, as James said he would be, then they would know James wrote by inspiration.
 - 2. If not, then they would know James to be a false teacher.
 - 3. Remember, the purpose of miracles was to confirm the word, not to heal the sick.
- C. Jesus was not present with the servant of the centurion when he healed him (Luke 7).
- D. Paul was not present with those sick people healed when he sent aprons and handkerchiefs to them (Acts 19:12). Those who delivered the handkerchiefs and

- aprons to the sick did not have to be miraculously endowed.
- E. Elisha was not present when Naaman was healed of leprosy (II K. 5).

JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED

I Corinthians 1:18-2:2

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (26) For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (2:1) And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Three times in this reading the apostle Paul refers to the preaching he did. Once he refers to it as "the preaching of the cross." Once he said, "We preach Christ crucified." The third time he referred to what he preached as "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." In fact, he said he determined not to know anything among them except "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This does not mean Paul's preaching was limited to the fact of the crucifixion of Christ; what it does mean is that he preached only those things that pertain to the Scheme of Redemption that centers around the cross of Christ. He did not waste his time declaring the philosophies of men or the wisdom of this world. He was not interested in entertaining people, but in saving them.

The cross of Christ was the center of the preaching done by all inspired preachers in the New Testament. (1) Peter's sermon on Pentecost. (2) To Cornelius in Acts 10:39-40: "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly." (3) The Jewish leaders at Jerusalem knew what the apostles preached. They said to them in Acts 5:28: "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

Look also at the statement of Jesus in John 12:31-32: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

We understand that Jesus had to die to satisfy infinite justice. God's problem was that he wanted man to be forgiven, but his infinite justice would not allow him to overlook sin. Romans 3:24-26 underscores this problem and its solution:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

That explains why Jesus had to die. But why the cross? Why such agony and shame?

DISCUSSION

I. TO SHOW THE REALITY OF SIN

- A. We live in a time when the reality of sin is denied. The word *sin* and the word *salvation* are both rather old-fashioned, and they are not very popular in our polite and intellectual society.
 - 1. The most disgusting sins are not sins; they are just one's chosen lifestyle.
 - 2. Our misdeeds are not sin; they are simply misfortunes. We are not sinners; we are victims of circumstances--the product of society, and not of our own choices.
 - 3. Salvation is thought of as the attainment of a desirable type of personality and a satisfactory relationship with other personalities.
- B. But if you want to know about the reality of sin, look at Jesus Christ and him crucified. If you want to know if sin is terrible, look at the cross.
- C. One of the problems in getting people to obey the gospel is the problem of getting them to see they are lost because of sin.
 - 1. Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
 - 2. Romans 3:10: "There is none righteous, no, not one."
 - 3. Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 4. Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
- D. Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
- E. Is sin real? Look at the cross.

II. TO SHOW GOD'S LOVE FOR SINNERS

- A. 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." That verse does not tell the whole story of God's love. "God gave his only begotten Son" to be crucified on a cross.
- B. First John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...."
- C. I do not understand that kind of love. I have a wife, a daughter, a son, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, a grandson, and a granddaughter. I cannot conceive of any circumstance under which I would consent for either one of them to endure, even for my friends, what God allowed his Son to endure, and that was for his enemies.
 - 1. Romans 5:6-8: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
 - 2. Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." For me as much as if I were the only sinner who needed salvation.
- D. If you ever wonder if God really loves you, look at the cross.

III. TO SHOW GOD'S HATRED FOR SIN

- A. The very nature of God demands he hate sin. Habakkuk 1:13: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...."
- B. I am afraid God's great love for sinners has been misunderstood as a tolerance for sin. Not so.
- C. God's hatred for sin can be seen throughout the history of mankind.
 - 1. In the Garden of Eden.
 - 2. In the plagues of Egypt, especially the death of the firstborn.

3. In the overthrowing of thousands of disobedient Israelites in the wilderness.
4. In the case of Uzzah, of Nadab and Abihu, of Achan, of the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath.
- D. But the supreme demonstration of God's hatred for sin is the crucifixion of Christ.
- E. We have a tendency to laugh at sin, to think it is not so bad. We need to take a look at Calvary.

IV. TO SHOW THE POWER OF THE SCRIPTURES

- A. Matthew 26:53-54: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (54) But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"
- B. Luke 24:44-47: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. (45) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
- C. You may be among the number who say, "Yes, I know the Bible says so-and-so, but I still know it is otherwise." If that is the way you feel, then look at the cross. Could the Scriptures be wrong? No!

V. TO SHOW THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE

- A. Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; (9) And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
- B. Philippians 2:5-8: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 1. Obedient to the point of dying to be obedient.
 2. But not just death; "even the death of the cross."
- C. Second Thessalonians 1:6-8: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; (7) And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, (8) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 1. What of those who have not obeyed the gospel? Vengeance upon them.
 2. We are kidding ourselves when we think the disobedient will enjoy the blessings of salvation.
- D. Do you wonder if obedience is necessary? Then look at the cross.

CONCLUSION

Galatians 6:14 says, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The only way you can be crucified unto the world and the world to you is by obedience to the gospel. In Romans 6:1-4 Paul wrote, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Later in that same chapter he wrote, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

The cross has meaning and value only to those obey the gospel.

Paraltic

JESUS HEALS THE PALSIED MANMark 2:3-12

This is a true incident in the life of our Lord. It is one of the many miracles he performed. John wrote: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

But in this real-life account we find represented five classes of people: the helpless, the helpers, the hinderers, the healer, and the critics. Consider these five classes.

DISCUSSION**I. THE HELPLESS**

- A. The man sick of the palsy was helpless.
 - 1. Obviously he could not walk, and had to be carried wherever he went.
 - 2. But he was helpless also in that he was powerless to heal himself of the palsy.
- B. What about the person who is lost in sin? Is he not helpless in that he is powerless to heal himself of his lost condition.
 - 1. "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7).
 - 2. If the sinner had to depend on his own ingenuity or his own goodness for salvation, he could never be saved. (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- C. One reason many are not saved is because they are depending on their own good works, which are powerless to save them.
 - 1. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).
 - 2. Be sure you do not think you hear me say salvation is given the sinner without his doing what God says for him to do.
- D. Those who are lost in sin may not even know it, or they may not know how to be saved. This is where the next class of people comes in.

II. THE HELPERS

- A. The sick of the palsy was fortunate to have friends interested enough in him to bring him to the Lord.
 - 1. He could not have come otherwise.
 - 2. His friends had faith in the Lord's ability to heal the man. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5).
- B. Those lost in sin need friends to help them come to the Lord.
 - 1. Just as the palsied man's friends cared, we should care about those in sin.
 - 2. Just as they were willing to get involved, we should be willing to get involved.
 - 3. Just as they had faith, we need to have faith in the power of the gospel.
 - 4. Just as they faced the fact their friend was sick with a very serious malady, we must face the fact that those without the gospel are lost, and that is serious.
- C. Things we can do to be helpers of those in need of coming to Christ:
 - 1. We must show them we care about them
 - 2. Teach them (John 6:44-45; Matthew 28:18-20).
 - 3. Invite them to attend services with us. (Psalms 122:1; Isaiah 2:3).
 - 4. Hand out tracts, etc.

- D. These helpers were willing to overcome whatever obstacles stood in the way.
1. They would not give up.
 2. Do we give up too easily on those we are trying to help?

III. THE HINDERERS

- A. There was such a multitude of people pressing about the Lord that they hindered the efforts of the helpers.
- B. There are always those who hinder our efforts to save the lost.
1. The devil will try to keep lost people from learning the truth. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4).
 2. Sometimes relatives will try to persuade their loved ones not to obey the gospel. "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:35-37).
 3. Preachers of error will do what they can to keep people from becoming simply Christians.
 4. And, of course, there is the tug of the world on the heart strings. (II John 2:15-17.)
- C. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

IV. THE HEALER

- A. Jesus was the healer. He was the only one who could heal this man.
- B. He is the Great Physician.
1. "But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matthew 9:12).
 2. His prescription must be applied.
- C. The only cure for sin is his blood; the only way to apply that remedy is by obedience to the gospel. Jesus, the Great Physician, has prescribed faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. All who apply the remedy will be healed--guaranteed.
- D. There is no other remedy. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

V. THE CRITICS

- A. Some present were not interested in the welfare of the man who had palsy. Their main concern was to find some fault with the Lord.
- B. There are always those who find something to criticize.
- C. Need to read regularly Matthew 7:1-5.
1. What this passage does not mean
 2. What it does mean

CONCLUSION

We have mentioned five classes of people represented in this account. Into which class do you fall?

If you are not a Christian, those of us here today want to help you obey the Christ so you can be saved.

II Kings 6:24-7:20

Intro: Benhadad, King of Syria, besieged Samaria, until there was a great famine.

Asses head (unclean animal) sold for 80 pieces of silver.

Half pint of doves dung sold for 5 pieces of silver.

Relate incident of woman who complained about the failure to boil & eat friend's baby.

Jehoram, the king, said: "God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day." (6:31).

Relate Remainder of account.

Note Lessons.

Discussion

I When Things Go Wrong We Look for Someone to Blame

A. Jehoram blamed Elisha

1. May have thought Elisha caused it
2. May have felt he could have prevented it

B. Man whose son got drunk, and lost his life in car wreck, said: "I'll

Kill the man who sold whiskey to my son." Went to his liquor cabinet to get a drink to steady his nerves, but the bottle was only half full.

C. Often we are responsible for our own problems. So it was with Jehoram + Israel.

D. It is not always so. But let us not try to fix blame needlessly. Especially on those doing all they can to get us to do right.

II Never Under Estimate the Power of God

A. One of the lords on whose hand the king leaned thought the thing God promised was beyond God's ability to perform.

B. Dan. 3:17 "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

C. II Tim. 1:12 "I know whom I have..."

D. Eph. 3:20 "Now unto him that is able."

E. Acts 20:32 "And now, brethren I..."

F. Hab. 7:25 "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost..."

- D. He is able to hear and answer our prayers (Mt. 7:11-13).
- H. He is able to care for us. (1 Pt. 5:7 - "Cast your care upon...")
- I. Able to over rule whatever happens & make it work for our ultimate good. (Rom. 8:28).

III It Will Always Be Exactly As God Says

- A. Man thought God was exaggerating.
- B. Prophets were men of their own time, as well as foretellers of future.
- C. Prophet said in 24 hours:
 1. a measure of fine flour would sell for a shekel (about 6 or 7 cents).
 2. Two measures of barley... for a shekel.
 3. This lord of the king would see it, but not eat of it.
- D. Notice how completely accurate the prophecy
 1. How long - next day about this time.
 2. How much for a measure of fine flour?
 3. For 2 measures of barley?
 4. Did the doubting servant see it?
 5. Did he eat of it?
- E. Cf. Acts 27:25 "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."
R.S.V. "that it will be exactly as I have been told"

1. About salvation by faith only (Jr. 2)
2. About doing God's will (Mt. 7:21).
3. About God's judgment (II Pt. 3:9,10).
4. About God's rewarding the righteous (1Co. 15:58).
5. About sowing + reaping (Gal. 6:7-8).

IV Note the Terrible Consequences of Unbelief

- A. He just couldn't see how the prophet could be correct - but he was.
- B. Many today just cannot see
1. That baptism is essential
 2. That sprinkling is not just as good
 3. That using the instrument would really matter
 4. That those who refuse to obey will be lost.

V "God Moves in a Mysterious Way, His Ways to Perform"

- A. He would accomplish his purpose through 4 starving, leprous men.
- B. Ro. 11:33 "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his..."

Conclusion

I don't know about you, but I want God on my side - or rather, I want to be on God's side.

LEGAL SIN

LEGALIZED SIN

I am thankful we live in a free country. No society in the history of the world, anywhere in the world, has enjoyed the rights and freedoms we enjoy in the United States of America.

The first ten amendments to our constitution make up what is called our Bill of Rights. In it we, as citizens of this great country, are guaranteed such things as freedom of religion, freedom of speech and press, freedom to assemble, the right to own property, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to trial by jury, and the like. I think all of us realize that many of our problems arise because there are differences of interpretation of these rights. Some believe their rights are being unduly restricted; others believe some, in the name of freedom, are overstepping the boundaries of their rights.

It is unfortunate that some have confused their legal *rights* with what is *right*. In this study we will talk about *Legalized Sin*, that is, some things we as citizens of the United States of America have a legal right to do, but which are not right. In other words, the Constitution of the United States of America gives you the right to do these things, but God does not grant you that right. These are in harmony with the Constitution, but not in harmony with the will of God. You may do these things without ever violating any federal, state, county, or city law, but you violate God's law. That means simply that you sin. And if you will not cease the practice of sin, and obtain God's pardon, you will be eternally lost, even though you never do anything that is illegal.

DISCUSSION

I. **HOLDING TO A FALSE RELIGION IS LEGALIZED SIN.**

- A. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).
- B. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).
- C. When we talk of false religion, some think of such religions as:
 - 1. The Muslim religion, which has no Messiah
 - 2. The religion of the Jews, which denies Jesus is the Christ
 - 3. The worship of Satan, which is a system of immorality
- D. But there are many false religions which claim to be the religion of Christ. Jesus did not establish 300 churches.
 - 1. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).
 - 2. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).
 - 3. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).
 - 4. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." (I Corinthians 12:13).
 - 5. "But now are they many members, yet but one body" (I Corinthians 12:20).
- E. Some religions are false because they teach and practice a false plan of salvation.
- F. Some are false because their worship is not in spirit and in truth. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).
- G. Some are false because they do not abide in the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath

both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

- H. In this country, it is perfectly legal to engage in any of these, but to do so is to engage in legalized sin.

II. GAMBLING IS LEGALIZED SIN.

- A. It is perfectly legal to go to the horsetrack or the dogtrack and place a bet on a certain horse or dog, even if doing so deprives your children of needed food, or clothes, or shoes, or even it takes the roof from over their heads. It is still legal.
- B. It is legal to play Bingo at Forestdale and try to win the Social Security money away from the old people who need every penny they can get.
- C. It is legal to catch the bus and go to the casino over in Mississippi, and gamble away your monthly check. (Do you not know that the odds of your coming home with more money than you had when you left are stacked against you? There has to be a great deal more money lost than won, or else the gambling operations could not stay in business.)
- D. Legalized gambling is not the solution to the financial ills of state, county, or city governments.
 - 1. In the January 15, 1996 issue of *U. S. News and World Report*, Professor John Kindt of the University of Illinois was quoted as saying, "For every dollar gambling contributes in taxes, taxpayers spend at least three dollars on everything from fixing streets around casinos to increasing police patrols and treating pathological gamblers."
 - 2. When Milton McGregor was able to get paramutual betting on horse racing legalized by making people think it would provide marvelous revenues to finance education and other public concerns, the first thing that happened was that 8 million dollars of public funds was spent to build a road to Mr. McGregor's racetrack.
- E. Not only is gambling a bad investment for individuals and for society, but it is sinful.
 - 1. The very motive behind it is a violation of the Golden Rule. "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" (Matthew 7:12).
 - 2. Gambling violates the Bible principle of work: "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" (Ephesians 4:28).
 - 3. Gambling is driven by covetousness.
 - a. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17).
 - b. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).
 - 4. Gambling violates the second greatest commandment: "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).
- F. Gambling is legal under certain circumstances, but it is a legalized sin.

III. ABORTION IS LEGALIZED SIN.

- A. On January 22, 1973 the Supreme Court of the United States of America ruled in the landmark *Roe vs. Wade* case that unborn babies are not legal persons, and, therefore, have no rights under the constitution. The mother can have the baby killed, even up to the time of birth if her doctor agrees (Cf. *Dred Scott* decision of March 6, 1857, which declared black people were not legal persons, and had no rights under the constitution, but were the property of their owners.)
- B. In the New Testament, the same Greek word, $\beta\rho\epsilon\phi\omicron\sigma$, is used to designate the unborn baby as is

used to designate the infant after birth.

1. Three months before the birth of John the Baptist, Mary, who was to give birth to Jesus, visited Elisabeth, John's mother. Luke 1:41 says, "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the *babe* leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."
 2. Elisabeth said in verse 44: "For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the *babe* leaped in my womb for joy."
 3. Now look at Luke 2:12: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the *babe* wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."
 4. Also verse 16: "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the *babe* lying in a manger."
 5. What is called a babe three months before birth is also called a babe after it is born.
- C. Those who argue for legalized abortion describe themselves as "Pro-Choice."
1. That sounds better than saying one is in favor of killing unborn babies.
 2. But they are not pro-choice; they give no consideration at all to the right of the unborn baby to choose whether he will live or die.
 - a. You may say the unborn baby is not capable of making that choice.
 - b. On that basis, there would be nothing wrong in killing an infant after he is born.
- D. Our choices must be responsible choices, and the responsible choice needs to be made before children are conceived. One's failure to make a responsible choice does not give her the right to murder an unborn human being a few months later.
- E. Please understand that what I say here is not to embarrass or shame one who has made the mistake of having an abortion in the past.
1. If you have, I hope you have repented and obtained God's pardon.
 2. But my remarks here are to emphasize that abortion is sinful, and to warn against this sin. (I realize there are rare cases where the life of the baby is taken to save the life of the mother. That is not what I am talking about. And I emphasize those cases are rare.)
- F. Killing unborn babies is perfectly legal, but it is a legalized sin.

IV. PORNOGRAPHY IS LEGALIZED SIN.

- A. The word *pornography* is defined as, "Written, graphic, or other forms of communication intended to excite lascivious feelings" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*).
1. How much of what is published in books and magazines, what is shown at the theatre, and what is seen on television is "intended to excite lascivious feelings"?
 2. It does not have to be what some call "hard core" to be pornographic.
- B. Lasciviousness is wrong. "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" (Galatians 5:19-21).
- C. The Christian must keep his thoughts pure.
1. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).
 2. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." (Proverbs 23:7).
 3. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).
 4. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).
 5. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (I Timothy 1:5).

6. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Timothy 2:22).
7. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (I Peter 1:22).
- D. One cannot be pure in heart and feed his heart on pornography.
- E. Make no mistake about it: pornography is legal, but it is legalized sin.

V. **DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE FOR ANY CAUSE OTHER THAN FORNICATION IS A LEGALIZED SIN.**

- A. In the early sixties I learned in a sociology class that there were nine different reasons accepted for divorce in the State of Alabama.
 1. I do not know how many there are now.
 2. I know this, one can obtain a legal divorce if he wants one.
- B. The Pharisees asked Jesus a question about this very matter: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3).
 1. Jesus' answer to them was plain: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6).
 2. Their response was, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Matthew 19:7).
 3. "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:8-9).
- C. The reason Jesus uses the word *adultery* here is because God does not recognize divorce for any reason other than fornication. (Please understand I am not talking about what might be named as the cause for divorce on the divorce decree. That really does not matter.)
 1. In God's eyes, those divorced for any other cause are still married, and *adultery* is the word which denotes the sex act between a married person and one to whom he is not married.
 2. Since God did not recognize the divorce, then neither does he recognize the subsequent marriage. That is why the word *adultery* is used.
- D. Parents, the time to teach our children the permanent nature of marriage is before they get old enough to think about marriage.
- E. We see so much divorce and remarriage that we become acclimated to the idea, and think there is really nothing wrong with it.
- F. Divorce and remarriage for any cause except fornication is legal, and is being widely practiced, but it is legalized sin.

VI. **OTHER LEGALIZED SINS** (See outline on Respectable Sins)

- A. Drinking
- B. Dancing
- C. Dressing immodestly

LISTENING

II Peter 1:12-13; James 1:25

"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. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

To the seven churches in Asia the Lord said: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Seven times in Revelation 2 & 3.)

This sermon has to do with the importance of listening.

DISCUSSION**I. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LISTENING AND JUST HEARING.**

- A. Psalms 4:1 "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."
 - 1. Psalmist was not asking merely that the sound of his prayer fall on the ears of God.
 - 2. No. He was asking God to give attention, and act upon his request.
- B. So it is with our listening to what God tells us.
 - 1. Peter was saying: "I'm going to tell you again some things you have already heard, but you weren't really listening."
 - 2. James also was warning about hearing and not really listening.
 - 3. Sometimes Lois Ann says to me, "Bob, you haven't heard a word I've said."
- C. Psalms 17:6 "I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech." Means pay attention. Give serious thought to.
- D. Psalms 86:1 "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy."
 - 1. Sounds like: "Lean over, so you can hear clearly what I am saying."
 - 2. Isn't this what we should do when God speaks to us?
- E. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) illustrates this truth. Four kinds of hearers represented by the four kinds of soils, but only one group of hearers really listened.
- F. I am convinced this is one of the greatest problems facing the church, especially in our time.
 - 1. How many sermons preached and Bible lessons taught fall on what we call "deaf ears"? But they are not really deaf at all; they simply do not listen, though they hear clearly.
 - 2. So many of the warnings we give about error, about immorality, about indifference, about procrastination, etc., are heard but not heeded.
 - 3. Brother V. E. Howard's trademark as a preacher is the question, "Are you listening?"

II. LISTENING IS NECESSARY IF OFFENDERS ARE TO CORRECT THEIR LIVES.

- A. Matthew 18:15-18 "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

1. Here is one to whom I have done some wrong. He comes to me and tells me of my wrong. I hear every word he says, but I make no correction. The text says, "If he shall hear thee" But it means hear in the sense of taking the proper action.
2. He brings one or two others with him. Why? Because I didn't hear him. I might say I did, but I didn't. Same may be said of my hearing them.
- B. There are some people who have two good ears, but simply will not hear anything that they need to hear to make them more pleasing to God.
 1. Matthew 13:15 "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 2. Some can never be saved, because they hear, but do not listen.

III. FAILURE TO LISTEN IS VERY COSTLY.

- A. Responsible for wasted time.
 1. Suppose 300 people here. If I speak 30 minutes, and nobody listens, then we have wasted 150 hours.
 2. In that case each person would have wasted 30 minutes he can never recall.
- B. A certain publication carried an article some time ago saying that some large corporations are now beginning to teach courses to their employees on how to listen. Accordint to the article:
 1. Listening efficiency in industry is less than 50%. (Think of the cost.)
 2. Senior officers spend up to 80% of their time in discussion, either face to face or on the telephone. (But if less than 50% effective, think of the wasted time.)
 3. An industrial plant had a serious problem. Took months and much expense to track it down and fix it. After it was fixed, a young employee told a personnel manager, "I have known what the problem was from the beginning." When asked why he didn't tell someone, he replied: "I told the superentendent and the foreman, and neither one listened."
- C. Hardeman Nichols tells about seeing a deaf man and his wife driving down a street. They were signing to each other, and he could tell from the expressions on their faces they were in a very heated argument. She was driving, and when she stopped for a traffic light, she took both hands, and was really getting him told. He just picked up a newspaper and held it in front of his face.
- D. A lady wrote to Ann Landers about her husband who has a hearing aid. She said when they get into an argument, he has his say, and then turns off his hearing aid.
- E. These are the kinds of problems Peter and James were talking about in our texts.

IV. FAMILY MEMBERS NEED TO LISTEN TO EACH OTHER.

- A. Husbands and wives. Not just hear, but listen.
 1. Conversation involves two things: (1) speaking and (2) listening.
 2. I think sometimes we listen, but we listen only to what we ourselves are saying. And we think we are good conversationalists.

3. Ephesians 5:22-27 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
- B. Parents should listen to the children.
 1. Do not mean children should rule the home.
 2. But wise parents will take time to listen to their children. What is important to the children, even at early age, is just as important to the child as important things are to the parents.
 3. Parents, do you know whether your children are happy? Have you listened to them?
- C. Children should listen to parents.
 1. Though parents may seem ever so stupid when they get past thirty years old, still they usually are wiser than their teenage sons and daughters.
 2. Ephesians 6:1-3 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

V. SOME THINGS THAT HINDER GOOD LISTENING.

- A. The speed at which we are able to listen
 1. The average speaker speaks about 125 words a minute. The average person can listen about four times that fast. Danger of getting bored.
 2. But this is an advantage, if we do not get lazy. If we will analyze what is being said, and not just throw our minds into neutral and coast. Must concentrate. Listening is hard work.
- B. Preconceived ideas
 1. In explaining why he spoke in parables Jesus said it was because of the preconceived ideas of some (Luke 8:10 "And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.")
 2. This keeps many today from listening.
- C. Bad attitudes toward the speaker
 1. James 1:20 "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."
 2. If you were all upset with me, you would not appreciate anything I said to you in the lesson.
 3. As listeners, we must be impressed with the fact that the message is from God, and not from the preacher. (I Corinthians 2:1-5 "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.")
 4. It is the message, not the speaker that is important (Cf. Jonah).

CONCLUSION

In Matthew 11:15 Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We might paraphrase that in this way: "He that has ears to hear, let him listen."

Is there one in the audience who is not a Christian, and who is listening to the word of God? Are you listening to Christ as he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Are you listening as he says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Some have been hearing, but not listening. Won't you open your ears and your heart to the Lord as he invites you to enjoy the blessings of salvation?

Mountains of the Bible

Long considered self fortunate to live in a section where there are mountains. In plain view of my home as a boy. Every year in the fall my dad would spend an afternoon just walking + driving in the mountains around Jacksonville, AL.

Mountains occupied a significant place throughout Bible history. Want to mention some of them and observe lessons suggested to us by each of them.

Discussion

I The Mountain of Revelation

A. Mt. Horeb, or Sinai

1. Here God appeared to Moses in burning bush (Ex. 3).
2. It was here God brought Moses + Israel to give them the law (Ex. 19).
3. Mentioned in Paul's allegory in Gal. 3, in which he is showing the contrast of the bondage of the law of Moses + the freedom we have in Christ.
4. Mentioned (not by name) in Heb. 12, showing superiority + permanence of the church.

- B. Sinai is imp. because it was where God revealed his will to man.
- C. Revelation is important (1 C. 2:9, 10)
1. Eph. 3:1-5 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you B.
 2. Dent. 29:29.
- D. Valuable only if we:
1. receive it,
 2. Follow it.

II Mountain of Transfiguration

A. Mt. 17:1-5.

1. Do not know the name of the mountain (possibly Mt. Tabor, or Mt. Hermon).
 2. Name of Mt. not imp., but what happened there. Here God showed that the word of X is to be honored, & not the word of some other.
- B. Some today give honor to:
1. words of parents
 2. " " preacher
 3. Own thinking
 4. Jeane Dixon
 5. Church tradition
- C. Must hear X, & him only.

I The Mountain of False Worship.

A. Mt. Gerazim (Jno. 4).

1. Jeroboam had led 10 tribes to pull away & begin worshipping at altars he set up in Dan & Bethel (1 K. 12).
2. Samaritans claimed to be descended from those 10 tribes, & they worshipped at Mt. Gerazim.

B. When the woman in Jno. 4 asked about the matter, Jesus plainly taught her the truth.

1. Mat say, "That's a minor thing."
2. Worship never has been minor. (Isa. 10; Gen. 4; II Jno. 9).

IV The Mountain of Conflict

A. Josh. 14:12 "Now therefore give me this mountain" Had been promised 40-45 years earlier. Caleb was anxious to fight for it & take it at age 85, one of the two oldest men in Israel. Might think all his conflicts would now be past, but no.

B. Life is a series of conflicts. (Gal. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:58)

V The Mountain of Temptation

A. Mt. 4:8 "exceeding high mountain"

1. Our confident the temptations of Jesus were every bit as strong as any we meet. (Hab. 4:15).

2. 1 Pet. 2:21-23 "For ever hereunto..."

B. We can overcome temptation (1 Cor. 10:13)

1. Be familiar w/ scrip. (Mt. 4).
2. Pray
3. "flee fornication" 1 Cor. 6:18
4. "flee from idolatry" 1 Cor. 10:14
5. "flee youthful lust" II Tim. 2:22
6. "Resist the devil & he..." Jas. 4

VI The Mountain of Sacrifice

A. Gen. 22:1ff - A mountain in the land of Moriah.

1. This command was not given for God's benefit, but for Abraham.
2. Called "worship" (Gen. 22:5).

B. God calls on us to sacrifice.

1. 1 Cor. 16:1-2
2. II Cor. 8
3. II Cor. 9:7
4. May have to sacrifice parents Mt. 10:37, 38.
5. Must give up world (II Jn. 2:15-17)
6. Lk. 9:23 "If any man will..."

VII The Mountain of Redemption

A. Calvary - Lk. 23:33.

1. Only way a lost world could be saved.
2. Jn. 3:14-16. "As Moses lifted..."

B. Our gratitude demands submission

VIII The Mountain of Evangelism

A. A mountain in Galilee

1. ~~Lk~~ Mt. 28:16 "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee..."
2. Disciples kept their appt. w/ the Lord.

B. Was here Jesus said: "Go ye therefore..."

1. Just as imp. to preach now.
2. Must keep our appts. w/ the Lord.

IX The Mountain of the Lord's House.

A. Isa. 2:2-4

B.

X The Mountain of Vision.

A. Deut. 34:1 ff. Called "the Mountain of Nebo" "the top of Pisgah"

B. Pr. 28:18 "Where there is no vision"

C. Vigilant - 1 Tim. 3; 1 Pet. 5:8

3/12/95

THE NAILS OF THE CROSS

Colossians 2:14

Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

John 20:25: "The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Though there is no passage in the Bible that contains the words *Jesus was nailed to the cross*, still we know from these and other passages that he was. This is one of the things involved in crucifixion, the cruel method Rome had of executing its enemies who were not Roman citizens. (Roman citizens were beheaded.) Crucifixion was a slow, very agonizingly painful, and shameful death. The pain of the crucifixion itself began when the nails were driven into the hands and feet of the victim; it ended sometimes days later when a welcome death finally came to the victim. The Lord's death came in about six hours after the nails were driven into his hands and feet.

The passage we read from Colossians tells us that when Jesus was crucified, he abolished the "handwriting of ordinances...nailing it to his cross." Figuratively speaking, when those Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, they also nailed the Old Testament to the cross. (Explain.)

But in a figurative sense, we might also say the nails of the cross accomplished a number of other very important things that we need to be aware of and appreciate.

DISCUSSION

I. THE NAILS OF THE CROSS DROVE DOWN THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

- A. All God's promises are fulfilled in Christ. II Corinthians 1:20: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."
 - 1. To Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: {3} And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
 - 2. Fulfilled in Christ. Luke 2:11 "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."
 - 3. It was written, therefore, it had to happen. Luke 24:44-47 "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. {45} Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, {46} And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: {47} And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
- B. Will God keep his promises?
 - 1. Hebrews 13:5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
 - 2. Matthew 7:7-11: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: {8} For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh

findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. {9} Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? {10} Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? {11} If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

3. Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
- C. In order for the promise of God to fail one would have to remove the nails from the hands and feet of Jesus.

II. THE NAILS JOINED TOGETHER CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

- A. Ephesians 5:23-27: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. {24} Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. {25} Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; {26} That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, {27} That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
 1. Note: "gave himself for it."
 2. Shows the value of the church.
- B. Christ and his church are inseparable.
 1. Some say, "The death of Christ saves us, and not the church."
 2. But the blood shed on the cross purchased the church. Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"
- C. If Christ saves one separate and apart from the church, then he will have to save him without being nailed to the cross also, for the nails that fastened Jesus to the cross also fastened together Christ and the church. You will have to pull the nails out of his hands and feet in order to get him to save you without your becoming a member of his church.

III. THE NAILS DROVE DOWN BAPTISM AS A CONDITION OF PARDON.

- A. Romans 6:3-6: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? {4} Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. {5} For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: {6} Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."
 1. Note: "baptized into Christ" and "baptized into his death." One not baptized is outside of Christ, and one not baptized has no connection with his death.
 2. Note: "our old man is crucified with him" when we are baptized. If not baptized, then that old man of sin is still alive and we are dead in sins.
- B. This is why it is said of baptism that:
 1. it is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)
 2. it washes away sins (Acts 22:16)
 3. it saves (I Pet 3:21)
- C. One who denies the essentiality of baptism is inadvertantly arguing that Jesus did not have to be nailed to the cross in order for us to be saved.

IV. THE NAILS FOREVER CLOSED EVERY OTHER APPROACH TO GOD.

- A. Jesus is the way. John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
- B. Jesus is the door. John 10:9: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."
- C. Jesus is the good shepherd. John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
- D. Sometimes even brethren, wanting to be charitable, affirm their belief that the Jews who reject Christ as the Son of God are acceptable to God. Some believe Buddhists, Moslems, etc., are acceptable. If such were the case, it would make God and Jesus foolish for having him nailed to the cross.

V. **THE NAILS FASTENED IN PLACE A PICTURE OF GOD'S HATRED FOR SIN.**

- A. The people in America are living under the impression that God is a "softie" when it comes to the matter of sin. They really do not believe he hates sin.
 - 1. Proverbs 6:16-19: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: {17} A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, {18} An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, {19} A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."
 - 2. Hebrews 1:9: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."
- B. Regardless of society's view of sin, the nails of the cross testify to God's hatred of lying, cheating, fornication, adultery, drunkenness, abortion, homosexuality, and the other sins our society refuses to frown upon.
- C. In order for God to approve of sin, the nails would have to be pulled out of the hands and feet of Jesus.

VI. **THE NAILS FOREVER DROVE DOWN THE FACT OF GOD'S LOVE FOR MANKIND.**

- A. 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."
- B. Romans 5:7-8: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. {8} But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- C. God loved man from the beginning, and planned to save him. Before he created man he knew what he would do in the event man sinned. Ephesians 3:10-11; "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, {11} According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- D. But the full extent of God's love for man was never demonstrated until Jesus was nailed to the cross. If you ever wonder, "Does God really love me?" the answer is in those nails.

CONSLUSION

Finally, the nails of the cross can nail closed the door to your past life, and enable you to start life anew. Ephesians 2:11-16: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; {12} That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: {13} But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. {14} For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath

broken down the middle wall of partition between us; {15} Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace {16} And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING EFFORTS TO CHANGE WORSHIP

In the initial issue of *Wineskins*, a magazine edited by Rubel Shelly, Mike Cope, and Phillip Morrison, the following statement is made: "*Wineskins* is committed to the stimulation of bold but responsible change in the church of God" (May 1992, Page 1). In the book, *The Second Incarnation*, by Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris (Howard, West Monroe, 1992), the authors state on page 13: "The tired, uninspiring event called worship in our churches must give way to an exhilarating experience of God that simultaneously exhibits and nurtures life in the worshippers." It is obvious that among the changes some want to make are changes in the way we worship. These statements represent a disposition on the part of some to make some changes. They would say the changes they wish to make are in reference to matters that are non-essential, but when they begin to make the changes, those changes are in connection with things that are essential.

Notice some observations about the disposition to change our worship.

DISCUSSION

I. **STATUS QUO IS LOOKED UPON AS AN UGLY WORD.**

- A. If it has been around a while, then it must need changing, seems to be the attitude.
- B. A caricature of Scriptural worship is drawn, and then the caricature is ridiculed.
 - 1. Caricature defined: "A representation...in which the subject's distinctive features or peculiarities are deliberately exaggerated or distorted to produce a comic or grotesque effect." "An imitation or copy so inferior as to be absurd." (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.*)
 - 2. We sometimes call it "building a straw man." It is easy for us to make things look ridiculous if we are allowed to exaggerate it and make it the way we want it to look to others.
- C. Sometimes abuses and mistakes are attacked as if they were an essential part of the system of worship. The whole system does not need to be scrapped because of some abuses.

II. **WORSHIP IS LOOKED UPON AS BEING UNSATISFACTORY BECAUSE OF A LACK OF HUMAN FEELING AND EXCITEMENT.**

- A. "I didn't get anything out of the service."
 - 1. If that is the case, then you came as a spectator.
 - 2. Besides, who is supposed to be pleased by worship? We worship God to do honor to him, not to ourselves.
- B. The effectiveness of worship is erroneously judged by how much human feeling and excitement it generates.
 - 1. If it is not in line with their ideas, it is not worthwhile.
 - 2. It is not considered relevant, but to whom? To each other.

III. **THEY SAY WE NEED TO CHANGE THESE OLD TRADITIONS.**

- A. But tradition is not an ugly word. Used to refer to ordinances of God in II Thes. 3:6.
- B. If a thing is nothing more than a human tradition, then it may need to be changed, but not necessarily.
 - 1. It may be a tradition that is altogether good, and cannot be improved upon. In such

cases, why change?

2. If it is a bad tradition, it should be changed.
- C. But if those who clamor for change are allowed to change things from our traditions to their way, it will simply be a matter of change from one tradition to another.

IV. **THOSE CLAMORING FOR CHANGE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A "VICTIM SOCIETY" MENTALITY.**

- A. Let me illustrate: The Civil Rights Movement succeeded because people saw themselves as victims of an unjust and unfair society. I certainly would not deny that.
- B. The Women's Suffrage Movement succeeded because women were made to see themselves as victims of unjust and unfair laws. Cf. Now the Women's Liberation Movement.
- C. The L. A. Riots, when those who beat Rodney King were acquitted. They were persuaded they had the right to do what they did. (Woman working at Parisian in Birmingham was fired because she was caught stealing from her employer. One of her friends said, "I know if she is guilty, there must have been a good reason.")
- D. The drunkard, the gambler, even the murderer is really the victim now in the eyes of some. Clarence Darrow, famed criminal lawyer, obtained hundreds of acquittals by appealing to the jury to consider all the disadvantages of the accused that led to his doing what he did.
- E. Worship changers have appealed to that mentality. "Look how bad you have had it all your life in the church of Christ with its dull, boring worship. But it's not your fault. Now it's time to correct that situation."

V. **ALL THE CHANGES THE CHANGERS WANT TO MAKE TEND TOWARD DENOMINATIONALISM.**

- A. Instrumental music
- B. Solos, choirs, quartets, etc.
- C. Singing during the Lord's Supper. (I called two First Christian Churches in Birmingham and asked if they play the organ while they eat the supper. Both said they do. Even they--at least one of them--do not sing while eating the supper.)
- D. Hand clapping
- E. Are the denominations that much closer to what the Lord wants in worship than we? Or is it merely a matter of wanting to do in worship what appeals to the most folks, as are the denominations? Or is it just wanting to be like the denominations?

VI. **GOD IS HOLY.**

- A. He is not a casual God, when it comes to worship. We must be aware of his holiness, and be dignified in our worship. God is not our "buddy." He is our Heavenly Father.
- B. Worship is not a trivial thing. A thing for our entertainment.
 1. Churches are now hiring ministers of worship, whose job it is to choreograph the worship.
 2. One large church published its order of worship in the bulletin. It went something like this: "songs, call to worship, a word from the Lord, prayer, songs, a word from the Lord, song, prayer, a word from the Lord, Lord's Supper, song, blessing."
 3. What this amounts to is a period of entertainment with a few very brief remarks from the preacher scattered throughout.

4. Such may appeal to our emotions and our feelings, but is it a period of mental devotion to God?
- C. One denominational church I read of advertized a 22 minute service on Sunday. They began at eight o'clock and guaranteed to dismiss no later than 8:22. That appeals to the flesh. Is that what we are appealing to?

VII. **CHANGES BEING MADE ARE MOVING TOWARD PERFORMANCE INSTEAD OF SPIRITUALITY.**

- A. That is the appeal of what is called "special" music in worship.
 1. Look at the denominational TV programs and their performers.
 2. Have you attended a denominational funeral recently, and noticed the kind of music they have?
- B. Even some preachers think it is their job to keep the people (audience) entertained.
- C. We must remember that each Christian is a performer, and God is the only one in the audience.

VIII. **SOME APPROPRIATE SCRIPTURE OBSERVATIONS.**

- A. II Kings 17:15 "followed vanity." Hebrew word means "something transitory and unsatisfactory." Even change can become dull and boring.
- B. II Samuel 6:1-17. (Cf. Ex. 25:14; Num. 4:15). New cart! How appropriate! No doubt David thought the culture of Israel in the wilderness was the reason the ark was to be borne on staves. It took 90 days to get back to the Bible way of moving the ark after the death of Uzzah.
- C. Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1ff). Look at how many things they did right.
 1. They were the right ones to burn incense.
 2. They put it in their censers. That was the right place to put it.
 3. They each had a censer. That was as it should have been.
 4. They put fire in the censers. That was what they were supposed to do.
 5. But they made one small change; strange (unauthorized) fire.
- D. II Peter 2:18-19. "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Some have become slaves of change.

CONCLUSION

Change within itself is not wrong; neither is it necessarily right. If worship is not satisfactory as it is taught in the Bible, and as it has been carried on in churches of Christ, then a change needs to be made. But the change needs to be made in the worshiper.

THE OLD PATHS

Jeremiah 6:16

The prophet Jeremiah began his work as a prophet during the reign of Josiah, one of the good kings of Judah, and he continued to prophesy until Judah was carried away into Babylonian Captivity. Like most of the faithful prophets of the Old Testament, he was not very popular with the people, and suffered many injustices at their hands.

In Jeremiah 6:16 the prophet says: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." These words constitute a brief summary of the situation in Jeremiah's day: God's pleading with his people to do right, and the people's responding by saying, "We will not."

These words were written more than two and one-half millennia ago, but the admonitions contained therein are just as much needed today as they were then. Let us analyze this verse carefully, and see if it does not have a very modern-day application.

DISCUSSION

I. "STAND YE IN THE WAYS, AND SEE"

- A. Do as a traveller would do if he came to a place in the road where several roads converge, and did not know which way to go. He would not merely choose one road at random and go on securely believing himself to be on the right road. He would study the matter to be sure he is choosing the right road. He would ask someone the right way.
- B. It is unfortunate that, in religion, countless thousands never stop to consider whether the way they are travelling is the right way.
- C. Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
- D. Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
- E. Second Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
- F. Life is too short, death is too certain, and eternity is too long for us to go through life without making thorough examination to be sure we are on the right road.

II. "ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY"

- A. The Hebrew word translated "old" here means "everlasting, perpetual...of time long past."
 1. The idea suggested is certain new ways had come along, and that God's eternal truth had been forsaken in order to walk in ways that were new.
 2. Whether a thing is new or old is really of no consequence within itself.
- B. There are some new things that are far superior to the old.
 1. I wouldn't want to cross the country in a wagon train or on horseback.
 2. I prefer modern methods of dentistry.
 3. Modern medicine is better. (Laser and arthroscopic surgery, etc.)
 4. Electric and gas cooking stoves vs. old wood burners.
 5. Central heating and air conditioning vs. fireplace and funeral home fans.

- C. But the standard of human conduct set forth for us in the Bible is perfect, and nothing we might do could improve upon it.
1. Second Timothy 3:16-17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
 2. Second Peter 1:3 "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."
 3. Psalms 19:7-11 "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. {8} The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. {9} The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. {10} More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. {11} Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."
 4. Psalms 119:130 "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."
 5. Psalms 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
- D. As we approach the Twenty-First Century, there is nothing more important that we could do than ask for the Old Paths where is the Good Way.
1. We should ask for the old paths in matters pertaining to faith.
 2. We must ask for the old paths in matters pertaining to morals.

III. "AND WALK THEREIN"

- A. It is not enough to know what is right and wrong. We must walk accordingly.
- B. Second Timothy 3:14 "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."
- C. James 1:22-25 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. {23} For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: {24} For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. {25} But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
- D. Colossians 2:6 "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."
- E. Ephesians 5:2 "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."
- F. Ephesians 5:8 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."
- G. Colossians 4:5 "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

IV. "AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS"

- A. This reminds us of a statement by Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. {29} Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
- B. The psalmist said in Psalms 38:3: "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin."
- C. Rest can be found only in walking in the old paths.

V. **"BUT THEY SAID, WE WILL NOT WALK THEREIN"**

- A. This is the problem today. Men and women stand in rebellion against God.
- B. John 5:39-40 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. {40} And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."
- C. Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

CONCLUSION

What is your response to this plea from God's prophet?

ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, WHAT IF...?

Second Corinthians 5:10

That there will be a day of judgment is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Second Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Acts 17:31: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Ecclesiastes 12:14: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Man is accountable to God for his actions while he lives on earth. Romans 14:12: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Matthew 12:36: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." First Peter 4:5: "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." The parable of the unjust steward shows man is accountable. Luke 16:2: "Give an account of thy stewardship." So of the parable of the talents (Matthew 25).

All of us will be present. We will be judged by the Lord, who makes no mistakes. We will be judged by our deeds. The Bible will be the standard by which we will be judged. We will be judged for all eternity.

The purpose of the judgment will not be to determine guilt or innocence. First Peter 3:12: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Second Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his."

The purpose will be two-fold: (1) To pronounce sentence or announce rewards. Matthew 25:34: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Verse 41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (2) To vindicate God in rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient. Matthew 12:41-42: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

But I am to speak to you on the subject "On the Judgment Day, What If...?" We will look first at certain negative possibilities, and then at the positive side. WHAT IF I:

DISCUSSION

I. AS AN ELDER, HAVE NEGLECTED MY DUTY TO GUARD AGAINST GRIEVOUS WOLVES IN THE CHURCH?

A. This duty is clearly set forth in Scripture.

1. Acts 20:28-30: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."
2. 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."

B. My neglect has caused honest souls to be led astray.

1. Will some former member of the church where I was an overseer say to me, "I am lost because you neglected your duty to see that the truth was plainly taught and error plainly refuted"?
 2. Perhaps I will bear my share of the responsibility for split churches and alienated brethren, because I neglected to see that the truth was preached and error soundly refuted.
- C. On the other hand, suppose I have gone against popular opinion, and have stood firmly against all innovations. I can picture someone's meeting me at the judgment, and saying to me, "Thank you for being firm. Had it not been for your firm stand for truth, I would have gone into error. The false doctrine being taught sounded good to me, and I was ready to accept it. But your loving, yet firm stand helped me find the right way. I would have been lost, but now I am saved."

II. AS AN ELDER, HAVE BEEN A DECISION-MAKER OR A BUSINESS MANAGER INSTEAD OF A SHEPHERD OF GOD'S SHEEP OR A LEADER OF GOD'S PEOPLE

- A. It is true that elders have the responsibility of making decisions with respect to the local church. This is God's plan. But there are two kinds of leaders;
1. Corporate style. Authoritarian. Hand down decisions to underlings.
 2. The other is the kind Jesus describes in Luke 22:25-26: "And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."
- B. First Peter 5:1-3 says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."
- C. To be a shepherd, one must smell like the sheep." --Tom Holland's subject at 11:00 A. M.
- D. The shepherd does not drive the sheep; he walks in front of them, and they gladly follow.
- E. You want to know the feeling of the sheep toward the shepherd? Read Psalm 23.
- F. If I have not been a caring, loving shepherd, the sheep will resent me. And some of them will say to me in the judgment, "Why didn't you lead me, instead of driving me? You knew I would resent that and would refuse to follow. But if I could have seen you walking before me every step of the way I would have gladly followed you wherever you chose to lead me. As it is, I'm lost, because I didn't think you really cared anything about me."
- G. On the other hand, suppose I as an elder have realized the sheep do not exist for my benefit, but I for theirs, and have had the heart of a shepherd, and have done as Ezekiel 34:15-16 says, "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick...."
1. Then there will be those there who will say to me, "Thank you for your help and encouragement along the way. Your patience and persistence is the thing that enabled me to be finally faithful. If it were not for that, I would be lost."
 2. If one says something like that to you at the judgment, will not all your sacrifices as an elder be worthwhile?
 3. Or if you are the wife of an elder, or deacon, or preacher, and something like that is said to you or your husband, will not all your sacrifices be more than repaid?

III. AS A PREACHER, AN ELDER, OR A DEACON HAVE BEEN SO BUSY TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD AND BUILD UP THE CHURCH THAT I HAVE NEGLECTED MY OWN FAMILY?

- A. My own son or daughter might say to me, "Daddy, you worked tirelessly in the service of the church. You were successful in leading some to obey the gospel and become Christians. But I wanted you to spend some time with me. And because the church took you away from me, I came to hate the church. You wondered why I quit the church when I married and left home. That was the reason."
1. Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Note: *Your* children.
 2. Joshua 24:14-15: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Note: Me and *my house*.
 3. While I am trying to save the children of the world, I must be careful not to neglect my own.
- B. On the other hand, what if I have spent time with my children, and have led them in the right direction. Perhaps at the Judgment, they will say to me, "Thank you, Daddy. You and Mom gave your lives in service to the Lord, but you never neglected us. You showed us what real Christian parents should be. You gave us a pattern to follow in rearing your grandchildren."

CONCLUSION

These are just a few of the "What Ifs" on the Day of Judgment.

We do know the day of judgment is coming. What if we reach the judgment having accumulated more material wealth than Television Ted Turner and the Late Sam Walton combined? Will it matter? What if we have obtained more political power than the combined membership of the Security Council of the United Nations? Will it matter? What if we have earned terminal degrees in every academic field? Will it matter? What if our names have become better known than that of Coca Cola and Elvis Presley combined? Will it matter?

What if we have become obedient to the gospel of Christ, and have faithfully served God and our fellow human beings while we lived here on this earth? Will it matter?

One Thing

Sometimes we attach far too much importance to one thing. For example, think of wicked King Ahab, who had everything his heart could desire, but was miserable because of ONE THING: Naboth would not sell him his vineyard. He finally, through his wife, Jezebel, committed murder to possess that ONE THING he really did not need to begin with. Temptation to forget the many things that bless our lives & concentrate on one thing we are unhappy with or that is not to our ^{liking} ~~liking~~, & make ourselves miserable.

On the other hand, ONE THING might be of such importance that without it all other things are of no real & lasting value. This is the kind of ONE THINGS I want you to think about now. We might entitle this sermon: Four "One Things" in the New Testament.

Discussion

- T. "One Thing thou Lackest" (Mark 10:21).
- A. Relate story of Rich Young Ruler.
 - B. Many things he had:
 1. Wealth - "great possessions"
 2. High social rank
 3. Authority - Mk. 10:18 "a certain ruler"
 4. Religious practice

5. Morality

C. Four phrases sum up his character & condition

1. So near & yet so far
2. So rich & yet so poor
3. So good & yet so bad
4. So wise & yet so foolish

D. Jesus said to him: "One thing thou lackest" (MK. 10:21)

1. A true conception of the value of ~~the~~ spiritual things in comparison to material things.
2. This is the one thing many today are lacking.
3. Without a proper conception of the value of ~~a~~ spiritual things, all else a person may have or be is of such little worth & ~~is~~ for such a very short time.

II. "One Thing is Needful" (LK. 10:42)

A. Relate story of Jesus' visit in the home of Mary & Martha.

B. Martha's work is admirable. She was doing what was normally expected of a good hostess.

C. It is good to be industrious with ref. to material things:

1. Keep a clean house
2. Prepare nourishing meals
3. Be enthusiastic on the job, or in business

D. But Jesus said to Martha: "Martha, Martha, t' art careful & troubled about many things; But one thing is needful; & Mary hath chosen"

E. We talk about our needs:

1. Better job, more income
2. Larger house, more closet space
3. A new car, or another car in the family.
4. etc. - These are our wants

F. But our real needs in a material sense are really very few & we have them for such a short time.

G. In fact Jesus said, "One thing is needful," & it was not something material. It was that "which shall not be taken away."

H. One day we must turn loose of everything we have accumulated. But death does not separate us from the joy & bliss of salvation. That is the one thing that we really need.

III "One Thing I Know" (Jn. 9:25).

A. Relate story of Jesus' healing the blind man.

1. Washed in Siloam - just as commanded, & because commanded
2. Pharisees began to try to find fault w/ Jesus. Said he violated the Sabbath.
3. Asked blind man's parents about him. They affirmed only that he was their son, & was born blind.
4. Then they said to the healed man: "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner."

B. It was then he said: "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

- C. Jews were trying to deal with what they thought was some theological complexity. But the healed man did not see the problem. He just knew he could now see.
- D. Sometimes people keep delaying their obedience to the gospel, because, they say, they "do not understand" some things. Don't know enough.
- E. But how much does one have to know?
1. That he is lost because of his sins and stands in need of forgiveness.
 2. Jesus is God's Son and will save those who will obey him.
 3. Must know what Jesus requires one to do in order to be forgiven. Cf. The blind man understood what Jesus told him to do, & did it, even though he might not have understood why Jesus required what he did.
7. All the education or knowledge in the world is unimportant beside the knowledge of God's will for man.

IV. "One Thing I Do" (Phil. 3:13)

- A. Paul was not here saying that he did absolutely nothing that was not directly connected with serving the Lord. He was saying rather that his pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling..." was his #1 priority. Everything else was secondary.

B. This is what Jesus said should be true of all of us. (Mt. 6:33.).

Conclusion

If you are lost, you should decide now, that if there is one thing, & only one thing, you do before you pillow your head for sleep tonight, it will be to make peace with your Maker.

The Organization of the Church

Some of the earliest departures from the faith after the church was established were in connection with the organization of the church.

Some of the earliest problems to develop after the beginning of the Restoration Movement were centered around efforts to organize the church in a way foreign to N. T. teaching.

The division of God's people over orphan homes + church cooperation in the late '50's + early '60's came in part because some thought God's plan for the organization of his church was being violated.

Currently one of the major errors of the so-called "Discipling Churches" is an error with ref. to God's plan for the organization of his church.

Discussion

I The Word Church May Be Used in One of Three Senses.

(from ἐκκλησία - called out). Ac. 19:37 not same word

A. Universal sense

1. Mt. 16:18. Same as Kingdom of Dan. 2:44.
2. Eph. 4:4; 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18
3. Eph. 5:25-27 - "Husbands love your...."
4. In universal sense, Ch. = Kingdom. Ch. = body.

Ch. = Bride. Rev. 21:9 Ch. = bldg. 1 P. 2:5 1 C. 3:9

5. There is no organization of the church in the universal sense. No org. of congregations.

B. The assembled sense.

1. 1 Cor. 14:19 - "Yet in the church I had rather speak..."
2. v. 28 - "But if there be no interpreter present..."
3. v. 34 - "Let your women..."
4. Heb. 2:12 - "I will declare thy name unto my..."
in the midst of the church.
5. No organization as such in the assembled sense.

C. The local sense.

1. Ro. 16:16
2. 1 Cor. 1:2 "Unto the Church of God which is..."
3. Rev. 2 & 3 - seven local churches
4. This is the church that is organized.

II Four States of Local Churches w/Ref. to Org.

A. A church may be: scripturally unorganized

1. Tit. 1:5 - "For this cause left I thee..."
2. Churches may exist without formal org. + be scriptural, provided none are qualified to be appointed as elders & deacons.
3. As a rule - Such should not continue to be the case decade after decade. Should develop.

B. Unscripturally unorganized.

1. Those qualified to be elders & deacons, but the church prefers not to have such. - Unscript.
2. A rejection of God's arrangement. Often because some who are not qualified want to have as great a voice as those who are.

C. Unscripturally Organized.

1. May involve a den. type org. One bishop over the others, a pastor system, etc.
2. A committee to function as elders. (Nothing wrong w/committee to do a certain thing it may be appointed to do, even if church has elders. But to appoint a com. to act as an eldership is not scriptural.) (Maybe deacons instead of elders.)
3. Appoint men to serve as elders or deacons who are not scripturally qualified. Two extremes (both erroneous):
 - a. One has to be perfect
 - b. One does not have to have all the characteristics in the list.

D. Scripturally Organized.

1. Elders (bishops, pastor, presbyter). These oversee the local church. Plurality in every church.
 - a. Acts 20: ~~17~~ 17; 28. 17 - Presbyters - elders
28 - episcopos - Bishops
28 - poimain - pastor
 - b. Acts 14: 23 - "And when they had ordained them"
 - c. Tit. 1: 5 - "For this cause"
 - d. 1 Pet. 5: 1-3

THE elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

2. Deacons - qual. set forth in 1 Tim. 3;
3. Evangelists, teachers, all other members subject to oversight of elders. (Heb. 13:17).
4. Apostles & prophets did work of revealing & conf. word. We have that work. No need for modern apostles.

III Current Departures from the Faith w/resp. to Org.

- A. Elders have no authority. (Heb. 13:17)
1 Pt. 5:3 is used. But cf. Mk. 10:42; Lk. 22:25.
- B. That the idea of autonomy of local church is a myth.
- C. Evangelistic Authority.

Conclusion

God's wisdom in this as well as all other things.

AN OVERVIEW OF SECOND AND THIRD JOHN

They are very similar in structure and design. Both were written by the apostle John, who calls himself "the elder" in both epistles. That Third John was written to an individual, Gaius, who was a faithful Christian is quite obvious. I believe also that Second John was written to an individual, a lady, who also was a faithful Christian.

Notice with me some things in these epistles that will help us to be faithful.

DISCUSSION

I. GOD IS INTERESTED IN THE INDIVIDUAL.

- A. About eight books of the N. T. are addressed to individuals (Luke, Acts, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, II & III John).
- B. Where would we be without these inspired books?
- C. Philip was involved in a very successful gospel meeting in the city of Samaria, when the angel of the Lord called him to go and preach to one man, the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8).
- D. Mark's account of the Great Commission emphasizes the individual: "every creature."
- E. In Galatians 2:22 Paul wrote: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*
 1. Hebrews 2:9 says Jesus tasted death for every man.
 2. But here Paul makes it individual.
- F. It will help me be faithful if I will be aware that Jesus died for me personally.

II. GOD IS CONCERNED WITH THE WELL-BEING OF WOMEN.

- A. II John is written to "the elect lady."
 1. Some say this term designates the church. (Foy Wallace, Jr., for example, in his commentary on the Revelation.)
 2. But this book was not written in prophetic or symbolical language. I know of no reason to think the term *the elect lady* applies to the church.
 - a. Reference is made to her children. If she is the church, then who are her children? The church has no existence apart from its members.
 - b. Reference is made to her sister and her sister's children also.
 3. This does not change the teaching of the book, but its being written to a literal sister in Christ underscores God's concern for women as well as men.
- B. Certain restrictions are placed on women (II Timothy 2:8-15).
 1. Some would remove these restrictions, saying:
 - a. That this was written by Paul because of his unmarried state.
 - b. Or that Paul's rabbinical or Pharisaical background is responsible.
 - c. Some even say it was not written by Paul at all, but by some scribe around 115 A. D.
 - d. Others say it was written only to conform to a certain culture and a certain time.
 2. Paul himself gave two reasons why women are to have no dominion over men in the public worship:
 - a. Verse 13: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."
 - b. Verse 14: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."
- C. But women can do one of the greatest works possible.
 1. Note verse 15: "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."
 2. Call it a lowly task if you will, but there is no greater or more productive work than being a

Christian wife and mother.

3. Where would God's people in Bible times have been without the Sarahs, the Hannahs, the Marys, the Elizabeths, the Priscillas, the Loises and the Eunices?
4. Where would the church be today without its Godly women?

III. FAITHFULNESS REQUIRES ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN RIGHT-DOING.

- A. Gaius was commended because of his assistance and encouragement in connection with good works.
 1. Note III John 4-7: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles."
 2. Christians should not be so self-centered as to remain aloof good works being done. We should be as involved as possible in every good work.
 3. Cf. Titus 3:1: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work."
- B. These verses indicate Gaius was a man of hospitality. In Romans 16:23 Paul refers to "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church"
 1. Whether or not this is the same Gaius, I do not know.
 2. But I do know that hospitality is not as abundant as it should be.
 3. In listing qualifications of elders, Paul told Timothy the elder should be "given to hospitality" (I Tim. 3:2).
 4. He wrote to Titus that the elder must be "a lover of hospitality" (Titus. 1:8).
 5. Roman Christians were told to be "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).
 6. No doubt, generally speaking, we are not as hospitable as we should be.
- C. Faithfulness to God requires active involvement in good works.

IV. FAITHFULNESS REQUIRES STANDING FIRMLY AGAINST ALL SIN AND ERROR.

- A. II John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
- B. Perhaps this elect lady was so good-natured and benevolent that there was a danger she might exercise hospitality to such an extent that she would aid and abet the teaching of error. John is warning her against that very thing.
- C. Those who are faithful will love the things God loves, but will also hate the things God hates.
 1. Hebrews 1:9 says concerning the Son of God: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" We also should love righteousness and hate iniquity.
 2. Prov. 6:16-19 says: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." If the Lord hates these things, then so should we.
- D. There is a disposition on the part of some to ignore the fact that some have embraced error the likes of which would destroy the blood-bought church of Christ from the face of the earth.
 1. Perhaps they have convinced themselves that love prompts such a disposition.
 2. Perhaps they feel that to do otherwise would be too harsh and judgmental.
 3. Maybe they excuse themselves by saying they choose not to become involved in "brotherhood quarrels." They believe in so doing they have elevated themselves above others, who oppose

error.

- E. The truth of the matter is, if I conduct myself toward false teachers in such way as to encourage or aid them in the teaching of their error, then I have become guilty myself of teaching their error. Note again II John 11: "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
- F. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 16:13-14: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity."
 - 1. We must stand fast in the faith if we are to be faithful. This means we must stand fast for that which is right and against that which is wrong.
 - 2. A word of caution: Let us be sure we do not equate our own likes and dislikes to "the faith."

CONCLUSION

May God help us all to learn the lessons of Second and Third John.

MAMMON

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

Luke 16:1-10

It is a little unfortunate for us that we cannot see the expression on the face of the Lord, or hear the inflection in his voice, as he speaks to us in the New Testament. Perhaps if we could, we would appreciate his teaching more and understand it better. One of the parables whose meaning might be more obvious if we could hear the inflection in the Lord's voice is the Parable of the Unjust Steward:

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much [Luke 16:1-10].

The most common explanation of this parable is that the Lord wanted to teach his disciples that men of the world often use better judgment with respect to worldly affairs than the disciples of the Lord use in connection with spiritual matters. It is said that the master commended the good business sense of the unjust steward, but not his dishonesty.

I do not believe that is the teaching of this parable. I believe the lesson of the parable is far more valuable than that. Examine the parable with me very carefully, and let us see what it does and does not teach.

DISCUSSION**I. SOME QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED**

- A. Did the unjust steward really do the wise thing?
 1. Yes, I know verse 8 says, "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely...." But what tone of voice did Jesus use when he said that?
 2. Could he have been speaking sarcastically and ironically in order to strengthen the force of his statement?
 3. Let me illustrate. In First Kings 22 Ahab and Jehoshaphat were trying to decide whether or not to go into battle against Ramoth in Gilead. About four hundred of Ahab's prophets had prophesied saying that Ahab and Jehoshaphat would be victorious. Micaiah was sent for. "So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king" (1 Kings 22:15). There must have been something about the tone of his voice that caused Ahab to say, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD?" (verse 16).
 4. *Sarcasm* is defined as "a sharply mocking or contemptuous remark...." *Irony* is defined as "the use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning." That is precisely what Micaiah did, and that is what Jesus did in this parable, when he said the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely.
 5. Is it ever literally wise to be dishonest and a cheater?
- B. Are the children of the world really wiser than the children of light?
 1. Yes, I know verse 8 say, "for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the

- children of light." But is that to be taken literally, or was Jesus using sarcasm to emphasize his point?
2. If this is really true, then what makes it true? Is it because only those who are stupid become Christians, or does becoming a Christian make a wise man unwise?
 3. What about Matthew 7:24-27? Did the Lord make a mistake? Did he mean to liken the one who hears and does his word to the foolish man instead of the wise man?
- C. Does anyone really think a dishonest crook will be able to guarantee his comfortable retirement in the home of one, just because he helps that one cheat his master out of fifty measures of oil? Twenty measures of wheat?
1. It just doesn't work that way, does it, even though these reductions in the debt were quite significant? (Fifty measures of oil would be 800-900 gallons.)
 2. But look at the statement in verse 4: "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses."
 3. No wise person would think like that. Would you provide a permanent dwelling in your home for a conniving crook, even though he had benefited you greatly in a financial way through his crookedness?
- D. Does the Lord really recommend that his children make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness?
1. The word *unrighteousness* is from a word which occurs 25 times in the Greek New Testament, and it never refers to anything except iniquity or unrighteousness. Is that what the Lord is literally advocating?
 2. What about James 4:4? "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
- E. How would making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness get one into "eternal habitations"?
1. Yes, I know verse 9 says, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."
 2. Isn't Jesus here speaking words which obviously mean the very opposite of what the words themselves would mean under ordinary circumstances? That is irony, and, in this case, sarcasm.

II. THE CONTEXT OF THIS PARABLE WILL SHOW THAT JESUS WAS TEACHING A LESSON THAT MOST HAVE NEVER LEARNED, EVEN IN OUR OWN TIME.

- A. Go back in Luke to chapter 12, verses 13-15: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Here is a case where one's concern over the mammon of unrighteousness brings a rebuke from the Lord.
- B. Immediately following that is the Parable of the Rich Fool, and the Lord's application: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Do you get the impression the Lord is teaching his disciples that they should make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness? That's exactly what the farmer in this parable did.
- C. Next in that chapter the Lord teaches us not to be anxious about food and raiment. He uses the ravens, the lilies, and the grass of the field as examples of God's care. Now look at verses 28-31: "If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." Do you get the impression he is trying to tell us to depend on the mammon of unrighteousness when all else fails?
- D. Verse 33: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." Is he saying unrighteous mammon will get one into everlasting habitations?
- E. The next chapter tells of the healing of a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years. The ruler of the synagogue was critical because the healing was done on the Sabbath day. "The Lord then answered

him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" (Luke 13:15). In other words, the ruler of the synagogue and all the other Jews were very careful to tend their cattle, but not very interested in the things that really mattered. They had made friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

- F. A similar incident occurred in chapter 14, when Jesus healed the man who had the dropsy. Once again, the Lord's reply shows their care and concern for the cattle. "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (Luke 14:5). They had made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness.
- G. That brings us to Luke 15. Jesus was criticized for eating with publicans and sinners, and he spoke three parables: the parables of (1) the Lost Sheep, (2) the Lost Coin, and (3) the Prodigal Son. The lesson here is that they were more interested in their sheep and their money than they were the lost people of the world. Is that not a lesson we need today?
- H. Now, it is right here in the very next verses that we have the Parable of the Unjust Steward.
- I. Immediately following it, and in the same chapter, is the account of two men who lived on the earth. One of them was a rich man; he had made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness while he live on the earth. The other man was a beggar named Lazarus. He had not made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. These two men died, and one of them was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Was it the one who had made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness? Did making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness fix it so that the rich man would be received into eternal habitations?

CONCLUSION

To place a literal interpretation of the words of Jesus in the Parable of the Unjust Steward is to make the parable teach the very opposite of what the Lord was actually teaching. The Lord was trying to show the utter foolishness of attaching so much importance to material things. This is a lesson sorely needed in our society.

What is keeping you from doing the will of God? Just remember: whatever it is, it won't provide for you any everlasting habitations. Only obedience to God's gospel and faithful service to him will.

PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15

These verses require that the gospel be preached, not only to the many different independent countries of the earth, or to the many major cities, or to every village, but to every creature. That means the grocer, the paper boy, the garbage man, the woman next door, the man across the street, etc.

We are not doing it. In fact, we are not keeping up with the growth of the population, which means there are more lost people today than there were ten years ago. If we continue at the present rate, there will be more lost people in ten more years than there are today. Colossians 1:23 tells us that before the end of the first century the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven. It was done without benefit of radio, television, telephone, the printed page, or any modern means of travel.

How did they do it? They did it in the method Jesus was talking about when he said, *"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."* As you know, leaven works from one molecule to another. That is the way the church is to grow. Each one must win others. We must be personal workers.

DISCUSSION

I. WHY ARE WE NOT DOING MORE PERSONAL WORK?

- A. "I just can't do it. I don't know how."
 - 1. Have you tried to learn? You learned to read and write. To add and subtract. Drive a car, change a tire, catch a fish, swim, etc.
 - 2. Do you not think you could learn to do personal work if you really wanted to?
 - 3. Need to have a positive attitude. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13).
- B. "I just don't have time."
 - 1. Time for TV, golfing, fishing, ballgames, and other things we really want to do. Do we really want to save souls?
 - 2. If it is true we do not have time, then we need to rearrange our priorities, for Jesus said: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33).
- C. "I'm afraid I'll say the wrong thing. Afraid I'll hurt someone's feelings. Afraid I'll cause someone to be lost."
 - 1. But people without the gospel are already lost. They cannot be any

- more lost than they are already.
2. The one talent man said, "I was afraid" (Matt. 25:25). His master said he was a "wicked and slothful servant." The New English Bible has his master saying to him, "You lazy rascal!"
- D. These are all excuses, and none of them will sound very convincing in the judgment if we see someone who says, in the words of the song, "You met me day by day, and knew I was astray, yet never mentioned him to me."

II. WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR ONE TO BE A WINNER OF SOULS?

- A. The soul winner must himself have been won to Christ.
1. Before one can sell a thing he must himself be sold. Zig Ziglar, in one of his books, tells about a cookware salesman who was failing miserably. He was doing such a poor job that he could not even afford to purchase a set of the cookware he was trying to sell. His supervisor insisted the man buy a set of the cookware and pay for it by the month. He did, and then became a top salesman.
 2. The greatest soul winner who ever lived wrote the following words: *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"* (Phil. 3:7-8).
 3. "How can I win my husband?" You can't, unless you are completely won yourself.
- B. The soul winner must be determined and persistent.
1. We usually quit too soon. Statistics reveal that the majority of insurance sales are made after the fifth call. Does that tell you why we do not win more souls?
 2. Brother V. P. Black tells about a man and his wife who were invited by their neighbors so often to attend services, they finally attended just to get the neighbors off their backs. But they learned the truth and became faithful Christians.
 3. Look how determined God and Christ were to save us. They were willing to do whatever it took, even to the death of Christ. We must be determined and persistent.
- C. The soul winner must have a plan.
1. It may be just making friends and getting one started to services at first.
 2. It may be taking care of one's children who is sick.
 3. It may be baking a cake or pie, or inviting one over for coffee.
 4. It may be getting one to agree to study the Bible with an elder,

deacon, preacher, or some other qualified teacher. Oletha (Pete) Cicero was dying with bone cancer. Her condition was such that she could barely get around. She could use her telephone, however, and she called a young mother who had visited the services of the church, whom she had never met, and set up an appointment for her to study with Bobby Duncan. Both she and her husband were baptized and are faithful Christians.

5. It may be the soul winner is qualified to teach the prospect himself, and will do so.
6. But there must be some kind of plan. We rarely accomplish anything worthwhile without a plan of operation.

III. HOW CAN ONE OVERCOME FEARS AND HAVE CONFIDENCE AS A SOUL WINNER?

- A. Remember that the word of God is powerful; it is able.
 1. Acts 20:32: *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."*
 2. Heb. 4:12: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*
 3. Rom. 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."*
 4. Psa. 19:7-9: *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."*
- B. Forget about your own inabilities. It is the word of God that does the job. You will certainly fail if you depend on your own abilities.
- C. Be sure you measure success by the right rule.
 1. Not whether the person obeys the gospel, though that is the desired result.
 2. But whether you gave him the opportunity to obey.

IV. WHAT ARE SOME GOOD METHODS OF TEACHING THE BIBLE TO THE LOST ON A PERSONAL BASIS?

- A. The Jule Miller filmstrips have been used to convert thousands. They have

the advantage being a tool that can be used by one that knows very little about the Bible or who has little teaching ability. They have also been used successfully by those very knowledgeable and skilled in teaching.

- B. Ivan Stewart's *Open Bible Study* is used successfully by many. One who uses it needs some training in how it can be used most effectively.
- C. The Northwest Church of Christ in Lawton, Oklahoma, with its fine evangelist, brother Harold McRay, has developed a system they have used with great success. It involves placing in the hands of the prospect a Bible just like the one the teacher is using. The Bible the teacher is using is marked with notes to guide him in the study. These notes include the next passage to be studied along with the page number of that passage. This allows the student to find the passage with ease. In this system the teacher asks the student to read the passage, and then he asks a question that the student can answer from the passage. This system can be obtained free of charge by writing the Northwest Church of Christ, P. O. Box 6281, Lawton, Oklahoma 73506.

CONCLUSION

The rewards for being a personal worker are great in this life and in the life to come. Imagine the joy of seeing one you have worked with obey the gospel. Imagine watching him grow stronger in the faith. Imagine the judgment scene when one tells you how thankful he is that you were interested enough in him to show him the way.

Daniel 12:3 says, "*And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*"

Proverbs 11:30 says, "*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*"

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Prodigal Son - Not Always A Happy Ending LK. 15:11-32

Intro: Young man commented: "He did all right." Meant he sowed his wild oats, enjoyed the pleasures of sin, then when the good times were over, he came back home, & received his father's blessing. Glamorous! Young people, you must realize Jesus told the parable to emphasize Heaven's concern over a lost soul.

Would be wonderful if every story of a prodigal son or daughter had a happy ending. Unfortunately, most stories about prodigals do not end with the words "And they lived happily ever after." Notice why:

Discussion

I Most Prodigals Never Return Home.

A. Die in the far country of sin.

B. Some intend to return home.

1. But accident claims life.

2. or die in a bar room brawl.

3. or despair causes them to take own life

C. Jno. 8:21 Jesus said: "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."

D. Jas. 4:13, 14: "Go to now..."

II Most Prodigals Never Come to Themselves.

- A. "And when he came to himself...." (Lk. 15:17)
1. Explain what it means.
 2. When one "comes to himself" - will come home
- B. II Cor. 4:4 speaks of some whose minds have been blinded by the "god of this world." They simply cannot see themselves as they really are.
- C. Heb. 11:25 speaks of enjoying the "pleasures of sin" for a season.
- D. I Timothy 4:2 speaks of some whose conscience is "seared with a hot iron." Means they have persisted in sin until they are able to feel ~~and~~ no guilt or shame, + ∴ have no desire to come home.

III Many Prodigals Would Like to Return Home, but are not Able to Do So.

- A. Jn. 8:34 "Whoever committeth sin is the [bond] servant of sin."
- B. One who ~~chooses~~ chooses to follow the desires of the flesh may lose his freedom to choose:
1. May become addicted to alcohol or drugs. - ~~Heb.~~
 2. May become entangled in crime to point cannot escape; associates won't let them.
 3. May become addicted to immoral life style: Prostitution, homosexuality, live-in companion.

4. Others entrapped in unlawful marriages, perhaps with children.
- C. Few in such cases find the strength to break free & return home.

IV Some Prodigals Have Difficulty in Returning, Because People are Unforgiving.

- A. God will forgive those who genuinely repent & meet his terms (II Cor. 3:9).
- B. Not easy for those so hurt by one's sins to forgive & forget.
- C. Many prodigal husband or wife repent w/ bitter tears, but no amount of begging can put him back in the good graces of the mate and/or children who have been injured. Damage done is irreparable.

V Even a Returned & Forgiven Prodigal Must Live With the Scars of His Former Life Style

- A. Paul called himself "chief of sinners." (I Tim. 1:15).
- B. Some will have lingering guilt feelings, unable to forgive themselves, afraid someone will learn about their former life of sin.
- C. Prodigal may come home, but friends & neighbors won't forget. Would you want your dau. to date the son in 2K. 15?

D. Returned & forgiven, but:

1. Still thought of as a "Con".
2. People remember he used to be a homosexual
3. Health & emotions damaged by foolish indulgence. Maybe AIDS.

E. No Such Thing as Undoing the wrong.

VI Returned & Forgiven Prodigal Must Live w/ the Knowledge of the Shame & Hurt He Brought His Loved Ones.

A. Forgiven - never to mention it again.

B. But he knows he put the gray in the hair of that old daddy, or the furrow of grief in the face of that old mother.

C. Some prodigals ~~do~~ return too late to bring joy to those who love them most & who have been hurt the worst.

1. Maybe a mother who prayed daily for the return of her son, but died before he finally grew tired of sin.

2. Maybe a father, who was brought to an early grave with a broken heart because of a straying & prodigal daughter.

D. What a burden it is to know you have hurt those you loved most by your selfish & thoughtless conduct.

Conclusion

- I. The idea that one can go into the far country of sin, & stay as long as he wishes, & then return home, & live happily ever after, is a lie of the devil.
- II Gal. 6:7, 8 "Be not deceived. . . ."
- III No rational person ever regretted living an upright life. Multitudes have regretted ever going into the far country of sin.

PROFIT AND LOSS

Mark 8:36

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Some consider this question as an absolute conflict between material and spiritual things. Not so. Our Lord made the material things as well as the spiritual, and he knows the value of material things when properly used. In this question he is rather sounding a much-needed warning against the inordinate attachment to material things.

Money is a dominant power in this world, for good and for evil. To some it is a compromise of their character and a thief of their souls. To others it is an agency for great good, because they know how to use it for righteous purposes.

Jesus, then, is not saying that money is evil, or that it is evil to acquire money. Rather it is a question of values. Look with me at several things that will help us to understand better and appreciate more what our Lord is teaching us by asking the question, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

DISCUSSION

I. THE VALUE OF THE SOUL

- A. Seen in its origin and its image (Genesis 1:26).
 1. Made by God
 2. Made in his image. This is not talking about the physical image, but the spiritual.
- B. Seen in the price paid for its redemption. First Peter 1:18-19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"
- C. Seen in the contention of heaven and hell for it.
- D. Seen in the eternity of bliss or woe that awaits it.

II. THE DANGER OF LOSING THE SOUL

- A. The question Jesus asks, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" does not mean the soul can be annihilated, for the soul is immortal.
 1. Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
 2. Daniel 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
 3. Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 4. Second Thessalonians 1:9: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
- B. But the reference to the loss of the soul is to its loss of sonship with God and fellowship with God's family. Its loss of holiness, happiness, hope and heaven. It is the loss of God, God's protection, God's redemption, God's blessedness.
- C. The Scriptures testify to the certainty of this loss.
 1. Matthew 7:13: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."
 2. First 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."

3. Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 4. John 3:5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
 5. Psalm 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."
- D. Is it any wonder Jesus had the master of the house in the Parable of the Great Supper saying, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in..." (Luke 14:23)?
- E. How concerned the church should be about lost souls!
- F. How concerned you should be if your soul is lost!

III. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD"?

- A. Read the history of the centuries and see how men have lived and toiled to get, to win, to grasp to obtain what they call wealth, material values expressed in houses, lands, jewels, money, stocks, and bonds.
- B. It is said that Alexander the Great conquered the world, and then wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. He had not actually conquered the world; he had allowed his greed to conquer him.
- C. Suppose a man, in his desire to gain the world, could become possessed of health of body, vigor of mind, high official position, even the title of a king, the luxuries of the table, the most extensive opportunities for intellectual development, a cultivated taste for poetry, music, oratory, and the refinements of painting and sculpture, a palatial home in the midst of cheerful companions, with wine and women where he could have every desire satisfied in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. What would be his gain? Solomon had all these, and he said, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit!"
- D. Solomon also said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

IV. JESUS TALKS ABOUT PROFIT AND LOSS

- A. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"
- B. Every business man knows the difference between gross receipts and profit. If he should confuse the two he would be in trouble. He knows he cannot calculate profit without considering cost.
- C. The devil has been successful in confusing the minds of men and women down through the centuries, making them confuse gross receipts and profit, and causing them to forget that all-important factor, cost.
 1. Did Adam gain anything by eating the forbidden fruit? Yes. He gained the knowledge that he was naked, and he gained the approval of the devil. But look what he lost: Paradise and the tree of life.
 2. Did Cain gain anything in killing his brother Abel? Yes. He gained revenge, but he lost God's favor.
 3. Did Lot gain anything by pitching his tent toward Sodom? Yes. He increased his physical wealth temporarily. But he finally lost it all along with his wife and at least two of his precious children.
 4. Did Achan gain anything by his theft when Jericho was overthrown? Yes. A golden wedge, some silver, and a Babylonish garment. But look what he lost: his life.
 5. Did Ahab gain anything in allowing Naboth to be murdered? Yes. A vineyard. But he lost life and his wife.
 6. Did Belshazzar gain anything by that lascivious feast in which he and his guests drank from the holy vessels from the temple of God? Yes. He gratified his sensuality. But he lost his life,

- his soul, and his kingdom.
7. Did Gehazi gain anything by lying to Naaman? Yes. Two talents of silver and two changes of garments. But lost his health and became a leper for the rest of his life.
 8. Did Judas Iscariot gain anything by betraying Christ? Yes. Thirty pieces of silver. But lost his life and his soul.
 9. Did Ananias and Saphira gain anything by lying about their giving? Yes. The prestige of having given a liberal gift. But they lost their lives and their souls.
 10. Did the rich farmer of Luke 12 gain anything by keeping everything for himself? Yes. One day of ease. But he lost his life and his soul.
 11. Did Herod gain anything by appearing before the people in shining raiment? Yes. The blasphemous applause of the people. But he lost his life and his soul.
- D. All of these gained something. But in doing so, they lost ever so much more than they gained. So it is with thousands living today.
1. The drunkard and the drug abuser gain a feeling of exhilaration (I am told), but they lose their self-respect, their self-control, and sometimes their friends and family members, not to mention their souls.
 2. The young person begins smoking cigarettes to gain the approval of his peer group. But it costs him not only a fortune in money over the period of a lifetime, but also his health and his good influence, and likely even his soul.
 3. The young woman who wears immodest apparel gains the satisfaction of being in style, of attracting attention to herself, of receiving the admiring glances of members of the opposite sex. But she loses her good influence, the approval of God, maybe even her virtue, and, if she does not repent, eventually her soul.
 4. The fornicator and adulterer gains the immediate gratification of his fleshly lust. But in doing so loses his self-respect, the respect of others, often his family, and his soul.
- E. Men and women today are enjoying their quest for gain, and they are accumulating much, but at the cost of their souls. When they come to the end of the day and start to balance their books, they will recognize not only the fact that they have failed to show a profit, but that their losses are so great that they can never overcome them.

V. "WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?"

- A. In the next verse following our text Jesus said, "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
- B. In the days of slavery men, women, and children were sold for various prices. What would you take for your child? Your sight? Your hearing? Your speech? This helps to see the difference between material things and things that are of real value. Some things money cannot buy.
- C. In South America there is a plant called the "Matador," which means "murderer." It climbs and strangles great trees little by little. Materialism does that. It is a murderer.
- D. John Ruskin tells of a man abandoning a sinking ship who tied around his waist 200 gold coins. He then adjusted the life preserver, slipped into the water, and sank to the bottom. Ruskin then asks, "Now, did he have the gold, or did the gold have him?" So it is with the material possessions of so many.
- E. The newspaper carried the story of a woman who moved her furniture out of her burning house, only to remember too late that she had forgotten to save her baby. How foolish the choices are we sometimes make.
- F. A very wealthy Texas farmer told me shortly after his son died with a heart attack--both father and son were unfaithful church members--"I have wasted my life." He had gained much, but had forgotten to count the cost as he was going through life.

CONCLUSION

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

This is one of the greatest questions ever asked. It is a challenge to every person who is neglecting his soul, either by putting off his obedience to the gospel, or, as a church member, by failing to give the kingdom of God first place in his life.

I challenge you to make this question of our Lord a personal question. If you have not become a Christian by obeying the gospel of Christ, do it now. If you, as a Christian, have neglected your soul and spiritual matters, make the necessary corrections now. Second Corinthians 6:2 says, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

The Providence of God

Literally, the provide-⁻¹ence of God. Word signifies "foresight". It has to do with God's intervention in the affairs of men.

Discussion

I. False Ideas About God's Intervention

A. Deism - the idea that God in no way intervenes. He created the world, but has exercised a "hands-off" policy ever since.

1. This refuses to recognize the Bible as a revelation of God, the deity of Jesus, the atonement, the efficacy of prayer, etc.

2. We cannot accept this philosophy

a. It makes no sense

b. It attacks God's love, mercy, benevolence, etc.

c. It denies scripture + leaves no explanation ^{"THE MOST"} for the events of history. (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32).

B. Calvinism - the idea that everything, to the most minute detail, is foreordained and predestinated.

1. This makes God responsible for every bad thing that happens. Man is a mere robot, without the power to choose.

2. Josh. 24:15; II Pet. 3:9

C. Pentecostalism - every favorable event that transpires in the life of the Christian is miraculous.

1. Miracles were done in the creation & in revealing & confirming God's will. They have ceased.
2. But akin to this is the idea that every good thing that happens is a direct intervention of God. Praying for a parking place, & then for a dime to put in it.

II Principles for Understanding God's Providence

A. God's providence operates in harmony with His nature

~~His nature~~

1. He is holy (Isa. 6:3), & righteous (Ps. 89:14).
2. He never tempts people to do evil (Jas. 1:13, 14).
3. Ro. 9:17 ("raised up & raised up") must be interpreted in this light.

B. God's providence operates in harmony with his revealed will.

1. God has revealed the conditions for rem. of alien sins (Mk. 16:16; Ac. 2:38)
2. One should not surmise that God's providence saved him in some other way.

C. God's Providence Does Not Negate Man's Freedom of Will.

1. God will not coerce one to do good or evil
2. But he can use either in his providence to accomplish his purpose
 - a. Used Assyrian as an instrument of punishment upon Israel
(Isa. 10:5-7)

5 ¶ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

b. Used Babylonians (Chaldeans) to punish Judah (Hab. 1:5, 6, 11)

5 ¶ Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

6 For, lo, I raise up the Chāl-dē'āns, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs.

11 Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

c. Raised up Pharaoh to show his power (Ex. 9:16)

d. Paul & Barnabas rejoiced how God had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Ac. 14:27)

D. The Providential Must Be Distinguished from the Miraculous.

1. A miracle is God's working outside the realm of natural law. Accomplishing what cannot be accomplished in any natural way.
2. The birth of Jesus was miraculous; the birth of Samuel was providential.
3. The smiting of 185,000 soldiers in Assyrian army under King Sennacherib was a miracle (Isa. 37); The death of Sennacherib himself was providence (Isa. 37:7)

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

4. By miracle the death of Ahab was prophesied; by providence it came to pass as prophesied (1K. 21-22)

E. In Providence, God Works Behind the Scenes

1. Miracles are obvious demonstrations of divine intention; providence is not "provable" as such
2. Cannot say: "I know this thing is an act of God's providence."
3. Can say: "I know God's providence is at

work in the lives of his people, because the Bible teaches it." But no specific happening can be said certainly to be providential.

4. Just like prayer.
5. "God Amid the Shadows" is a book written by Leslie D. Thomas on the book of Esther, the only book of the Bible in which is no direct reference to God. "And who knoweth whither thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Conclusion

We sometimes marvel at what God did by miracles in Bible times. It is even more marvelous to consider what God did w/out miracles in Bible times.

The God of Scripture is the God of History. He is not merely the God of the past; he is the God of the present.

Ephesians 4:20 says, "Now unto him that is able to do. . . ."

RESULTS OF IGNORING THE FAITH

Jude 1-25

Book of Jude reads as if it might have been written yesterday. Is relevant to the society in which we live, and especially to the situation in the church of our Lord.

Author identifies self as "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Was actually the brother of Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary. But there is a relationship more important than flesh and blood, that is, a spiritual relationship.

Written to those sanctified, preserved, and called. His desire for them was that mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto them.

Verse 3 tells the need for what he is writing in this epistle, and verse 4 tells why this need has arisen.

My assignment, "Results of Ignoring the Faith," is set forth in verses 5-16, and these verses make it clear that apostasy always results from ignoring the faith. Notice how the inspired writer develops this theme in some of the most impressive language you will find anywhere.

DISCUSSION

I. JUDE LISTS THREE GROUPS TO ILLUSTRATE THE DANGER OF APOSTASY.

- A. The people who came out of Egyptian bondage (verse 5).
 1. They were idolaters, fornicators, murmurers, and they rebelled against God in refusing to enter Canaan.
 2. Jude summed all this up by saying they "believed not." Our departures from God are a demonstration of our lack of faith.
 3. The same God who saved them destroyed them when they sinned. (Rom. 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and" II Cor. 5:11: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord")
 4. Have we, while thinking about the marvelous love, mercy, and grace of God, overlooked the terror and the severity of God?
- B. The angels which kept not their first estate (verse 6).
 1. Were not satisfied with the station God assigned to them. "Left their own habitation."
 2. How many problems in the world, the home, the church are caused by those who want to put themselves into positions God never assigned them.
- C. Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them (verse 7).
 1. "Giving themselves over to fornication"—has America done that? More and more we are hearing of preachers, elders, deacons, and their wives who ruin their lives and bring shame on the church by committing fornication.
 2. "And going after strange flesh"—a clear reference to homosexuality.
 3. Here again is a situation in which people were not satisfied with God's arrangement. The sooner we realize that God made us and knows what is best for us, the better off we will be.

II. JUDE LISTS THREE INDIVIDUALS TO ILLUSTRATE DIFFERENT REASONS FOR APOSTASY.

- A. Cain. His sin was a presumptuous sin. (Cf. Ps. 19:13.) Presumption is the sin of the new hermeneutic.
- B. Balaam. His sin was covetousness.
 1. Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5).
 2. Listed in Romans 1:29 in the most ugly catalog of sins to be found in print.
 3. Balaam was one who would sell his preaching to the highest bidder, and preach it just like those who bought him wanted it. Do we have preachers like that today? (II Tim. 4:2-4).
 4. Look at verse 16: "These are murmurers, complainers"

- C. Korah. His sin was in his ambition for preeminence. (Cf. III John 9.)
 - 1. When a church splits, look closely, and you will usually find a Korah, a Diotrephes—one who loves to have the preeminence.
 - 2. I Pet. 5:6: "Humble yourselves therefore under the"
 - 3. Luke 14:11: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be"

III. JUDE LISTS THREE CATEGORIES OF APOSTASY.

- A. "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh"
- 1. That is, they gratified every lust and desire of the flesh. Look at verse 16: "walking after their own lusts," and verse 18: "who should walk after their own ungodly lusts."
- 2. Is that not one of the greatest problems in the church today? People think they are to follow wherever the lusts and desires of the flesh may lead. They let the world cut for them a pattern for living (Rom. 12:1-2; I John 2:15-17).
- 3. Do you see why I said it reads as if it were written yesterday?
- B. "These filthy dreamers . . . despise dominion."
- 1. Lawlessness is rampant in our country. It is fashionable to protest and violate any law one does not like.
- 2. This attitude pervades the thinking of so many in the church. They somehow think God has no right to restrict them without their permission. "Don't fence me in" attitude.
- 3. Some think liberty in Christ means no restrictions. Liberty has never meant that in any area of our lives. In fact, those under the greatest bondage are those who have thrown off all restrictions.
- 4. Gal. 5:13: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for"
- 5. Gal. 6:2: "Bear ye one another's"
- 6. Jas. 1:25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of"
- 7. Yes, the New Testament is the constitution for the church.
- C. "These filthy dreamers . . . speak evil of dignities." Literally, "blaspheme glories."
- 1. These would speak against dignities, both earthly and heavenly, in a way in which Michael the archangel would not even speak against the devil.
- 2. Maybe this is the basis for the poet's words: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

IV. JUDE MENTIONS FIVE METAPHORS IN DESCRIBING APOSTATES AND THEIR FATE.

- A. Spots in your feasts of charity . . . feeding themselves without fear.
 - 1. Rocks in with the beans.
 - 2. Brazenly feeding themselves, instead of others. Selfish.
- B. Clouds without water, carried about of winds.
 - 1. Great promise, but no performance. Might furnish a shade for a moment, but no permanent good.
 - 2. False teachers with their soothing words, but it all has to do with the temporary. The here and now. Ill: Man called and said he wanted to know what has happened to the church. Said all he hears is how to feel good about yourself, how to have a good self-image, how to get along with your friends, etc. All good, but no eternal good.
- C. Dead, fruitless fruit trees.
 - 1. Had fruit at one time, but now "trees whose fruit withereth."
 - 2. No hope of any improvement: "twice dead, plucked up by the roots."
- D. "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." Impressive, huge, noisy, but soon nothing but foam.
- E. "Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Did you ever see a shooting star? Exciting, but gone in a moment forever. Too many preachers trying to make a big splash, or to be exciting, but provide no permanent good.

- V. JUDE CITES A PROPHECY CONCERNING THE IMPENDING JUDGMENT OF ALL APOSTATES.
- A. Enoch, the seventh from Adam (to distinguish him from a son of Cain by the same name, Gen. 4:17), prophesied of these.
 - B. Was Enoch a prophet? This says he was.
 - C. How accurate was his prophetic utterances? Remember, he was the father of Methuselah. Do you know what the name Methuselah means? "He dieth when the flood cometh." Have you ever sat down to calculate the ages of the patriarchs and when they died?
 - D. If Enoch hit the nail on the head in naming his son 969 years before the flood came, then he won't miss this one either.

CONCLUSION

What was true when Jude wrote his short epistle is true today. The warning of this epistle is crystal clear: You cannot apostatize and get by.

But God can keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory, if you will allow him to do so.

OVERVIEW

THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION**An Overview**

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9). This often read and applied to Heaven, but it is talking about the fact that, during the period of the Old Testament, before the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through his inspired apostles and New Testament prophets, God's great Scheme of Redemption was still a mystery.

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. They are all centered around God's love for man as it is set forth in his plan of saving man from sin. The Bible is divided into two major divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Each part of the Bible serves its own distinct purpose, while each part is an essential part of the whole.

The Bible begins with the creation of the heaven and earth and all things in them, including the first man and the first woman. All things were good. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good...." (Genesis 1:31). But God's goodness was sidetracked when Adam and Eve rejected God's command to them and obeyed Satan instead.

In this lesson we will take a look at the Bible in a panoramic sort of way. I hope this will help us all have a greater appreciation for God's revelation, and a desire to want to know more about it and to live in harmony therewith.

DISCUSSION**I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL THEME OF THE BIBLE**

- A. Bible tells about the two greatest tragedies of all time:
 1. The entrance of sin into the world. "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" (Romans 5:12).
 2. The crucifixion of the Son of God, the only person ever to live on the earth without any sin, and who did not deserve to die. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).
 3. Yet in view of our sins, it would have been tragic if he had not been crucified, for we could not have been forgiven.
- B. Atonement for sin begins with the blood of animals, and ends with the blood of Christ.
 1. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).
 2. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4).
 3. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5).
- C. Worship began in the Old Testament at the altar where God met the worshiper. Then worship moved to the tabernacle, a portable tent which moved from place to place with the people of God. Later the temple was built in Jerusalem, a permanent structure where God met the worshiper. Worship has its climax in the spiritual body of Christ, his church, which is said to be the house

of God (I Timothy 3:15).

- D. The home for man was at first a beautiful Garden of Eden, with the tree of life in the midst. Because of sin, Adam and Eve were driven out. God later promised a home to Abraham and descendants in the land of Canaan. The Israelites enjoyed the homeland of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey. But their sins also caused them to lose that home. God's promise of a home to his people now is of a home in heaven, a city described as having a street of gold, gates of pearl, and walls of jasper, with the tree of life restored. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).
- E. The paradise of Eden, lost because of sin, is regained for the faithful by virtue of the atonement made for sin by Jesus Christ.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The five Books of Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
 - 1. The creation, and the fall of man. But as soon as man sinned, God promised the Redeemer: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Man's sin did not catch God unawares.
 - 2. The call of Abraham, to come out of Ur and live in Canaan. To him God promised: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3).
 - 3. The development of the Israelite nation down in Egypt, and the deliverance from Egyptian bondage by the hand of Moses.
 - 4. It was by Moses also that God gave his law to the Jewish nation. That law is referred to as the "law of Moses," but it is also called "the law of God."
 - a. Nehemiah 8:1 says, "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel."
 - b. Then verse 8 says, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."
 - 5. From the creation to the giving of the law by Moses was about 2500 years.
- B. The next twelve books of the Old Testament, Joshua through Esther, are books of history.
 - 1. They tell about the leadership of Joshua, the successor to Moses, who led the Jews in conquering the land of Canaan. God gave them vineyards and oliveyards they had not planted.
 - 2. These books tell about the period of the judges, such as Gideon, Samson, and Samuel.
 - 3. They tell also about the kings, such as David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Hezekiah, and Ahab.
 - 4. They tell about the kingdom's becoming divided, and about God's blessing the faithful and punishing the disobedient.
- C. The next five books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are books of song and poetry about the redemption of God's people. Through all of these books runs the thread of the Christ who would come and make forgiveness possible by his suffering and death on the cross.
- D. The next seventeen books are prophetic in nature.
 - 1. The Old Testament prophet was both a foreteller and a forthteller.
 - a. He foretold the future

- b. He was also a preacher for the people of his own time, telling them God's will.
- 2. Some few of the many remarkable prophecies of the Old Testament:
 - a. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).
 - b. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).
 - c. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3).
 - d. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).
 - e. There are many others, such as the prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter in Acts 2, concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh.
- 3. The very last paragraph in the Old Testament reads as follows: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5-6). Notice the last word in the Old Testament is the word *curse*, and if there were no New Testament, then that curse would rest upon us all.

III. AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are four different accounts of the life of Jesus, with emphasis upon the fact that he is the Son of God, as is proved by his resurrection from the dead.
 - 1. He fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Christ.
 - 2. The religious Jews reject Jesus. They are still looking for one to come to be their Christ, the Messiah. But they have a dilemma: one could not come and more completely fulfill the prophecies.
 - 3. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).
- B. The Acts of the apostles tells of the setting up of the church, and of its early growth and spread throughout the first-century world.
 - 1. Within less than twenty-five years after the church was set up the apostle Paul was able to write that the gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven.
 - 2. This book also furnishes all the examples of conversion. To see clearly what people did to become Christians in the New Testament, read this book.
- C. Romans through Jude are letters or epistles written to individuals and to churches to teach them how to live and to correct their errors. At least thirteen of them were written by Paul. Other writers were Peter, James, John, and Jude. These books are very valuable to us in living the Christian life. They let us know that the early Christians had problems, just as do we, and they let us know how to deal with those problems. They also furnish much encouragement for living the

Christian life.

- D. The book of Revelation is a book of prophecy to let those Christians in the first century (and we know that God is in charge).
1. It was probably written shortly before the Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.
 2. At the time it was written, the author said, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Revelation 1:1).
 3. While the things in the book were to come to pass shortly, like all the other books written to first century Christians, it has an application to us also.
 - a. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).
 - b. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).
 - c. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).
 - d. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

CONCLUSION

Now look again at our text: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9). The next verse says, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

All the blessings offered in God's great Scheme of Redemption are found and enjoyed in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Not one of these blessings is available to those out of Christ.

If you are in Christ, aren't you thankful? If you are not in Christ, there is only one way to get into Christ, and that is stated in Romans 6:3: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

SOME PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURAL GIVING

We live in a commercially oriented society. Most of us enjoy a high standard of living, which we pay for with dollars earned usually by long hours of hard work. Everywhere we turn someone is trying to convince us we really need the product of service he is offering—for a price, of course. Consequently we have conditioned ourselves to be very wary, or cautious, or on guard with reference to any discussion that centers around opening our wallets or our checkbooks. If such were not the case, one could be ruined financially in a few days.

Unfortunately this conditioning, this wariness, this sales resistance carries over into the religious realm. This even keeps some from obeying the gospel of God; they ~~think~~ we are trying to "sell them a bill of goods." And it keeps some from benefitting from Bible teaching on the subject of stewardship. How unfortunate that we allow our sales resistance shield to keep us from receiving the benefits and blessings that come to those who have a mature understanding and appreciation of the principles of stewardship taught in God's book, the Bible.

As we study the subject of stewardship, please try to be very objective. (I didn't say "objecting.") Forget about yourself and your practice with reference to giving, and let us see just what the Bible teaches. What you may do about it is another matter. That can be decided later, when we have all the facts. Right now we just want to see what the word of God teaches, just as we would want our non-Christian friends to examine the word of God with reference to the subject of baptism.

DISCUSSION

I. OUR GIVING BENEFITS US, NOT GOD

- A. Like everything else God has taught us to do.
- B. True, God's plan for financing his work is through our giving, but he arranged it that way for our benefit. He could have done it otherwise, but chose to do it this way.
- C. Yes, the poor and needy, those who are having the gospel preached to them, both here and in other places, children who learn about the Bible all benefit from our giving. But the greatest benefit is ours. (Acts 20:35 "I have showed 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.")
- D. Who benefited by:
 - 1. Abraham's offering Isaac (Gen. 22)?
 - 2. Offerings made to build the tabernacle (Ex. 36:5-7)?
 - 3. The selling of possessions and goods (Acts 2:45) and houses and lands (4:34-37), and giving it?
 - 4. The giving of the widow's mites (Mark 12:41-42)?
 - 5. The giving of the Macedonians (II Cor. 8:1-4)?
- E. Make no mistake! God can and will use our gifts, be they ever so small in our own eyes (Cf. the widow's mites). But our giving is for our own blessing.

II. ONE CAN NEVER OUTGIVE GOD

- A. II Corinthians 9:7-8 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him

give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. {8} And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

- B. Ephesians 3:20 "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

III. GOD GIVES TO US IN PROPORTION TO THE WAY WE GIVE TO HIM

- A. II Corinthians 9:6-11 "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. {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. {8} And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: {9} (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. {10} Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) {11} Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." (I realize some of the TV con artists have perverted these verses and even caused some to deny the principle herein taught.)
- B. Who among us believes the poor widow of Mark 10 starved to death?
- C. I have never known one who practiced Scriptural giving to declare himself to be poorer as a result thereof. Have you?
- D. This is not to say that one can expect to be made materially rich by giving to God, as the TV con artists declare. It is to say that the principle of sowing and reaping applies in the spiritual realm also.

IV. ONE'S GIVING REFLECTS THE WAY HE FEELS ABOUT GOD

- A. What God gave reflects the way he feels about us. "For God so loved that he gave. . ." (John 3:16). Question: How do you know how much God loves you?
- B. Now look at the other side of the coin:
 1. II Corinthians 8:24 "Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf."
 2. II Corinthians 8:8 "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."
 3. Ill: Around Christmas time or on her birthday, tell your wife how much you love her, and convince her you are telling the truth, but if you give her a gift at all, let it be some little inexpensive trinket.

V. THERE ARE SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF SCRIPTURAL GIVING

- A. Scriptural giving is liberal giving.
 1. Romans 12:8 "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity [liberality, ASV]; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."
 2. II Corinthians 9:6 "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

- B. Scriptural giving is giving according to purpose.
 - 1. 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."
 - 2. II Corinthians 8:10 "And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago."
- C. Scriptural giving is cheerful giving.
 - 1. 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."
 - 2. II Corinthians 8:1-2 "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; {2} How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."
- D. Scriptural giving is from the heart.
 - 1. 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."
 - 2. Love is the motive (John 3:16).
- E. Scriptural giving is regular giving.
 - 1. I Corinthians 16:1-2 "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. {2} 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."
 - 2. Weymouth's translation: "On the first day of every week"
 - 3. "Every Sunday, let each one of you . . ." --McCord's translation
 - 4. When I am away on a given Sunday, I am still obligated to give.
- F. Scriptural giving is personal giving.
 - 1. I Corinthians 16:2 "Upon the first day of the week let every one"
 - 2. Yes, husband and wife may combine their contribution in one check, but each should have a part in deciding the amount.
- G. Scriptural giving is giving according to one's prosperity.
 - 1. I Corinthians 16:2 "Upon the first day of the week let every one"
 - 2. Does your giving reflect your prosperity? Multiply what you give by ten, and see if you think you could live on that.

CONCLUSION

This lesson is designed to teach Bible facts about giving. Have I taught anything other than Bible facts?

We have many very conscientious and liberal givers at Adamsville. I believe we will all do better when we are taught better on any subject.

SIN

This little three-letter word is not being used very much these days. It may not be long until the dictionary will list this word as being archaic. The idea of sin is looked upon as being held only by the uncultured and unrefined. Refined and educated people prefer to think of one who is guilty of some misdeeds, not as a sinner, but as a victim of our society. He is simply reacting to his environment.

Nevertheless, the word of God is plain in dealing with this subject. We need to emphasize the teaching of the word of God on the subject of sin.

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT IS SIN?

- A. In the New Testament the word *sin* is translated from a Greek word which means "to miss the mark."
 1. Adam and Eve missed the mark when they ate the forbidden fruit.
 2. The people of Noah's day missed the mark when the imaginations of their hearts became only evil continually.
 3. David missed the mark when he committed adultery and murder.
 4. Ahab, Jezebel, Judas, Ananias and Saphira, Demas . . . all missed the mark.
- B. Sin is transgression of God's law. I John 3:4 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 1. For example, Gal. 5:19-21 "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."
 2. One does not have to commit every sin in the Bible to be a transgressor. James 2:10-11 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Brother Nichols used to illustrate it by saying a cow does not have to jump the fence at every post to be on the outside of the pasture.
- C. Sin is neglecting to do right.
 1. James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
 2. Neglecting to attend, pray, give, help needy, study, etc. is sin.
 3. In other words, one can sin by doing nothing. I am afraid many of us who would never become guilty of doing some bad thing might be lost simply for neglecting to do our duty.
- D. Sin may be of the body or of the mind. In other words, one may sin by doing certain deeds, or he may sin by simply by entertaining evil thoughts.

1. Matthew 5:27-28 "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
 2. Also I John 3:15 "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."
 3. Prov. 4:23 "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."
 4. Phil. 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."
- E. Sin may be moral or religious (or doctrinal) in nature.
1. People almost universally understand the violation of God's moral commands, such as those in the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not steal," or "Thou shalt not commit adultery," or "Thou shalt not kill."
 2. But there is little recognition, even among religious people of our day, of sins that are religious in nature.
 - a. The worship of Cain (Gen. 4).
 - b. The burning of incense by Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10).
 - c. Uzzah's touching the ark of the covenant (II Sam. 6).
 - d. The man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath (Num. 15).
 3. A failure to understand there is such a thing as religious (or doctrinal) sin has caused some to do nearly everything under heaven in the name of religion.
 4. It has caused some even in the church to ridicule the idea that the New Testament contains a pattern for the church, and to embrace as obedient children of God those in every kind of religious error.
 5. II Tim. 4:2 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
 6. II John 9-11 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
- F. God's word, the Bible, is the standard of right and wrong.
1. Acts 17:11 "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
 2. Psalms 119:128 "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."

II. SIN IS ALWAYS SIN.

- A. There is a popular idea that sin is not sin under certain circumstances. This is known as "situation ethics."

- B. Many very honest religious people became convinced that gambling and selling liquor is not sinful if it will provide more money for hospitals and schools. That is why these things are legalized.
- C. Four things we need to remember:
 - 1. It is always right to do right.
 - 2. It is always wrong to do wrong.
 - 3. It is never right to do wrong.
 - 4. It is never wrong to do right.
- D. All of this is not to say that good never comes from doing wrong, or that harm can never come from doing right. But it is always sin to do wrong, even if it is for a good cause.
 - 1. Gambling is wrong, whether in a casino, at the dog track, Bingo in the basement of a church to raise money for the church, or buying a chance on a TV for the benefit of the local PTA.
 - 2. Immodest apparel is wrong, whether in the super market, around the swimming pool, marching in front of a band, being judged in a beauty contest, or even on vacation.

III. SIN IS DECEPTIVE.

- A. Heb. 3:13 "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
- B. II Cor. 11:3 "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
- C. Eve was deceived into thinking the consequences of sin would be so very good (Gen 3:4-6). (See also I Timothy 2:14 "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.")
- D. Judas was deceived in thinking he would enjoy the reward he was given for betraying the Lord.
- E. The Prodigal Son was deceived into thinking riotous living was the way he wanted to live (Luke 15).
- F. Many a man, woman, boy, and girl wreck and ruin their lives because the devil has been successful in deceiving them and getting them to engage in sin.
 - 1. Homes broken
 - 2. Diseases contracted, such as AIDS
 - 3. Children left homeless
 - 4. Unwanted pregnancies
 - 5. Businesses bankrupted
 - 6. Lives destroyed

IV. SIN IS PROGRESSIVE.

- A. Psalms 1:1 "Blessed is the man that *walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *standeth* in the way of sinners, nor *sitteth* in the seat of the scornful."
 - 1. The late N. B. Hardeman used the illustration of a young man who curiously walks past one of the modern hell-holes. He wouldn't dare stop. Then he gets a little braver, and he stops and stands there. Then,

getting a little braver, he finally goes in and sits down to partake of the evil of that place.

2. He also said, "Did you ever watch a cow wade out into the creek in the hot summer? She goes a little way, and then stops. Then she goes a little deeper, and stops. She can't stand to jump in all at once, like a bullfrog." So it is that most people cannot stand jumping into sin all at once. They usually do it a little at a time.
- B. The man who becomes a car thief started out by stealing candy bars.
- C. The man who is convicted for embezzling a quarter million dollars started out by cheating on his income tax.
- D. The man who becomes an adulterer started out by being too friendly with some woman.
- E. The man who is an alcoholic began by taking just a few social drinks.
- F. The present liberal movement in the church was started by some who simply wanted to compromise the pulpit, and quit preaching sermons that caused members of the church to feel guilty because of their sins.
 1. It progressed to the point that religious error was not to be condemned. After all, we did not want to offend our denominational friends. Some preachers were told not to use the word *denomination* in the pulpit.
 2. Then some began to proclaim that all who have been immersed to please God, even if they did not know it was to be saved, are our brethren.
 3. Then faith in the deity of Christ became the only test of fellowship.
 4. Now it has come to the point that at least one church in Alabama and one in Tennessee are meeting with various denominations for worship, without ever putting forth any effort to get them to obey the truth.

V. THE REMEDY FOR SIN IS THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

- A. Heb. 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
- B. This remedy must be applied, and the only way to apply it is obedience to the gospel. Heb. 5:8-9 "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
- C. Obedience to the gospel includes faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins.

CONCLUSION

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SIN THE SEPARATOR

Isaiah 59:1-2

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

This passage talks about the separation from God which sins brings. In Genesis 2:17, separation from God is referred to as death: *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* In I Timothy 5:6 Paul wrote: *"But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."* That means she is cut off from God--separated.

Sin has been called the Great Separator. Someone has said that man's highest good is communion or fellowship with God. That being the case, man's worst state is being cut off from that communion or fellowship with God. That means that if the pleasures of sin were ten thousand times greater than they are, and if those pleasures were permanent instead of "for a season," it would still be extremely foolish for man to live in sin and separation from God.

I want you to think with me about Sin, the Great Separator. You see, sin not only separates one from God. It also separates one from:

DISCUSSION

I. THE CHURCH, THE FAMILY OF GOD

A. When a child of God persists in sinful living, it is the duty of the church to exclude that one from its fellowship.

1. II Thess. 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
2. Rom. 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."
3. I Cor. 5:4-5: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." In verse 11 he adds: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

B. Not only so, but sin in one's life will make him uncomfortable in the company of those who are living as God would have them live.

C. One who lives in sin drives a wedge, perhaps ever so slowly, between himself and those who are serving the Lord. Sin is the Great Separator.

II. HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN (OR HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN)

A. Statistics concerning the number of divorced people and children living with

one parent and separate from the other are alarming. In every case (except those where one parent has died) sin is directly responsible.

- ① Either the sin of adultery, which gives the innocent party the right to divorce and remarry (Matt. 19:9), or
- ② Sins of violence or cruelty, which make it impossible for one to continue married and at the same time live the Christian life, or
- ③ The sin of one who simply decides to call it quits, and demands a divorce, even though there has been no unfaithfulness on the part of the spouse. This one nearly always winds up committing adultery, either by promiscuous living, or by entering into an unscriptural marriage, which amounts to the same thing.
- ⓑ Many husbands and wives become careless in their associations with members of the opposite sex, and never intend to commit sin. But in the end they sin, and their sins eventually break up their homes, and they lose their families.
- ⓒ It was sin that put Lot in the position that caused the loss of at least two of his daughters and his wife when Sodom was destroyed (Gen. 19).
- D. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate one from his family.

III. HIS JOB

- A. Luke 16:1-2 tells of a certain steward who lost his job because he had wasted his master's goods.
- B. How many men and women have lost their jobs because of sin of one kind or another? How many have been terminated because they:
 - 1. Were dishonest? Defrauded their employer, stole from the company for which they worked? (Eph. 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.")
 - 2. Became guilty of some sexual immorality?
 - 3. Were lazy? I Thess. 4:11: "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." II Thess. 3:10: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."
 - 4. Were guilty of drunkenness? How many men and women have lost lucrative positions or jobs because of drunkenness?
- C. Sin, the Great Separator, has caused many to lose their jobs.

IV. HIS MONEY

- A. Remember the line in the story of the Prodigal Son: "And when he had spent all"
- B. This is the story of sin.
 - 1. The drunkard spends the money his children need for food, clothing, and shoes on booze.
 - 2. The gambler's children suffer in the same way.
- C. God has not promised his children they will be rich in this world's goods, but he has said: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).
- D. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate a man from his money.

V. HIS GOOD NAME

- A. Prov. 22:1: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."
- B. ~~For years I published articles in Words of Truth and in Vigil by some men whose names were known and loved. I now no longer publish articles by some of those men, because they have allowed sin to separate them from their good names.~~
- C. ~~What do you think of when you hear the name Michael Jackson? Magic Johnson? Pete Rose?~~
- D. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate one from his good name.

VI. HIS GOOD HEALTH

- A. Righteous living does not guarantee good health; many good people suffer from poor physical health. Regardless of how upright our lives, we must all die. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
- B. But living in certain kinds of sin is certain to hasten poor physical health, and even death.
 - 1. For example, drinking alcoholic beverages causes sclerosis of the liver, as well as accidents that cripple and kill.
 - 2. Smoking cigarettes causes lung cancer and heart problems.
 - 3. The AIDS epidemic has been brought on by sexual sins, especially homosexuality.
- C. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate one from his good health.

VII. THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

- A. Prov. 28:9 says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."
- B. John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."
- C. Matt. 7:7-11: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"
- D. What a wonderful privilege some lose because of sin!
- E. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate one from his privilege of prayer.

VIII. HIS GOOD CONSCIENCE

- A. Acts 24:16: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."
- B. I Tim. 1:5 talks about "charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience."
- C. I Ti. 3:9: "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."
- D. Some even have their "conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:2).
- E. Even after David was forgiven, his conscience still bothered him. He wrote: "My sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3).
- F. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate one from his good conscience.

IX. HIS FREEDOM

- A. There is no doubt in my mind that people in the United States love and appreciate freedom more than any other people. Talking about political freedom.
- B. But our prisons are filled to overflowing with those who have been separated from their freedom by their sins.
- C. But there is another kind of prison to which sin confines one. I refer to the bondage of sin itself.
 - 1. The man (or woman) who drinks is exercising his freedom. But soon he has lost his freedom not to drink.
 - 2. The man who smokes is exercising his freedom. But soon . . .
 - 3. The man who gambles is exercising his freedom. But soon . . .
 - 4. Same with the adulterer, thief, etc,
- D. The more one sins, the less resolve he has not to sin.
- E. Romans 6:16-18: *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."*
- F. But even after sins are forgiven, one will have difficulty breaking free from the bondage into which his sin has led him.
- G. Sin, the Great Separator, will separate one from his freedom.

X. HEAVEN

- A. Rev. 21:27: *"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."*
- B. I Cor. 6:9: *"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."*
- C. Gal. 5:19-21: *"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."*

CONCLUSION

As you look at sin and see it as the Great Separator, are you not made to wonder how anyone could obtain his own heart's consent to live a life of sin? God, through his Son Jesus Christ, has made it possible for all of us to rid ourselves of the guilt of sin. This is done through our obedience to the gospel of Christ. As terrible as sin is, we can rid ourselves of its guilt by faith, repentance, confession and baptism. And then having done so, we can keep ourselves free from the guilt of sin by living the Christian life and by claiming the benefits of Christ's blood to cleanse us from our sins when we fail to measure up to the Lord's perfect standard.

SOME HAVE GONE OUT FROM AMONG US

I John 2:15-19

"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. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

There has likely never been a time since John penned these words when what he says in these verses was not applicable. But it seems certain there has never been a time when the things said here were more applicable than they are right now.

These verses call to mind certain questions:

I. WHY HAVE SOME GONE OUT FROM AMONG US?

- A. It is significant that warnings about the world and worldly things come just before statements about those who have gone out (15-17).
- B. Other warnings about the world: Jas. 4:4; Rom. 12:1-2.
- C. Would be good if all those bent on loving the world would get out of the church, but such is not the case. Some will stay in the church and bring the world into the church.
- D. True even with preachers. Is this not the reason for the efforts of the present liberal movement in the church?
 1. Trying to justify the instrument. Appeals to the flesh.
 2. The "new" pronouncements about grace. Appeals to the flesh.
 3. The so-called "New Hermeneutic." Removes restrictions God has placed upon us, and thus appeals to the flesh.
 4. The Willow Creek Church is held up as a pattern for us to follow to stimulate church growth. But every practice of that church which is pointed out as a reason for its growth is something that appeals to the flesh. (Cf. Gal. 5:6-7.)
 5. Even the desire for church growth can be sinful, if that desire is simply to satisfy the ego of some preacher. And I suspect such is the case when I see preachers lowering the standard and recruiting members from faithful churches.
- E. "They were not of us."
 1. Means they did not possess the same spirit of humble obedience.
 2. This is the reason false teachers have gone out from among us today.

II. HOW HAVE SOME GONE OUT FROM AMONG US?

- A. By assaulting the Bible.
 - 1. As not being a message the common man can understand. (Eph. 3:2-4; John 7:17; Eph. 5:17.)
 - 2. As not being relevant to our time and culture. (Matt. 24:35.)
 - 3. As not being sufficient to provide every thing we need to enable us to do the will of God as we should. (II Pet. 1:3; II Tim. 3:16-17.)
- B. By perverting the Bible doctrine of grace. Two ways primarily:
 - 1. By insisting it reaches those out of Christ. (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9.)
 - 2. By teaching that grace covers the impenitent and high-handed sinner. (Rom. 6:1-2.)
- C. By denying the distinctive nature of the church of Christ.
 - 1. Some say they are members of the Church of Christ born of the American Restoration Movement.
 - 2. Some seem to be unable to refer to the church as being the church of Christ. Rather refer to "this fellowship" or "our fellowship."
- D. By circumventing the church in doing the work of the church.
- E. By making laws God has not made. (I Tim. 4:1-4.)

III. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE GONE OUT FROM AMONG US?

- A. Efforts should be made to restore them (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20).
- B. Their error should be exposed and refuted (II Tim. 4:2).
- C. Those who will not repent should be marked and avoided (Ro. 16:17).
- D. They must not be afforded our endorsement and encouragement (II Jno. 9-11).

CONCLUSION

A word of warning: Let us take care that we not make the mistake of thinking every brother who differs with us on any matter has gone "out from among us." It is tragic that some will consider a man unfaithful to Christ if he differs with them on the smallest of matters.

Let us also remember that great dictum of the Restoration Movement: "In faith, unity; in opinion, liberty; in all things, charity."

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"SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH"

I Tim 4:1-3

Reference is here made to the fact that some would depart from the faith. This is an inspired statement, and so we know it is true. But we would know this is true even if the Bible did not say it. History records the fact it has taken place time and time again.

In order to appreciate fully what this text says, and to understand its significance in our own time, let us ask and answer certain questions with reference to the declaration: "Some shall depart from the faith."

DISCUSSION**I. WHAT IS THE FAITH?**

- A. The faith is that body of revealed truth known as the New Testament, the gospel, the doctrine of Christ.
 - 1. Acts 6:7 says that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." That is, they were obedient to the gospel.
 - 2. In Acts 13, we read of Paul and Barnabas and their preaching the gospel to a certain man by the name of Sergius Paulus, who was the deputy of the country. Verse 8 says: "Elymas the sorcerer . . . withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." (From the gospel.)
 - 3. Acts 14:22 tells us that Paul and Barnabas exhorted the brethren to "continue in the faith."
 - 4. I Tim. 6:10 says of certain ones: "They have erred from the faith."
 - 5. I Cor. 16:13 says: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith"
- B. The word faith may refer to our belief of the gospel of Christ. But when the word is preceded by the article the ("the faith"), without other modifiers, it refers to that which is believed, that is, the New Testament.
- C. When the inspired writer of our text wrote, "Some shall depart from the faith," he was warning that some would depart from the gospel, the doctrine of Christ, the New Testament.

II. HOW MANY FAITHS ARE THERE?

- A. Eph. 4:4-6: "There is one body, and one"
- B. As proper to ask, "Of which Lord are you?" "Of which God?" "Of which Father?" as to ask, "Of which faith are you?"

III. IN WHAT WAYS DO PEOPLE DEPART FROM THE FAITH?

- A. By teaching doctrines out of harmony with the faith.
 - 1. I Tim. 4:1-3: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly"
 - 2. I Tim. 1:10 speaks of that which "is contrary to sound doctrine."
 - 3. II Tim. 4:2: "Preach the word"
- B. By engaging in religious practices not found authorized in the faith.
 - 1. Matt. 15:8-9: "This people draweth nigh"
 - 2. II John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth and"
- C. By engaging in immoral and worldly practices. One may teach the truth, and strictly adhere to the teaching of the N. T. in religious matters, but be cruel, unjust, unmerciful, unfair, dishonest, or immoral in any number of other ways. He has departed from the faith.

IV. HOW DO DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH TAKE PLACE?

- A. Generally they do not take place all at once. Little by little changes are made, and they are just slight departures, so that they are not very noticeable to any one generation.
 - 1. Like watching our children grow. We are with them every day and do not see the changes taking place. But what about that child you do not see for a year or two?
 - 2. Have been told it is possible to boil a frog alive without his ever trying to jump out of the pot, by just heating the water slowly.
- B. This is the way it was during the first few hundred years of the church's existence, until finally in 606 A. D. the first Pope was elected and the Roman Catholic Church was in full bloom.
- C. The Restoration Movement called men back to pure New Testament Christianity.
 - 1. History repeated itself when churches began moving in the instrument. This was just the beginning of a great departure from the faith which resulted in the Disciples of Christ denomination, which now admits to being a full-fledged denomination, with instrumental music, missionary societies, women preachers, etc.
 - 2. With some, history is repeating itself as they, little by little, drift away from the faith. (Heb. 2:1: "Therefore we ought to give" "lest haply we drift away from them" --ASV.)
- D. Moral decay comes in the same way. Such things as dancing, wearing shorts, public swimming, social drinking were once frowned upon by decent people of all religions. Now many in the church think nothing of engaging in these. And what is worse, many preachers have quit mentioning them at all.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
 As to be hated needs but to be seen;
 Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
 We first endure, then pity, then embrace.
 --Alexander Pope

V. HOW CAN DEPARTURES BE AVOIDED?

- A. By maintaining the proper attitude toward the Bible (II Tim. 3:16-17; I Peter 4:11; Jas. 1:25).
- B. By training our children (Prov. 22:6).
 - 1. Judges 2:7-12: "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers"
 - 2. In the mid 1970's brother Guy N. Woods preached in a meeting at Adamsville. He referred to this passage and then said:
 It's my conviction, friends, that we are in the second generation today. Why, there are those tonight who, under no conceivable circumstance, will ever renounce the truth for denominationalism in any form. We have been taught the truth, and we have it so deeply ingrained in our hearts and in our characters that there is no possible way by which we could be induced to give it up, or to renounce it.
 But in my view there is a real reason to be concerned about whether or not we are transmitting it to the next generation with the emphasis with which it came to us. We forget that in every generation the truth must be taught all over again, or apostasy results.

VI. WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THOSE WHO DEPART?

- A. We must restore them if possible (Gal. 6:1: "Brethren, if a man . . .").
- B. If our efforts to restore them fail, we must mark them and avoid them (Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which . . .").
- C. It is a mistake to ignore departures from the faith--to play like everything is all right. Like ignoring cancer, thinking if we pretend it's not there it will go away.

VII. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE BY THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED FROM THE FAITH?

- A. They should repent, confess their sins, and ask for God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of their brethren.
- B. There is no other way than God's way. Any effort to be restored in any other way is in itself a departure from the faith.

CONCLUSION

II Corinthians 13:5 says: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Are you in the faith? If not, now is the time to get in the faith.

STANDING ALONE WITH GOD

Second Timothy 4:16-17

While there are times when all of us need to be alone, most of us do not want to be alone all the time. We all have a great need for companionship. God said as much in Genesis 2:18: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

But down through the history of man, those who chose to put their confidence in God and follow the divine will have chosen a lonely pathway. Yet he who stands alone in the right is not alone--the Lord stands with him. Notice Paul's statement in Second Timothy 4:16-17: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

Notice with me some who have stood alone with the Lord.

DISCUSSION

I. NOAH STOOD ALONE WITH GOD

- A. He and his family were the only righteous people in his generation.
- B. Genesis 6:9: "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."
- C. Can you imagine how lonely they must have felt when the smoke of their little family altar represented the only acceptable worship being offered in the entire world?
- D. Can you imagine the ridicule and scorn they must have received from their neighbors while they were building the ark and worshipping the one true God.
- E. What about the temptations to join in with the crowd and do the things they were doing?
- F. Despite the course others followed, it is said of Noah in Genesis 6:22, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."
- G. No man stood with him, but he stood with God and God stood with him.

II. ABRAHAM STOOD ALONE WITH GOD

- A. Genesis 12:1: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:"
 1. How would you feel if you had to leave family and friends behind and permanently move into a strange country?
 2. Hebrews 11:8-9 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."
 3. How lonely he must have felt moving from place to place and living in a tent for a hundred years. But God was with him.
- B. Genesis 22:1-14 tells of Abraham's offering Isaac. Relate incident.
 1. Can you imagine the loneliness as he travelled toward Mount Moriah for three days. True, he was in the presence of Isaac his son and two servant lads, but they did not know what was about to take place.
 2. Think how alone he must have felt when, on that mountain top he stretched out his hand to pick up the knife to slay his son.
 3. But God walked with him every step of the way, and Abraham called that mountain top Jehovah-jireh, thus acknowledging the presence of God.
- C. Abraham stood alone with God, and God stood with him.

III. JOSEPH STOOD ALONE WITH GOD**A. Genesis 37ff**

1. Think how he must have felt when he was being carried away in that Midianite caravan after being sold by his brothers.
2. The days, weeks, months while he was waiting patiently for his father to come and rescue him.
3. The lonely years after he realized his father was not going to come. The years as a slave in a foreign, heathen land. The prison years.

B. Others were serving idol gods. But Joseph stood alone in serving God.

C. No man stood with him during these lonely years, but the Lord stood with him every hour of the day and night.

IV. DANIEL STOOD ALONE WITH GOD

A. He had, as a child, been taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar's army when it overthrew Jerusalem. He was now in a strange land separated from mom and dad. Those with him were being fed a special diet upon orders of the king of Babylon. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).

1. What courage it took for him to refuse the diet the king prescribed and that others were eating.
2. But the Lord stood with him and blessed him through it all.

B. Later in Daniel 6 he stood alone with God. Relate the incident.

1. Could not God have heard his prayers if he closed his windows?
2. He may have been the only one who prayed during this time.
3. Can you imagine how alone he must have felt when they came and arrested him? How completely alone he must have felt when sentenced to be thrown in the den of lions?
4. But he stood alone for the right, and God stood with him.

V. SHADRACK, MESHACK, AND ABEDNEGO STOOD ALONE WITH GOD

A. Relate the incident in Daniel 3.

1. Could have said, "Look, we don't want to cause a scene."
2. "What harm will it do if we just bow down and just pretend to worship?"

B. But the law of God forbade their bowing down before images. Their allegiance was to one greater than any human king.

C. Others were bowing, but they refused. How alone they must have felt in this. But the Lord stood with them and delivered them.

VI. MICAHIAH STOOD ALONE WITH GOD

A. First Kings 22. Relate the incident.

1. Ahab had asked about four hundred prophets about going to fight against Ramoth in Gilead, and all of them had said, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."
2. At the insistence of Jehoshaphat Ahab sent for Micahiah, etc.

B. He was put in prison and fed bread and water. How alone he must have felt.

C. But he could not conform to the wishes of Ahab or the four hundred prophets.

D. He stood alone in saying Israel's army would be defeated and her king would be killed. But God stood with him.

VII. JESUS STOOD ALONE AT CALVARY

- A. All his disciples forsook him and fled. Matthew 26:56: "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."
 - 1. Can you imagine how alone he must have felt?
 - 2. Alone when he stood before the Sanhedren.
 - 3. Alone before Pilate, before Herod, and again before Pilate.
 - 4. Alone when they drove the nails into his hands and his feet.
- B. And then it got worse. Matthew 27:46: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
 - 1. He was suffering the punishment for my sins and yours, and that punishment involves "destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" (II Thessalonians 1:9).
 - 2. But the child of God will never have to say, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" for the Bible says in Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

CONCLUSION

Why is it that serving God so often causes one to have to stand alone? Because the child of God cannot do what the rest of the world does. He or she cannot talk as they talk, cannot dress as they dress, go where they go. Second Corinthians 6:17 says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

If your Christianity does not cause you to live a separated life, if it does not cause you sometimes to stand alone with God, you need to do some checking. Is it because your Christianity is so weak it allows you to go along with the crowd, even though the crowd is wrong? If so, that needs to be corrected. Now is the time.

WANTOGIV

THINGS THAT SHOULD MAKE US WANT TO GIVE

I sincerely believe that one of the greatest blessings that can come to a Christian is the blessing of a liberal soul. Proverbs 11:25 says, "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." In Acts 20:35 Paul quoted our Lord as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Many people have never learned the blessing connected to liberal giving. They have never been motivated to give. Have never experienced the real joy of liberality.

In this lesson I want you to consider with me some things in the Bible that should make us want to be liberal in our giving.

DISCUSSION

I. AN AWARENESS OF OUR STEWARDSHIP

- A. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25) illustrates our stewardship.
- B. Stewardship means we do not own anything; it all belongs to God.
- C. First Corinthians 4:7 contains a thought-provoking question: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"
- D. We may congratulate ourselves on our ability to make money, but notice Deuteronomy 8:18: "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day."
- E. Suppose everything I have belongs to Sam Willcut--the house I live in, the car I drive, every meal I eat he supplies. Suppose he places in my hands a certain amount of money, and says, "I will be calling for certain amounts of this from time to time." Sometime later he calls and says, "Bob, send me \$100." And I say, "Sam, I'm sorry, but I have some other obligations. I'm just going to send you \$25. Maybe I can do better a little later on."
- F. Notice this statement from God: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High" (Psalms 50:10-14).
- G. When one reaches the point he is fully aware of his stewardship, then giving becomes a joy.

II. BIBLE COMMANDS AND ADMONITIONS CONCERNING GIVING, AND THE ATTENDANT BLESSINGS

- A. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).
- B. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Corinthians 9:7-8).
- C. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).
- D. Even in Old Testament times: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

- E. These are only a few of the many.

III. BIBLE EXAMPLES OF LIBERALITY AND UNSELFISHNESS

- A. David: "And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver" (II Samuel 24:24).
- B. The Jews in giving materials to build the tabernacle (Exodus 35). Moses had to tell them to stop giving.
- C. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10).
- D. The Poor Widow (Mark 12:41-44): "She of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Do you think she starved to death?)
- E. The Jerusalem saints
1. Acts 2:44-45: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."
 2. Acts 4:34-35: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."
 3. Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37): "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."
- F. The churches of Macedonia (II Corinthians 8:1-5): "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to the power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 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."
1. They gave liberally, even though they were in deep poverty.
 2. They gave more than they were able.
 3. They were willing of themselves, without have to be begged and persuaded.
 4. They even begged the apostle to accept the gift in behalf of the poor in Jerusalem.
 5. They gave even more than Paul had hoped for.
 6. Their gave themselves to the Lord.
- G. Again, these are only a few of the many examples of unselfish liberality to be found in the Bible.

IV. A REALIZATION THAT COVETOUSNESS IS AN UGLY SIN

- A. Psalms 10:3 says the Lord abhors the covetous person.
- B. "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).
- C. Romans 1:29 lists covetousness along with other sins such as homosexuality, murder, and fornication.
- D. Colossians 3:5 says covetousness in idolatry.
- E. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).
- F. One of the main ways covetousness manifests itself is in a refusal to give liberally to the work of the Lord when the collection plate passes.
- G. Furthermore, covetousness is the only thing that can keep a person from giving liberally according to his prosperity.

V. SOME OTHER RELATED PASSAGES

- A. "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" (I Corinthians 16:1-2).
- B. "I have showed 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" (Acts 20:35).
- C. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:8-10).
 - 1. These Jews robbed God when they withheld what should have been offered in worship to him. What about us?
 - 2. They were suffering the consequences of their stinginess.
 - 3. God challenges them to put him to the test. They would have to have some faith in God to do what he said. So will you and I.
- D. "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" (Matthew 6:19-21). Liberal giving helps you get your heart into the work of the Lord.
- E. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). What is it you are investing your money in that is of greater value or importance than your soul and the souls of your children?

CONCLUSION

I sincerely believe that serious consideration of the things we have talked about this morning will make us all determine to be liberal givers. I have not mentioned as a reason why we should want to give the fact that our liberal giving is the only way the church at Adamsville can do the many great works we hope to do. God's plan for financing his work is by the liberal contributions of Christians upon the first day of the week. The eyes of the world look upon the religious works as a poor charity, free of taxation from the government, and riding on the shoulders of society, with bingo games, rummage sales, pie suppers, and begging from merchants. This is not God's plan. I'm glad the greatest work in the world has not been left to human schemes or hap-hazard chance. Christ is a perfect Savior, with a perfect plan of salvation, a perfect church, and a perfect plan for financing its endeavors. It will work if we will work it.

Let me ask you a question: Have you ever known anyone who has given liberally according his prosperity, and that consistently over a period of time, who regretted having done so, or who said he was unhappier and had less because of having done so? I never have, and I never expect to.

As stated before, the secret to liberal giving is found in Second 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." If you have not given yourself to the Lord, please do so now by obedience to the gospel of Christ, or by being restored.

If you are not giving liberally according to your prosperity, then you are missing out on the greatest blessings the Lord has to offer.

TRANSFIG

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

Matthew 17:1-9

An account of the transfiguration of Jesus is recorded by three of the gospel writers: Matthew, Mark and Luke. Our reading will come from Matthew 17:1-9:

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

There are many valuable lessons in connection with this incident. Perhaps that is why the Holy Spirit had it recorded three different places in the N. T. Notice some of these lessons:

DISCUSSION

- I. **ONLY PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN WERE TAKEN INTO THE MOUNTAIN TO WITNESS THIS EVENT.**
 - A. This is not the first time these three had been especially privileged in this way. In Mark 5 they were selected to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and it was they who were taken further into the garden of Gethsemane than were the rest of the disciples (Matthew 26:37).
 - B. Why? We are not told.
 1. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).
 2. A good guess would be that these three could keep a secret, and this event and the raising of Jairus's daughter were not to be told until later.
 - C. Could the Lord put confidence in you to keep to yourself something that does not need to be told? Are you the kind of person people can confide in?
 1. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:16).
 2. "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverbs 11:13).
 3. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37).
 4. "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20).
 - D. Some witnesses were needed for this event, so it could be proclaimed when the complete gospel began to be preached, but these witnesses were told not to tell what they had seen until after the resurrection. Why not tell it immediately?
 1. Perhaps their lack of understanding of its significance would make it unwise.
 2. Their account might not be believed, even by other disciples. After Pentecost, their testimony

could be confirmed by miracles.

3. The circulation of such a story would likely intensify opposition on the part of Jewish leaders

II. THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

- A. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"
 1. There is a sense in which all who are obedient to God are his children.
 - a. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).
 - b. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).
 2. But there is a unique sense in which Jesus is God's Son (John 3:16).
- B. The phrase *I am well pleased* translates one word (aorist tense of εὐδοκέω) in the Greek text, and the aorist tense demands a single act, that is, not done over and over again or repeated.
 1. So this statement does not refer to the fact God is pleased with the way Jesus conducted himself on earth, though he certainly was. It rather refers to some event in the past. Probably the fact that the Father was pleased to find in his Son a solution to the problem of sin.
 2. Same sense as in Isaiah 53:10-11: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."
 3. What does this say about God's love for man?

III. THE ABOLISHING OF THE LAW OF MOSES

- A. Peter's statement. Mark's account (9:6) tells us Peter did not know what to say. (We usually say wrong things when we do not know what to say. Better to say nothing?)
- B. The words, "Hear ye him," came in response to Peter's suggestion.
- C. Moses was Israel's great lawgiver. Elijah represented the prophets under the law. But God says they are no longer to be heard.
- D. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2).
- E. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14). Now look at verse 16: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days."

IV. THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

- A. Luke 9:31 tells us Moses and Elijah were talking about Jesus' impending decease in Jerusalem.
 1. Elijah had not died (II Kings 2:11).
 2. There was a great mystery surrounding the death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5-6).
- B. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead" (Matthew 17:9).
- C. The resurrection is an essential element of the gospel, both our resurrection and Christ's.
 1. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I

Corinthians 15:1-4).

2. Take the resurrection out of Peter's sermon in Acts 2, and what do you have left?
- D. Some say it really does not matter. Whether Jesus was raised or not, the sermon on the mount and the marvelous teaching of Jesus remains the same.
 1. But in First Corinthians 15 Paul argued that if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised; and if Christ is not raised, our preaching is false; and if our preaching is false, then you believed a lie; and if you believed a lie, then your faith is vain; and if your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins; and if you are yet in your sins, then you are of all men most miserable.
 2. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20).

V. THE STATE OF THE DEAD

- A. Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus. They had quit the walks of men many years before, but they are not out of existence, nor are they unconscious.
- B. Cf. the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16).
- C. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32).
- D. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).
- E. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).
- F. "Will we know each other in heaven?"
 1. Peter, James, and John knew Moses and Elijah.
 2. The rich man in Luke 16 knew Abraham and Lazarus.
 3. I will know who I am, and you will know who you are, and we can introduce ourselves.

VI. PETER'S LATER REFERENCE TO THIS EVENT

- A. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount [II Peter 1:16-18].
- B. In the next verse the KJV says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." The ASV puts it this way, "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure...."
- C. This was the way Peter and the Holy Spirit had of saying that the events that transpired on the mountain--the light from heaven brighter than the sun, the glorious shining of the face of Jesus, the appearance of Moses and Elijah, the voice of God--gave even greater credibility to the gospel of Christ as was foretold by the prophets. These things Peter had seen himself.
- D. There could be no doubt in his mind about the genuineness of the gospel.

CONCLUSION

If you are lost, you will wish, not only that you would not know anyone, but that you never had lived on the earth. Look what Jesus said about Judas: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24). Is it possible that is true of you? Do not allow it to be so.

The Uniqueness of Baptism

Subject of baptism one of most controversial. Yet the Bible is clear with reference to the matter. Will study baptism from the standpoint of its unique nature. Unique means only one of its kind. Baptism is unique - things said about it not true of other commands of God. As in the study of any subject, we will notice what the Bible says.

Discussion

I Baptism is Unique in that it is Done Right Only Once

A. Not so of faith, rep., conf., I.S., prayer, singing, giving, etc.

B. But of baptism (Eph. 4:4-6)

C. Men at Ephesus baptized again, but that was because not done right the first time. (Ac. 19)

II Unique in that there are No Degrees in Baptism

A. Not so of faith. Degrees of faith.

1. "great faith" (Centurion - Mt. 8:10)

2. "O thou of little faith" (Mt. 14:31)

3. "Increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5)

4. "Him that is weak in the faith..." (Ro. 14:1)

5. Abraham was "strong in faith" (Ro. 4:20)

B. Degrees of repentance.

1. Involves conviction & godly sorrow

2. 2 Cor. 7:10 - "For godly sorrow..."

C. No degrees of bap. Like marriage. Either married or not. Either been baptized or not. Changes relationship to God.

III Unique in that is Less Reason for it from Human Viewpoint

A. Can see reason for faith, rep., conf., but not baptism, as to the end desired

B. Can understand it pictures death of X (Ro. 6:1-4), but why did God make it a condition of salvation?

IV Unique in that People Object to it.

A. Many refuse to repent, but who argues it's not necessary? May refuse to confess, but admit it is necessary.

B. But many ostensibly trying to go to Heaven actually object to baptism & ridicule the idea one must be baptized.

V Unique in that Nearly All Preachers in the Denominational World Declare it Non-Essential And yet, ~~the~~ None of them Will Do Away With it Altogether.

A. They deny it is essential, but practice it. Can't be member of a single church in Jeff. County w/out being baptized.

B. Preachers preach against it, + yet practice it.

Conclusion

I Bible is clear on the subject.

II Those scripturally baptized are a unique people. Unique in that they have humbly submitted to God's will while others insist on having their own way.

Ecumeout

UNITY IS NOT FOUND IN ECUMENISM

The Bible has much to say about unity, and as with many Bible subjects, men have often perverted or misunderstood the teaching of the Bible on the subject of unity.

Let us observe some things the Bible does and does not teach about this great subject.

DISCUSSION**I. BIBLE UNITY IS NOT UNITY WITH ERROR**

- A. Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Does not say it is good to dwell together in unity with the children of the devil.
- B. First Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Cannot be of the same mind and same judgment with those who will not obey God.
- C. Philippians 3:16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." No unity among those who refuse to walk by the same rule.
- D. 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." The apostle did not expect any one to stand fast in spirit with those who were of a mind to strive against the truth.
- E. John 17:20-21: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Certainly no right-thinking person can believe this prayer is answered when the people of God set about to promote religious groups which exist without the authority of God and in opposition to his will.
- F. The ecumenical movement--a movement to get all religious groups to promote and cooperate with all religious groups--is not the unity taught in the Bible.

II. THE BIBLE PROHIBITS UNITING WITH ERROR

- A. I care not how many passages on unity one might quote, not one of them encourages cooperation with false teachers and false teaching. The Bible actually teaches the opposite.
- B. Second Corinthians 6:17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Not "stay in among them."
- C. Zophar gave good advice when he said, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles" (Job 11:14). Some want to dwell in the tent with iniquity.
- D. Second John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Was John encouraging unity with false teachers?
- E. While we should be kind and courteous in dealing with everyone, we should never act in such a way as to suggest to those in error that we believe their error is not very serious.
- F. Second Thessalonians 3:14: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."

III. IT IS INCONSISTENT TO COOPERATE IN A GENERAL WAY WITH CHURCHES BUILT BY MEN

- A. Those who do so are by their actions saying, "It's all right for you to preach sinners are saved before and without water baptism--when we are not together. In your building, but not in ours."
- B. "All right to sprinkle babies."
- C. "All right to preach hereditary total depravity."
- D. "All right for you to use the piano."
- E. "You preach and believe what you want to, and I will do the same, so long as we are not together. But when we come together in one of our unity meetings, we will avoid mentioning our differences, and instead spend our time bashing those of our own brethren who refuse to cooperate."

IV. FOUR REASONS WHY WE DO NOT PROMOTE AND COOPERATE WITH THE DENOMINATIONS

- A. I am not here talking about cooperating with and having fellowship with individual members of denominational churches in such things as PTA, a little league ball team, or the Band Booster's Club. I am talking about promoting and cooperating with man-made churches in their religious activities. (May I add that I do not believe one sins when he attends a religious service with a friend, so long as his doing so does not leave the impression he agrees with religious error. This is sometimes a way to get our friends to attend services with us.)
- B. Four reasons:
 - 1. The church of Christ is not a denomination, but fellowshiping the denominations implies that it is.
 - 2. Those in denominations, generally speaking, have not obeyed the gospel of Christ, but fellowshiping them implies they have.
 - 3. Unauthorized worship is a very serious sin, but fellowshiping those who engage in such implies it is not.
 - 4. Those in denominations do not teach the doctrine of Christ, but fellowshiping them implies they do.
 - a. Discuss "doctrine of Christ." Not just the doctrine of who he is.
 - b. Acts 2:42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Literally, "doctrine of the ap[ostles]."
 - c. Matthesw 7:28: "The people were astonished at his doctrine." Literally, "the doctrine of him."
 - d. Acts 5:28: "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Literally, "the doctrine of you."
- C. Those in denominations do not teach the doctrine of Christ with reference to:
 - 1. The church
 - 2. The plan of salvation
 - 3. The subject, action, and design of baptism
 - 4. The kind of music we are to have in worship
 - 5. The frequency with which we are to eat the Lord's Supper
 - 6. The wearing of human names
 - 7. Giving men titles such as Reverend and Father
- D. Yes, they teach some truth, but they have departed from the truth in so many areas it can hardly be said that they teach the doctrine of Christ. Second John 11 says, "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

V. UNITY IS TO BE FOUND, NOT BY IGNORING DIFFERENCES AND FELLOWSHIPING THOSE IN ERROR, BUT BY STANDING ON COMMON GROUND

- A. Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
 - 1. Truth and error are not compatible.
 - 2. Someone has described the difference between union and unity by saying, "If you tie two cats' tails together and throw them over a clothesline, you have union, but not unity."
- B. Is there a course upon which the religious world can be united?
 - 1. Jesus prayed for it, and the apostles enjoined it.
 - 2. Determine what, in the various areas of difference, can be embraced and practiced by all of us, without anyone's offending his own conscience, and then accept and embrace that.
 - a. What creed book would be acceptable to all? (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3).
 - b. Baptism. Sprinkling, pouring, or immersion--which one could we all accept?
 - c. What kind of music?
 - d. How often to eat the Lord's supper?
 - 3. I am not suggesting anyone make a law binding that which God has not bound.

CONCLUSION

We sometimes hear it said that religious division exists because of different doctrines that are taught and practiced. This is only partly true. Religious division exists because most people do not care enough about religious unity to give up the religious teachings and practices that cause division, and then embrace that upon which all believers can be united.

Jesus gave his life's blood on the cross that he might reconcile all men unto God in one body. When people reach the point they are willing to give up their own long-held human traditions, human names in religion, their man-made churches, and their divisive creeds, then--and only then--can we all be united in that one body which is the church purchased by the blood of the Son of God.

Will you now become a member of that church by simple obedience to the gospel?

UNTO FALL

THE UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS

John 17:20-21; I Corinthians 1:10

Ephesians 4:1-6

In the very outset I would like it understood that in this lesson we will not be talking about joining hands with every kind of error and pretending that error does not exist. Some would have what they choose to call unity which is nothing more than ignoring division, and playing like it doesn't exist. The prophet Amos said, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (3:3). If we are going to be united, we cannot go in opposite directions, and if we are going to go in opposite directions, we cannot be united.

This does not mean there is no room for differences in the body of Christ. We are free to differ with one another, but we are not free to differ with the word of God. We are free to differ so long as our differences do not lead us into a course that is out of harmony with the will of God..

Many would say it is unrealistic to talk about the unity of all believers. But if such be the case, then Jesus was unrealistic when he prayed, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21). Paul was unrealistic when he wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

If the unity of all believers is an unrealistic dream, then Paul was an unrealistic dreamer when he wrote,

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all [Ephesians 4:1-6].

There are so many choices to be made in the realm of religion. Hundreds of churches, all claiming to follow the Bible, are teaching contradictory doctrines. It is not possible for contradictory propositions to be true. If two unambiguously stated propositions contradict, then one of them is false. It is not possible for both to be true; both may be false, but not true.

In the many areas of religion where one must choose, is it possible to find a way upon which all believers can unite, without offending anyone's conscience, so that the prayer of our Lord might be realized? Notice with me some areas in which believers are divided, and let us see if there is course we can all take and upon which we can unite.

DISCUSSION**I. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT CREEDS.**

- A. The word *creed* is from the Latin word *credo*, which means, "I believe." A creed is a statement of belief.
- B. I wonder how many creed books have been written? I have several in my library. Each one sets forth the distinctive beliefs of some particular religious group.
- C. Is there one of the many creeds to which all believers can subscribe without anyone's violating his conscience? If so, which one would it be? Would it be the Baptist *Manual*, the Methodist *Discipline*, or the *Creed of Presbyterians*?
- D. Notice what the Bible says: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17). It also says "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godline through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3).

1. This being true, why would we need to write a creed?
2. If a creed book contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if less, it contains too little; if the same, then it is superfluous.
3. Notice what the Bible says about the doctrines of men: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).
- E. Is there a creed book that is acceptable to all? Yes. Who would object to following the Bible?
- F. The creeds of men cause division. There is not one of them upon which all believers could agree to unite. But the word of God produces unity. Not one believer would conscientiously object to letting the Bible be our only creed.
- G. Those who really want all believers to be united will discard the creeds, which cause division, and will follow the Bible, which brings about unity.

II. MANY DIFFERENT PLANS OF SALVATION ARE BEING TAUGHT.

- A. One is that certain ones are unconditionally elected to eternal salvation, and others to eternal damnation.
 1. That God and Christ held an election before the world began, and elected certain ones to be saved and certain ones to be lost, and nothing one can do will change that.
 2. This idea says that salvation is wholly a matter of grace, and man has no choice in the matter.
 3. In 1950 a man by the name of J. D Holder debated brother Gus Nichols in Medina, T and affirmed the following proposition: "The Scriptures teach that all for whom Ch. died will be saved or receive remission of sins, without the preached or written word, or any conditions on their part."
 4. This would mean if one is lost, God willed it that way, and is responsible for his eternal damnation. Man would have no responsibility in the matter.
- B. Another plan of salvation being taught is that man is saved by faith only.
 1. The *Discipline* says, "[W]herefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort" (Page 21).
 2. Years ago a man by the name of Sam Morris published a booklet in which he was insisting that justification depends entirely upon one's faith in Christ, and here are his words: "All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger."
- C. Another plan of salvation being taught is that the sinner must pray "the sinner's prayer."
- D. Another group says go to the mourners' bench and pray through.
- E. Christ and his apostles teach us on the pages of the Bible that the alien sinner must:
 1. Hear the gospel of Christ.
 - a. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45).
 - b. That is why Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

2. Believe that Jesus is the Christ. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).
3. Repent. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). To repent means to decide to obey God.
4. Confess Christ.
 - a. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).
 - b. An example of this confession is in Acts 8:37: "And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
5. Be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- F. Upon which of these various "plans of salvation" can we unite? I am not asking you say which are right and which are wrong, but upon which one can we all unite? A? B? C? D? Or D?

III. **THERE ARE DIFFERENT PRACTICES WITH REFERENCE TO BAPTISM.**

- A. Some practice what they call infant baptism, which is not baptism at all, but merely pouring or sprinkling a small amount of water on the baby's forehead.
- B. Some sprinkle or pour a little water on more mature people, and call it baptism.
- C. Some actually baptize mature people who believe they are already saved, and are baptized merely as a symbol of their salvation and as an initiation rite into the church.
- D. The New Testament teaches that baptism:
 1. Is a burial.
 - a. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).
 - b. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).
 - c. Here is common ground. Nobody is conscientiously opposed. All believers can unite on this.
 2. Is for those who:
 - a. Have heard and believed the gospel (Mark 16:15-16).
 - b. Have repented (Acts 2:38).
 - c. Have confessed Christ (Acts 8:37).
 - d. Does anybody object to this practice? Here is common ground. On this all believers can unite.
 3. Is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 - a. Cf. Mt. 26:28
 - b. Mark 16:16
 - c. Gal 3:27
 - d. I Peter 3:21
 - e. Acts 22:16
 - f. Would any say it is sinful to baptize for this purpose? Here is common ground. All believers can unite here, but not on some sectarian doctrine.
- E. Does it really make a difference? Some in the New Testament, under the guidance of the apostle, were baptized again.
- F. Many cannot conscientiously teach and practice sprinkling or pouring, or infant baptism. But no person's conscience would be violated by immersing penitent believers for the remission of sins. On this all believers can unite.

IV. **THERE ARE MANY SYSTEMS OF WORSHIP.**

- A. Some say it makes no difference how one worships.

1. Then why was the worship of Cain not accepted (Gen. 4)?
2. Why were Nadab and Abihu killed (Lev. 10)?
- B. The Bible teaches worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
- C. It teaches we must abide in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9).
- D. It teaches we have no right to add to or take from the word of God (Rev. 22:18-19).
- E. There are five items of worship in which Christians engaged in the early church.
 1. Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs congregationally.
 - a. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).
 - b. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).
 - c. Some, without any authority from God, add mechanical instruments. Can all believers unite on that practice? No. Some are conscientiously opposed, and for good reason.
 - d. Can we unite on *a cappella* singing? Would any believer's conscience be offended by singing without instrumental accompaniment? No. Then here is common ground--a practice upon which all believers can be united.
 2. Praying (I Thes. 5:17). Our prayers at church are not usually very long. Most of our praying is done in private.
 3. Preaching or studying the Bible (Acts 20:7). What I am doing here is not a solo; you are as much a part of this act of worship as I am.
 4. Eating the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). Notice, this was done each Sunday during the days of the apostles. Can we unite on this? Does anyone have scruples about eating the L. every Sunday? Of course not. Then here is common ground.
 5. Giving according to prosperity on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:2). This is God's plan for financing the work of his church. Not bazaars, bingo games, cake walks, or pie suppers. Does anybody oppose this? Here is common ground.
- F. Is there a course all believers can follow? Yes. It is this scriptural way of worship we have just described.
- G. Some in the church are bent on making some changes in our worship.
 1. They want solos, quartets, and other special groups to sing while the congregation listens. They believe such is all right, but it is without scriptural sanction. Question: Is there a practice on which all of us can unite?
 2. Some want to sing during the Lord's Supper. But one who follows the word of God can't do that. Christ and his apostles sang after they had eaten the supper (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). Is there a course in this on which we can all be united, and there be no division?
 3. Some insist on putting women in roles of public leadership in worship. Because of the clear teaching of such passages as First Timothy 2:8-15 and First Corinthians 14:34-35, some cannot conscientiously allow such. Is there some course we can follow that will not force anyone to violate his conscience? One on which we can be united?
 4. Some want to applaud during the worship while they are singing, during the sermon, or at a baptism.
 - a. Such detracts from the solemnity and the dignity of worship, and places it on a par with some kind of entertainment.
 - b. If clapping is all right, then would it be all right to clap one's hand against a s^c book? What about a drum? Ringing a cowbell? Do you see where this is go
 - c. "But it is just the same as saying, 'Amen.'" There is just one difference: Saying "Amen" during the worship is authorized in Scripture (I Corinthians 14:16);

clapping is not.

- d. Aside from all this, is there a course we can follow where all believers can be united? We all agree that clapping is not a required act of worship; many of us believe it is an unscriptural innovation. Those really interested in the unity of all believers will forego their personal whims and fancies for the sake of the unity of all believers.

V. **THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS NAMES.**

- A. The wearing of human names in religion shows there is contention. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (I Corinthians 1:11-12).
- B. Wearing human names is inconsistent with the very nature of Christianity. Notice Paul's questions to those who wore human names at Corinth: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (verse 13).
- C. Those who wear the names *Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Mormon, Catholic*, etc. are guilty of doing the very same thing Paul condemned at Corinth.
- D. At Corinth, the names of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ were being worn. Is there one of those four names all at Corinth could have been united in wearing?
- E. Is there a name all believers can wear, and not violate their consciences in so doing? What about the name of Christ.
 - 1. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
 - 2. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).
- F. Those really interested in the unity of all believers will lay aside the divisive names of men and wear only the name on which we can all unite.

CONCLUSION

We sometimes hear it said that religious division exists because of different doctrines that are taught and practiced. This is only partly true. Religious division exists because most people don't care enough about the unity of all believers to give up the religious teachings and practices that cause division, and embrace that upon which all believers can be united.

Jesus gave his blood on the cross that he might reconcile all men unto God in one body (Ephesians 2:16). When men reach the point they are willing to give up their long-held human traditions, their human names in religion, their man-made churches, their divisive creeds, then--and only then--can all believers be united in that one body. which is the church purchased by the blood of Christ.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

- I. The marvelous scope of God's plan to save commends itself to our gratitude and appreciation. (Mt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15,16; Mt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17.)
- II. But we are disturbed, in the light of all these passages, to observe that some passages suggest that it is possible to be outside the reach of God's mercy. (Heb. 6:4-6; Heb. 10:25-29; Matt. 12:31,32.)
1. This latter passage indicates one may sin against God & Christ and be forgiven, but if against the Holy Ghost he cannot be.
 2. All of us have pondered the question of why is it so much worse to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost than against God & Christ?
- III. What is the harmony between the former and the latter passages, and what is the unpardonable sin, or the blasphemy against the H. G.?

DISCUSSION

I. SOME ERRONEOUS IDEAS ABOUT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

- A. That it is impossible to commit the sin today because the Holy Gh does not manifest himself miraculously
1. But neither do God and Christ
 2. We will show that the sin can be and is being committed in this day and age, and that there is a danger that some in this audience might commit the sin.
- B. That it is simply neglecting to obey the gospel until death. But the text says, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come," showing that one may commit the sin and continue to live in this world after its commission. (Of course in this case one would be unpardoned and lost, and in one sense every sin is against the Holy Ghost, but not as in this peculiar sense)
- C. That it is suicide. But not so, for the same reason just given.
- D. That it is attributing the things done by the Holy Ghost to the prince of devils, Beelzebub. But, though we do not pretend to fathom the mind of God, this seems inconsistent with the very nature and scope of the gospel. Furthermore it is significant that after the church was established there is no mention of any who could not be saved because of having done this.
- E. That it is the "sin unto death" of 1 Jno. 5:16. (There is a sin the Lord will forgive, and one He won't. What is the one He will forgive, and what is the one He won't?) Syllogism:
1. God will forgive all sins a brother scripturally confesses. (1 Jno. 1:9.)
 2. There is a sin the Lord will not forgive. (1 Jno. 5:16.)
 3. Therefore the sin which the Lord won't forgive ~~is~~ is the sin a brother will not confess.

II. HAVING LEARNED WHAT THE SIN IS NOT, LET US LEARN WHAT IT IS.

- A. Explain "neither in this world, nor the world to come".
1. Some have taken this to mean life, but no sin of any kind will be forgiven in the life to come or next life.
 2. But means "age", or dispensation. Same as Heb. 9:26, which says Christ was offered "once in the end of the world" (ASV--'ages'). Not same as Jno. 3:16, 17.
 3. Jesus was saying there would be no forgiveness either in the Mosaical or the Christian age or dispensation.
- B. Why more serious to sin against Holy Spirit than God or Christ?
1. Ill: Man floating toward rapids ignores warning by 1st, then second, may be saved by the last. But if ignores the last there is no other warning.
 2. Application of ill: Man sinned, & for 4000 yrs. God extended offer no. 1 through the tearful pleadings of the prophets.

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Offer no. 2 was extended when God sent His Son to turn man from his rebellious way, but this also was rejected by most, and that with such malice that He was crucified. But still the mercy of God was not exhausted, and on the 1st Pentecost following the resurrection offer no. 3 was extended through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This is the final agency by which man is offered salvation. No other offer will be made. If man rejects this ~~XXXX~~ and expects to be saved by some other he is helplessly and irretrievably lost.

C. This is portrayed vividly in the Hebrew letter ~~XXXXXX~~. It was written to stay an impending ~~XXXXXX~~ apostasy to Judaism. But some of them were listening to Judaizing teachers who were telling them that Jesus was not the Christ, and they could be saved by a Messiah yet to appear. Notice:

1. They could not be saved by Jesus of Nazareth, because they were repudiating Him.
2. There would never be another who would come to save them.
3. So they were getting beyond the possibility of salvation. See if this is not what he says: (Heb. 10:25-29).

III. STEPS THAT LEAD TO COMMISSION OF THE UNFARDONABLE SIN.

- A. Grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30), as a child grieves his parents by behavior inconsistent with the parents' desires.
- B. Resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51), by being unwilling to bow to His influence.
- C. Quenching the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19), by becoming numb to His appeals.
- D. Every gospel preacher has seen it happen.

1. Ill: Man who at one time so powerfully influenced by the Holy Spirit through the gospel that agitation and unrest is visible in their very countenance. But in later years they are no longer moved, but are calm, composed and collected, though they still never have obeyed the gospel. They grieved the Spirit so long, they resisted Him so much that they quenched His power in their hearts.
2. It is ~~X~~ psychologically true that ~~we~~ every time we say "no" to a proposition it is easier to say "no" the second time.
 - a. We tend to build an immunity to that which we regularly resist. (Continue to shut off an alarm and go back to sleep. Soon it won't even awaken you.)
 - b. People who constantly reject the gospel finally become so hardened that the gospel loses its appeal and power over them. They have reached the line beyond which there is no return.

CONCLUSION

- I. To the lost: If you can contemplate what the Lord has done for you, the marvelous love, & all involved in the great scheme of redemption and no sense of gratitude prompts you to desire to obey him, for you I would entertain the gravest of fears. Could it be that you have reached the point of no return?
- II. If there stirs in your heart any desire to serve Him, this is evidence that you have not crossed the point of no return. Let me plead with you, if there is such an impulse remaining, act upon it lest it soon fade away and you are found to have sinned against the Holy Ghost.

Team #1

VALUES THAT WILL ENRICH YOUR LIFE (or, SOME THINGS YOU DIDN'T LEARN IN HIGH SCHOOL)

This is the time of year when we are congratulating a special group of young people who have met the requirements and have graduated from high school. I have an idea that the average young person who graduated from high school in 1995 knows more about secular subjects in general than the average college graduate knew just a few years ago.

What I say is as applicable to all of us as it is to those who have just graduated, but it is to them especially that I address my remarks at this time.

There are some things you need to learn that were not a part of your high school curriculum. Neither will you find these subjects listed in the catalog of the college or university to which you may be going. Yet the things I will discuss with you are even more important than the courses you were required to take in high school, or will be required to take in college. I am talking about values you need to learn. It makes no difference how much you may know about the arts and sciences, or anything else, if you have a poor sense of values, you will live a miserable life, and come to the end of your life a failure. Brother Gus Nichols used to say, "If you set down a bucket of slop and a bucket of diamonds before an old sow, she will choose the slop every time." You see, she does not have a proper sense of values.

What are some of the values we all need to learn in order to live rich, full, and successful lives, and then go to heaven when this life is over?

DISCUSSION

- I. **WE ALL NEED TO LEARN HONESTY.** (This is not to suggest none of us are honest at present.)
 - A. Be the kind of person who is always truthful, without any effort to deceive.
 - B. Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." -- Matthew 5:33-37
 1. This passage talks about swearing falsely ("thou shalt not forswear thyself"), then it cautions not to swear at all.
 2. Let your communication be, "Yea, yea;" or "Nay, nay." Just means be so honest that when you say "Yea," there is no need for an oath to confirm it.
 - C. Honesty and sincerity are such rare qualities nowadays that we have conditioned ourselves to beware scams of every kind.
 1. Those who conduct honest businesses have to suffer because of this.
 2. This also makes it hard to persuade people to obey God; they think it is necessary to resist the "salesmanship" of the one trying to persuade them to obey God.
 - D. The Christian can never afford to be less than honest. He is always sincere.
 - E. We all need to learn honesty.
- II. **WE ALL NEED TO LEARN INTEGRITY.** (Again, I am not suggesting that all of us are totally without any integrity.)
 - A. *Honesty and integrity* are words often used together, and which denote similar qualities.
 1. *Honesty* implies truthfulness, fairness in dealing, and absence of fraud, deceit, and

hypocrisy.

2. *Integrity* is moral soundness, especially as it is revealed in dealings that test steadfastness to truth, purpose, responsibility, or trust.

B. Examples of integrity:

1. Job. "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." -- Job 2:3
2. The psalmist. "The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me." -- Psalms 7:8
3. "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." -- Proverbs 11:3
4. Joseph was a man of integrity in refusing to succumb to the enticements of Potiphar's wife.
5. Vashti the queen in Esther 1.
6. Daniel.
7. Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego.

C. One who has integrity will not, under any circumstances, deviate from his determined course of action.

1. I heard a story of a beautiful young lady who was invited by a handsome young millionaire to go out with him on a date. During the course of the evening he asked her if she would spend the night with him for \$100,000. For that amount she said she would. He then asked, "Will you spend the night with me for \$100?" She said, "No! What kind of a girl do you think I am?" His reply: "We've already established that. Now we are just haggling over the price."
2. Is your integrity for sale? If it is for sale at any price, then you are without integrity.

D. All need to learn integrity.

III. WE ALL NEED TO LEARN RESPONSIBILITY.

- A. A responsible person is one who is capable of making moral or rational decisions on his own, and who is, therefore, answerable for his behavior.
- B. The Bible teaches we are all answerable for ourselves, and that we will all give account for our own actions.
 1. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." -- 2 Corinthians 5:10
 2. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." -- Romans 14:12
- C. We are teaching our children to be irresponsible when we:
 1. allow them to break the rules without paying the penalty.
 2. make it a practice to take sides with them in disputes with their teachers.
 3. make excuses for their failures to behave acceptably.
- D. We are acting irresponsibly when we make excuses for our own failures.
 1. Will never improve until we accept responsibility for our actions.
 2. Making an excuse is saying, in effect, it is not my fault.
- E. Our society continues to be plagued by an accelerated increase in crime because we blame crime on society, and not on the criminals. Example: A woman working in a department store in Birmingham was fired because she was caught stealing from the store. One of her acquaintances said she knew the woman would never have stolen unless she had a good reason.
- F. Church members quit the church, and blame it on someone else.

- G. We are all accountable for our own actions. Therefore we must learn responsibility.

IV. WE ALL NEED TO LEARN DEPENDABILITY

- A. Dependability is the quality of having earned the confidence and trust of others. Because of one's past performance, others have learned they can rely on him to be loyal to his commitments.
1. God's statement about Abraham's dependability: "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." -- Genesis 18:19
 2. Yes, God is omniscient. But it was Abraham's dependability, not God's omniscience, that enabled God to say this.
- B. In the New Testament, the primary meaning of the word πιστος 'faithful' is "trustworthy, faithful...worthy of trust; that can be relied on." For example, look at two passages that talk about the dependability of God:
1. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is *faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." -- 1 Corinthians 10:13
 2. "If we confess our sins, he is *faithful* and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." -- 1 John 1:9
- C. But that is also the word that is used in:
1. Revelation 2:10: "...be thou *faithful* unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
 2. First Corinthians 4:2: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful*." -- 1 Corinthians 4:2
 3. The parable of the talents: "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and *faithful* servant: thou hast been *faithful* over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." -- Matthew 25:21
 4. A number of other passages which talk about Christians.
- D. Song: "Can He Depend On You?"
1. To be present for the assembly? (Would you consider your automobile dependable if it started 9 times out of ten? Would you consider your wife faithful if she kept herself to you alone 360 days of the year?)
 2. To contribute every week as you have prospered?
 3. To dress modestly?
 4. To use pure speech?
 5. To keep your heart and your life pure?
- E. Can others depend on you to do what you say you will do and what is right under all circumstances?
- F. We all need to learn dependability.

V. WE ALL NEED TO LEARN SELF-DISCIPLINE.

- A. The Humanistic philosophy, which has so thoroughly permeated our society, teaches the very opposite--do whatever pleases you at the moment. According to the Humanist, there is no God greater than the human being; so do your thing.
- B. This philosophy has brought about the moral decline in our society.
1. Alcoholism, terrorism, drug addiction, murder, rape, abortion, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, (you name it).
 2. When the Bible is laid aside as the authoritative standard in every phase of our lives, this is what we can expect. And that is exactly what has happened in our society.
- C. When we do not practice discipline with our children, we cannot expect them to develop self-

discipline.

1. Lois Ann told in a speech recently at Memphis about being behind a woman and her small son in the check-out at the supermarket. The little boy asked for a candy bar, which his mother denied. He then demanded a candy bar, which was again denied. Then he hit his mother in the stomach with his fist as hard as he could, whereupon the mother gave her son the candy bar he wanted. Children should not be rewarded for that kind of action.
2. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." -- Proverbs 13:24
3. "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." -- Proverbs 19:18
4. "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." -- Proverbs 23:13-14
5. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame...Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." -- Proverbs 29:15, 17.
6. When we give our children everything they want, we are not teaching them self-discipline.
- D. Self-discipline is what Jesus was talking about when he said, "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself* [literally, say 'no' to himself], and take up his cross daily, and follow me." -- Luke 9:23
- E. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge *temperance* [self-control]; and to *temperance* patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." -- 2 Peter 1:5-7
- F. Self-discipline will enable one to avoid drinking, smoking, fornication, drugs. It will enable him to keep himself in the faithful service of the Master.
- G. We all need to learn self-discipline.

CONCLUSION

WE ALL NEED TO LEARN OBEDIENCE. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). The word *μανθανω* 'learned' is used here of Christ, not to suggest that his suffering made him more obedient than he had been in the past, but to denote that he was accustomed to perfect obedience to the Scriptures, and that his Sonship did not exempt him from obedience, even when that obedience led him to the cross. Now look at the next verse: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Jesus did not quibble or hesitate to do just exactly what the Scriptures required of him. "[Jesus] said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24:46). Anything short of doing exactly what the Scriptures teach is not obedience.

Have you learned obedience?

Obedience involves

*All to Jesus
I surrender*

Were You There?

I Pilate

- A. Mt. 27:24 "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made ...
- B. Knew the truth: "that for envy they had delivered him" (v. 18), but did not have the courage to stand for it.
- C. Public opinion, rather than conviction, dictated his action.

II Simon of Cyrene (Mt. 27:32 "And they came out....

- A. Bore the cross of Jesus, but only because he was compelled to do so.
- B. To some, service to Christ is a chore, performed only because it is a must.

III Soldiers who Cast Lots for His Garments

- A. Mt. 27:35 "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots."
- B. To them, the crucifixion meant nothing more than a small gain of a few garments. (Jn. 19:23).
- C. Some see in Jesus today only a opportunity to receive some material advantage.

IV Those Who Mocked Him

- A. "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Mt. 27:40)
- B. "He saved others; Himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (v. 42).
- C. "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God" (v. 43)
- D. Some who scoff + ridicule spiritual matters.

V The Centurion

- A. "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54)
- B. Too late. Already dead.
- C. No indication he ever obeyed him.
- D. Many freely acknowledge their belief of the truth, but never do anything about it.

VI Herod

- A. Lk. 23:8 Had heard of Jesus, + had wanted to see him for a long time - hoped to see him do some miracle
- B. To some, the gospel is nothing more than a means of entertainment - a social club

III The Women

- A. "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him" (Mt. 27:55)
- B. Not much they could do now, except show their concern by their presence.
- C. We sometimes feel so limited in what we can do. But can be present to lend our support + encouragement.

VIII John - The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

- A. "Woman, behold thy son" "Behold thy mother" (Jno. 19:26, 27).
- B. Knew could depend on John.
- C. Some today can be depended on:
 1. If want to be sure it gets done, give the job to them
 2. Some always present for services, gospel meetings, business meetings, visitation, etc.

Conclusion

If you had been present on that occasion in which groups would you have found yourself. Tell me what you are doing now, + I will tell you which group you would have been in. Remember, the crucifixion was for me + you. But benefits only those who obey (Acl. 5:8, 9).

WHAT AND WHOM SHOULD CHRISTIANS LOVE?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The word *love*, in all its forms, appears nearly four hundred times in the New Testament. It is translated primarily from some form of the Greek word *phileo* (verb) or *philos* (noun), or from the Greek word *agapao* (verb) or *agape* (noun). More than 80% of the time it is from some form of this latter word. Occasionally the adjective form of this Greek word occurs, and is usually translated "beloved." In the King James Version, the word *charity* is often used to translate this Greek word *agape*.

It should be noted also that this Greek word denotes a special kind of love. It has been defined as "active good will." It is something commanded to us, and so it must be something we can choose to do if we wish. (A child cannot be commanded to like spinach.) It is something one chooses to have or to do. John 3:16 is an example. We use the word *love* very loosely and without the biblical meaning, when we use it to refer to physical attraction ("It was love at first sight."), or to something that satisfies a physical longing ("I love home made ice cream.").

That Christians have an obligation to be a loving people is so clearly taught in the Bible that all people, religious or not, recognize love as one of the marks of genuine Christianity. Perhaps, though, we are not as well informed as we should be about what and whom we should love. Some have the perverted notion that we should love evil as well as good, error as well as truth, the doctrines of men as well as the doctrine of Christ.

What does the Bible teach about the matter? What and whom should I as a Christian love?

DISCUSSION**I. I MUST LOVE MY BRETHREN AND MY NEIGHBORS.**

- A. 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. {38} This is the first and great commandment. {39} And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
- B. 1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."
- C. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, {5} Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; {6} Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; {7} Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. {8} Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Loving each other will promote:
 - 1. patience - "suffereth long"
 - 2. kindness - "and is kind"
 - 3. trust and confidence - "envieth not"
 - 4. humility - "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"
 - 5. courtesy - "doth not behave itself unseemly"

6. unselfishness - "seeketh not her own"
 7. self-control - "is not easily provoked"
 8. forgiveness - "thinketh no evil"
 9. love for truth and purity - "rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth . . ."
 10. faith - "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"
 11. success - "charity never faileth"
- D. Loving one another will cause us to act in each other's best interests, even if doing so is unpleasant for us and for the one in whose interests we are acting.
1. As a parent who loves his child must sometimes do things that are unpleasant for him and for the child, even so our love demands such.
 2. Proverbs 13:24 "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

II. I MUST LOVE THE TRUTH, GOD'S WORD, GOD'S LAW.

- A. II Thessalonians 2:10-12 "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. {11} And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: {12} That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- B. Psalms 1:1-2 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. {2} But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."
- C. Psalms 119:97 "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."
- D. Psalms 19:7-11 "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. {8} The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. {9} The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. {10} More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. {11} Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

III. I MUST LOVE EVERYTHING THAT IS GOOD.

- A. Amos 5:15 "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."
- B. In listing the qualifications of elders, Paul wrote in Titus 1:8: "But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate." ASV correctly leaves off the word *men*. All of us should be lovers of that which is good.
1. Cf. Titus 3:1 "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work."
 2. Gospel meetings, VBS, lectureships, gospel singings, etc. (Some will travel half way across the nation to attend a ballgame, but not across the street to attend a gospel meeting.)

IV. I MUST LOVE LIFE.

- A. Are we to love ourselves? Yes. Matthew 22:39 "And the second is like unto

- it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
- B. Formula for loving life is in I Peter 3:10-11 "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: {11} Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."
 - C. Some, like Job, curse the day they were born. Job 3:3 "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived."
 - 1. They think life is not worth living.
 - 2. Have allowed selves to be made bitter by misfortune, heartache, sickness, disappointment, or pain. - D. As a Christian I must realize what life is all about and of what it consists.
 - 1. Luke 12:15 "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."
 - 2. True success and happiness in life is measured in terms of contribution, not accumulation.
 - E. Someone has given four rules for happy and successful living.
 - 1. Depend on God for guidance.
 - a. Jeremiah 10:23 "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 - b. Philippians 4:6-7 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. {7} And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
 - 2. Accept the things in your life you cannot change.
 - a. "Lord, give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."
 - b. Philippians 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
 - c. Someone has said: "Things are never as bad or as good as they appear."
 - 3. Live in the present.
 - a. Matthew 6:34 "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."
 - b. "Lord, for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray.
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin, just for today."
 - 4. Live for a purpose.
 - a. Philippians 3:13-14 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, {14} I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
 - b. Suicide is now the leading cause of death among teenagers.
 - c. Christianity gives purpose and meaning to life.

V. I MUST LOVE MY ENEMIES.

- A. Matthew 5:43-45 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. {44} 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; {45} 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."
- B. Romans 12:19-20 "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. {20} 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."
- C. Does not mean I am to love the wrong he does, nor that I am to act in such a way as to encourage his evil doing.
- D. It does mean I should do all within my power to get him to correct any evil or error in his life.

VI. I MUST LOVE THE CHURCH, INCLUDING THE LOCAL CONGREGATION.

- A. Ephesians 5:23-30 "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. {24} Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. {25} Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; {26} That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, {27} That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. {28} So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. {29} For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: {30} For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."
- B. Some think they love the Lord's church, but have nothing but contempt for the local congregation. They seem not to realize the local congregation is the only organization the Lord's church has.
- C. Something wrong with people who have no loyalty to the local congregation, but abandon it for weeks at a time.

VII. I MUST LOVE GOD AND CHRIST.

- A. Matthew 22:37 shows love for God must be supreme. "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."
- B. Do you love God? Here is the test: I John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
- C. Do you love Christ? Here is the test: John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
- D. Commands of God and Christ to:
 1. the alien (f-r-c-b).
 2. the erring (r-c-p).
 3. the Christian: Rev. 2:10.

CONCLUSION

I John 3:18 "My little children, let us not love in word, neither"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN OF GOD?

I John 3:9-10; 5:18

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. {10} In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:9-10).

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (I John 5:18).

The verses which serve as our text are an important part of this epistle, and an understanding of them is necessary to an understanding of the whole. Furthermore, what is taught in these verses is very germane to the problems created in recent years by some of our brethren who, in advocating their denominational positions, think they have found something new.

Let us notice from these verses some appropriate and very valuable lessons.

DISCUSSION

- I. **NOTICE WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORDS *DOTH NOT COMMIT SIN, CANNOT SIN, AND SINNETH NOT***
 - A. Some say this means the child of God lives a perfectly sinless life.
 1. If so, then anyone who commits a single act of sin proves thereby that he is not a child of God.
 2. If so, then this epistle contains a serious contradiction. (Cf. 1:7-10; 2:1.)
 - B. A distinction between the tenses of the verbs used in these verses is evident in the original.
 1. I John 1:8--"If we say that we have no sin" (Aorist tense.)
 2. I John 2:1--"that ye sin not . . . but if any man sin" (Aorist tense.)
 3. I John 3:9--"doth not commit sin . . . cannot sin" (a form of the present tense, which means continued action.)
 - C. These verses state emphatically that the child of God simply cannot continue to practice sin.
 - D. The reason he cannot keep on practicing sin is stated: "for his seed remaineth in him."
 1. The seed is the word of God (I Pet. 1:22-23; Luke 8:11).
 2. While one walks in the light of the word of God he will still commit momentary acts of sin (I John 1:7-10). For these he has the benefits of the blood of Christ and he has Jesus Christ as his advocate (2:1).
 3. But one with the seed remaining in him cannot live a life of habitual sinful practice.
 - a. Young men and young ladies who are dating cannot park and engage in licentious practices, for the word of God says in I Timothy 5:22: "Keep thyself pure." It also says, "Flee also

youthful lusts" (II Tim. 2:22).

- b. Christians cannot feed their minds on filthy movies and television shows, for the word of God says in 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." It also says, "Abstain from fleshly lusts" (I Pet. 2:11).
- c. Husbands and wives cannot flirt with those to whom they are not married, for the word of God says, "Flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18). It says also in I Thessalonians 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

II. NOTICE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE VERSES WITH REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT DOCTRINE OF GRACE BEING TAUGHT BY SOME

- A. Some actually use the grace of God to encourage people to sin, whether they realize it or not. (Cf. Rom. 6:1-2.)
 - 1. One lady explained why she changed congregations by saying, "Over here we have grace."
 - 2. One young intern at a large church in Alabama excused his lack of Bible study by saying, "The grace of God will take care of me."
- B. Some have said they know they are living in adultery because of an unscriptural marriage, but say they believe the grace of God will take care of them.
- C. Grace is always mentioned as an incentive not to sin, and never as encouragement to sin. These verses in I John show that one who is God's child cannot persist in sin.

III. NOTICE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BORN OF GOD

- A. The word *born* is from the same Greek word which occurs 41 times in the first chapter of Matthew, and is translated "begat" 39 of those times.
- B. The ASV translates: "Whosoever is begotten of God" Brother Guy N. Woods, in his commentary on I John, says the American Standard rendering is to be preferred, but that it "does not fully and adequately convey the meaning of the text."
- C. The idea is that what John here declares, he declares concerning those who are God's children.
- D. Jesus' statement to Nicodemus (John 3:5).
- E. Peter's statement (I Peter 1:22-23).

CONCLUSION

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." To seek the kingdom of God is to seek to enter into it as we have pointed out. To seek his righteousness is to seek to live in harmony with all his commandments (Psa. 119:172). Place that in the context of I

John 3:9-10 and I John 5:18.

John 3:3-5 places emphasis upon the necessity of becoming children of God by being born into his family. These verses place emphasis upon living as children of God after we have been born into his family.

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NEEDED

WHAT IS NEEDED TODAY

I heard the late beloved brother Gus Nichols say on one occasion that he had never preached a single sermon with which he was satisfied. Those are my sentiments exactly. The gospel of Christ is so great, so marvelous, so wonderful that I know my very best efforts cannot do it justice. But in a very special way I feel my inadequacy to deal with the subject, "What is Needed Today." My first thought as I began preparing this speech was, "Who am I to tell my brethren what is needed?"

If I had to depend on my own wisdom in order to say what is needed, I would be at a total loss. But our problems in the church have been created because some have depended upon their own wisdom instead of the leadership God provides in the Bible. Human wisdom cannot provide the solution to these problems, but the Word of God can. We do need to use a great deal of wisdom, plain common sense, in the application of the Bible to the situation that has been the theme of this lectureship. I trust all of us will do that as we approach our study of "What is Needed Today."

DISCUSSION**I. SELF-EXAMINATION IS NEEDED.**

- A. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).
- B. This passage does not teach, as some suggest, that judging a doctrine or a practice to be right or wrong is forbidden. We must make judgments with reference to certain things.
 1. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). A judgment has to be made.
 2. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). This shows what kind of judgments should be made.
- C. Matthew 7:1-5 teaches that we should never be unrighteous in our judgment of others, and that our first obligation is to be sure our own lives are in line with the Word of God.
 1. True of preachers. First Timothy 4:16 says, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
 2. True of elders. Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
 3. True of all. Luke 17:3: "Take heed to yourselves."
- D. We cannot effectively maintain purity of doctrine in the church unless we ourselves also maintain purity of life.

II. FACING REALITY IS NEEDED.

- A. Some refuse to accept the fact brethren who were faithful and who were respected have now gone out from us. They do not now believe the truth which they formerly

preached.

- B. An eldership which has a known false teacher coming to speak to the church, and who, upon being warned of his false teaching says, "Well, we refuse to get ourselves involved in any brotherhood squabble," is doing a grave disservice to its own congregation and to the church of Christ in general.
- C. The church stands at the crossroads. It is high time we faced that fact.
- D. There is a difference between gloating over a brother's departure from the faith and accepting the fact that he has departed.
- E. John is called the Apostle of Love, but notice what he wrote in First John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." His great love did not keep him from facing the facts.

III. AN UNCOMPROMISING SPIRIT IS NEEDED.

- A. A church located next to a large university campus permitted certain unsound teachers to come and speak. An elder explained by saying that the college students who were members of the church came from churches representing every degree of liberalism and conservatism. In other words, we are compromising.
- B. Compromise in matters of personal preference is to be commended.
- C. But compromise in matters of truth and error is sinful, and will destroy the church.
- D. Second John 9-11 says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." This passage shows:
 - 1. That there is a difference between truth and error.
 - 2. That we can recognize that difference.
 - 3. That we are to do nothing to aid and abet the false teacher.
 - 4. That even bidding him God speed makes us partaker of his evil deeds.
- E. We must have an uncompromising spirit.

IV. BALANCE IS NEEDED.

- A. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).
 - 1. Jesus did not condemn them for paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin. He rather rebuked them for leaving off judgment, mercy, and faith.
 - 2. He said they should have done both.
- B. It is easy for one to neglect one aspect of the truth while concentrating on another.
 - 1. Ill.: Old preacher preached every sermon on baptism. Brethren did not want to hurt his feelings by telling him not to preach on baptism, so they suggested he preach on the text that says, "and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks" (Isaiah 2:4). He read the text and then said, "Swords and plowshares are made of steel. Axes are made of steel. In the winter time we use axes to cut through the ice so we can baptize people. And that brings me to my subject...."
 - 2. Let us not become so obsessed with exposing and refuting liberalism that we

neglect such subjects as:

- a. Purity of Heart and Life
 - b. Teaching the Lost
 - c. Prayer
 - d. Purity of speech
 - e. The Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace
 - f. Loving one Another
 - g. Right Attitudes, etc.
- C. Not all of our preaching should be negative. Second Timothy 4:2 says, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
- 1. We need sermons on the terror of the Lord, but we also need sermons on the love of God.
 - 2. On the wages of sin, but also on the gift of God.
 - 3. On the punishment of the wicked, but also on the reward of the righteous.
- D. We cannot afford to become one-sided in our emphasis.

V. TEACHING ON FUNDAMENTALS IS NEEDED.

- A. Webster says a fundamental is "Something that is an elemental part of a system, as a principle or law; an essential" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*).
- B. This would be things such as:
- 1. The Deity of Jesus
 - 2. The Inspiration of the Bible
 - 3. The Authority of the Scriptures
 - 4. The New Birth
 - 5. Membership in the Lord's church
 - 6. The Essentiality of Baptism
 - 7. Scriptural Worship
 - 8. The Identity of the Lord's church
- C. Instead of trying to come up with something new or clever, we need teaching on fundamentals. Years ago brother G. K. Wallace, speaking on the Freed-Hardeman Lectureship, said, "If you are looking for something to preach the people have never heard, try 'Philip and the Eunuch.' They probably haven't heard that in years in most places."
- D. A few months ago certain liberal brethren managed to split a fine congregation. In a letter to me, an elder of that church said, "Bobby, this whole experience has taught me many things. But, I am continually impressed with the fact that a congregation can't get enough of basic, first principle teaching and preaching."
- 1. I know for a fact that congregation had had over the years, from its pulpit, some of the finest and best preaching on fundamentals of any church in the country.
 - 2. But it may be like an elder at Sixth Avenue in Jasper, Alabama said several years ago as a problem was being discussed in a meeting of the elders: "Brethren, the truth has been preached forcefully and clearly from our pulpit over the years. Everybody knows that's true. But it has not been reinforced by the teachers in our Bible classes" (Henry Hyche).
- E. We need plain, fundamental, distinctive Bible preaching done from our pulpits and the

same kind of teaching done in our Bible classes.

VI. AN EMPHASIS ON THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY AND TOTAL RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES IS NEEDED.

- A. This may be our greatest need, and it may be that a neglect in this particular area is responsible for most of our problems.
- B. We need to emphasize that

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward [Psalm 19:7-11].
- C. The truth with reference to the all-sufficiency and total reliability of the Bible strikes at the heart of every religious error, both in and out of the church.
 1. Roman Catholicism has its traditions and pronouncement of the Pope, and the Bible is authoritative only when interpreted by official Catholic scholars. Can you see why? Imagine trying to make a Catholic out of one by teaching him to read and study his Bible and obey it and it alone.
 2. Mormonism. Bible, *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*. Imagine trying to make a Mormon by using the Bible alone!
 3. Conservative denominationalism. Claims allegiance to the Bible, but the Bible never settles anything. Instead, governed by own subjective leadings, inner feelings, hunches, experiences.
 4. The present *Change Movement*.
 - a. The Bible is a futile effort on the part of God to communicate his will to man. (God talk vs. Man talk.)
 - b. Bible was all man needed back in the fifties and sixties, but not now.
 - c. Bible is God's word, but must have some enlightenment by the Holy Spirit to understand it.
 - d. The Holy Spirit is leading them (in their departures from the faith).
 5. The Change Agents know their movement is doomed if they denigrate the Bible, and convince people that they cannot totally rely upon the Bible as being all-sufficient.
- D. There is little doubt in my mind that the moral decline in our society can be blamed in part--in large part--upon preachers. They have denigrated the Bible.
 1. Saying it is not the inerrant Word of God, or
 2. Saying we cannot understand it, or
 3. Saying it means one thing to you and another to me, or
 4. Saying just obeying "the spirit of the law, and not the letter," meaning, of course, we don't have to obey it in every point (baptism, L.S., Inst. Music, etc.)
 5. No wonder very few people in America any longer consider the Bible as the standard in morality!
- E. We need to get back to the kind of preaching and teaching that causes those we teach to say, as did the psalmist, "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:127-128).

CONCLUSION

I have mentioned six things that are needed if the church is to survive the present dangers of liberalism. No doubt, you could think of others. In conclusion I want to mention three things the church does not need. In fact these three things we simply cannot allow.

We cannot allow ourselves to be *discouraged*. There are still "seven thousand" who have not "bowed the knee to Baal." This present Liberal Movement in the church will do its damage; there is no doubt about that. But it will pass, like other movements that have disturbed the church through the centuries. And then it will be something else. Satan will never leave us alone for very long.

We cannot allow ourselves to be *distracted*. The goal is heaven. The blood of Christ is the means for getting people there. The gospel is the tool for bringing people into contact with the blood. Let us preach it with all its power, regardless of what others may do.

We cannot allow ourselves to become *disoriented*. A pilot for a large airliner crossing the Atlantic ocean at night began to look at the stars above as they were reflected in the sea below. Vertigo began to set in. He could not tell which way was up and which way was down. He felt his instruments were not functioning correctly. Realizing what was taking place, he cupped his hands around his face, glued his eyes to the instrument panel, and safely brought his aircraft to a landing.

Let us cup our hands around our faces, glue our eyes upon the word of God as our only guide, and we will safely bring ourselves and the church of the Lord to land safely in heaven at last.

WHAT MAKES THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UNIQUE?

The word unique means "being the only one of its kind." A usage note under the definition of unique in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language says:

"Unique, in a careful usage, is not preceded by adverbs that qualify it with respect to degree. Examples such as rather unique, with reference to a book, and the most unique, referring to the most unusual of a rare species of animals, are termed unacceptable . . . on the ground that the quality described by unique cannot be said to vary in degree or intensity and is therefore not capable of comparison.

Some who are members of the church of Christ say it is unique. Is this a true claim? Is it one of a kind? Are there no others like it? Or is it just one among many?

Let us examine the claim that is made for the uniqueness of the church of Christ, and see if it is a true claim. Just saying the church of Christ is unique does not make it so. If the church of Christ is unique, what makes it unique?

DISCUSSION

I. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT UNIQUE IN CONTENDING THAT THE BIBLE IS THE VERBALLY INSPIRED WORD OF GOD.

- A. This fact makes it different from many churches. Many reject the Bible account of creation, say that Adam and Eve were not real people, and deny the miracles of the Bible, including the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- B. On Sunday, November 15, 1992, the Birmingham News had an article featuring John Shelby Spong, an Episcopal Bishop who has written a number of books attacking the Bible's authenticity. Many, if not most, members of the Episcopal Church do not agree with Bishop Spong.
- C. Many in other denominations would be surprised to learn that their own preachers, if pressured, would admit they do not believe the Bible to be the inerrant word of God.
- D. Either the Bible is the inspired word of God, or else it is filled with false claims, and therefore not worthy of belief at all.
 1. Paul wrote: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ." (II Timothy 3:16).
 2. To the Thessalonians he wrote: "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God . . ." (I Thess. 2:13).
 3. Peter wrote: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).
 4. Paul cautioned the Corinthians: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37).
- E. But the church of Christ is not unique in emphasizing that the Bible is God's book. The teaching of evolution and atheistic humanism are being opposed by conservative preachers and church leaders in many denominations. The church of Christ is not unique in this sense.

II. CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE NOT UNIQUE IN RECOGNIZING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- A. This distinction is emphasized in a number of passages:
 1. The Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, wrote: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31). This Old Testament

passage was quoted by one of the writers of the New Testament. That writer was showing that the law of Moses had been abolished, and the "new covenant," the testament of Christ had come into force (Hebrews 8:6-13).

2. Colossians 2:14 says: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." This says Jesus abolished the Old Testament ("handwriting of ordinances") when he die on the cross.
 3. This being the case, Paul wrote that he was a minister of the new testament (II Cor. 3:6). In the very next verse he refers to that which was written and engraven in stones as "the ministration of death." And in verse 11 he said it was "done away."
 4. In Romans 13:9 it is affirmed that all the moral obligations of a man toward his fellow man, as implied in the ten commandments, are embraced in the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
- B. But the church of Christ is not unique in recognizing the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
1. Just consider the fact that most religious people in America who worship at all do so on Sunday, the first day of the week, rather than on the Old Testament sabbath, which would be Saturday.
 2. Notice also that most do not offer animal sacrifices, as were required by the Old Testament.

III. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT UNIQUE IN ITS REFUSAL TO USE MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP.

- A. There is nothing inherently wrong with instrumental music. It is instrumental music in worship that we are talking about.
- B. It is true that our refusal to use instruments in our worship wets us apart from most in the religious world. Is there any real reason why churches of Christ do not use instruments in worship?
1. Every passage in the New Testament which refers to music in worship identifies that music as singing: Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; I Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13.
 2. We are warned not to go beyond the teaching of the New Testament (II John 9).
 3. Jesus taught that our worship must be in spirit and in truth. Worshiping in truth means worshiping according to the instruction in God's word. John 17:17 says: "Thy word is truth."
 4. God accepted the worship of Abel and rejected the worship of Cain, because the worship of Abel was what God had authorized, and the worship of Cain was not what God had authorized.
 5. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, lost their lives for worshiping in a way not authorized by God.
 6. If we play instruments in our worship, we are worshiping in a way not authorized by God.
 7. Instruments of music in worship were not used for centuries after the church was established, and was opposed by most of the reformers, such as Luther and Calvin.
 8. The fact instruments were available to the early church, and had been used in Old Testament worship, and yet were not used by the early church suggests there must have been some good reason why they were not used.
 9. It is universally agreed that singing without the instrument is acceptable as worship. Why do otherwise?
- C. But a cappella singing does not make the church of Christ unique. The Greek Orthodox Church and some Primitive Baptist churches do not use the instrument in worship, and for the same reasons stated.

IV. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT UNIQUE IN ITS OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER ON A WEEKLY BASIS.

- A. It is true most religious groups eat the Lord's supper quite infrequently. Some eat it as often as monthly, I am told. Others quarterly, semi-annually, or annually.
- B. While religious people are not in agreement with reference to how frequently the supper should be eaten, Bible scholars are generally agreed upon the frequency with which it was eaten by Christians during the first century. In commenting on Acts 20:7, here are some of the remarks of the best known Bible commentators:
 - 1. "... intimating by this, that they were accustomed to receive the holy sacrament on each Lord's day" (Adam Clarke, Methodist).
 - 2. "This is also an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians" (A. C. Hervey, D. D., Church of England, in Pulpit Commentary).
 - 3. "It is probable that the apostles and early Christians celebrated the Lord's supper on every Lord's day" (Albert Barnes, Presbyterian).
- C. In Acts 20:7, the language the writer uses ("upon the first day of the week") with reference to the Lord's supper is identical to the language used in I Corinthians 16:2 with reference to the contribution ("upon the first day of the week"). Why is the contribution taken every week (and sometimes several times a week), but the Lord's supper observed only once in a great while?
- D. But the weekly observance of the Lord's supper does not make the church of Christ unique. Those who call themselves Independent Christian Churches eat the supper on a weekly basis, as do those churches which are identified as Disciples of Christ.

V. CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE NOT UNIQUE IN THEIR STAND ON BAPTISM.

- A. In this also churches of Christ are set apart from many in the religious world, but not from all.
- B. Many practice infant baptism. The Bible teaches that those baptized must be:
 - 1. Those who have heard and believed the gospel (Mark 16:15-16). Infants are not capable of believing.
 - 2. Those who have turned their hearts from sin in repentance (Acts 2:38). Infants have no sins for which to repent, and they have not the ability to repent.
 - 3. Those who have confessed their faith in Christ (Acts 8:37). Infants have no faith in Christ, and could not confess if they did.
 - 4. For these reasons infants are not subjects of Bible baptism.
- C. Many practice sprinkling or pouring and call it baptism.
 - 1. Bible baptism is a burial in water (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
 - 2. The word baptize is translated from a Greek word which means to immerse.
 - 3. Pouring was first practiced by Pope Stephen II, and his action was ratified by the Council of Ravenna in 1311. Sprinkling came even later.
 - 4. Bible baptism is immersion in water.
- D. Many practice Baptism for the wrong purpose. They say it is merely an outward sign, or that one is baptized because he has already been saved, or that one is baptized to get into the church, or that baptism is essential to obedience but not to salvation. According to the New Testament, baptism:
 - 1. Saves (I Peter 3:21).
 - 2. Washes away sins (Acts 22:16).
 - 3. Is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 - 4. Puts one into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3).

- E. But its Biblical stand on Baptism does not make the church of Christ unique. For example, Baptist churches reject infant baptism and practice immersion. Those who refer to themselves as Independent Christian Churches, and those who refer to themselves as Disciples of Christ practice baptism for the remission of sins.

VI. OTHER AREAS IN WHICH CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE DIFFERENT FROM MANY BUT NOT UNIQUE

- A. Congregational independence, with Christ the only head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23).
- B. The use of Scriptural names, such as the name Christian to denote an individual member of the church, or church of God and church of Christ as designations for the church itself (Acts 11:26; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16).
- C. Emphasis on the Bible teaching concerning godliness, holiness, abstinence from the world (Romans 12:2; I Timothy 4:12; James 4:4; I John 2:15-17).
- D. Stressing the importance of benevolent work to relieve human suffering and of evangelistic work to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ (Galatians 6:10; I Timothy 5:16; Acts 8:4; Mark 16:15).
- E. All these are stressed in the church of Christ, but there are other churches which also stress all these. Stressing these things does not make the church of Christ unique.

VII. IF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT UNIQUE IN ANY ONE OF THESE THINGS, THEN IS IT UNIQUE?

- A. No one of these things discussed makes the church of Christ unique, but all of them together do.
- B. In other words, it is only in the church of Christ where people are found to be clinging to the Bible in all these different areas at the same time.
 - 1. For example, Denomination A may hold to the truth on the inspiration of the Bible, but not on the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
 - 2. Denomination B may hold to the truth with reference to the distinction between the Old and New Testaments, but be in error on the subject of instrumental music in worship.
 - 3. Perhaps Denomination C rejects the use of instruments in worship, but does not eat the Lord's supper each Sunday.
- C. But in the churches of Christ, one can find people clinging tenaciously to the truth of God's word on all these subjects. Where else would one find this? It is in this sense that the church of Christ is unique.

CONCLUSION

Is it not important for us to hold to all of the truth on every subject? The Psalmist wrote: "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:128). Shouldn't that very attitude be ours?

There is at least one other thing that makes the church of Christ unique. It is unique in that it is the only institution on earth one becomes a member of by doing only what the Bible teaches one to do to become a Christian. When one hears and believes the gospel (John 8:24), repents (Acts 17:30-31), confesses Christ (Matthew 10:32-33), and is baptized to have his sins forgiven (Acts 2:38), he is added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47). Doing these things makes him a member of no other institution, but it does make him a member of the church of Christ.

WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS

Galatians 6:14; I Corinthians 1:18

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18).

These two passages emphasize that the theme of the gospel of Christ is the cross of Christ. Some have always placed emphasis on the moral and social benefits of the gospel while saying little or nothing about the fact that atonement for sin had to be made in order for man to be forgiven.

What do you see when you look at the cross of Christ? When I Survey The Wondrous Cross:

DISCUSSION

I. I SEE THAT SIN IS A REALITY

A. Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Notice that: "of us all." READ ENTIRE CHAPTER

B. One of the problems in getting people to obey the gospel is the problem of getting them to see they are lost because of their own sins.

1. Rom. 3:10: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." ✓ 10-18

2. Verse 23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

3. Eccl. 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."

C. Heb. 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

D. Many efforts are made to minimize the reality of sin, or to explain it away.

1. Sin and salvation are both rather old-fashioned words, which at present are not very popular in polite intellectual society. GA. 1:6-12

2. Salvation consists in the attainment of a desirable type of personality and satisfactory relationship with other personalities.

3. We are not sinners; we are victims of circumstances. Our misdeeds are misfortunes rather than faults or sins.

E. But when I survey the wondrous cross, I know sin is real.

II. I SEE THE SELFISH NATURE OF SIN

A. The very nature of sin is selfishness. There never was a sin committed

that was not the choice of self in preference to God. In other words, there are two courses to follow:

1. I can do what God wants me to do, or
 2. I can do what I want to do instead. I sin only when I do this, and never when I do the first.
- B. But the cross is a perfect picture of unselfishness.
- ✓ 1. John 6:38: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."
 2. Matthew 26:39: "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."
 3. Matthew 26:42: "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."
- C. How can I be so selfish as to sin, when I survey the wondrous cross and see the selfish nature of sin?

III. I SEE GOD'S HATRED OF SIN

- A. His very nature demands this. Habakkuk 1:13: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." God cannot be God and tolerate iniquity.
- B. In order for God to be righteous, sin cannot go unpunished.
1. Romans 3:25-26: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; {26} To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."
 2. The punishment for sin is not a slap on the wrist. Look at the cross if you want to know how God hates sin.
- C. If God hates sin so much, what should be my attitude toward it?

IV. I SEE GOD'S LOVE FOR SINNERS

- A. John 3:16
- B. I John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."
- C. I confess to you, I cannot understand that kind of love for cruel and sinful man.
- D. Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
- E. ~~I challenge you to survey the wondrous cross and say God does not love you.~~

CONSLUSION

Read the words of the song, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

WHY IS JESUS COMING AGAIN?

Acts 1:9-11

Scout Sunday
Justin Keel
M2 How ever
C/21/ R. B. Stewart

Q+A
Team
#2

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

Those of us who believe the Bible believe that Jesus of Nazareth was born the Son of God, that he lived a perfectly sinless life, died on the cross to atone for the sins of the world, and was raised from the dead on the third day. Forty days later he ascended to heaven in a cloud, according to the passage we have just read. This passage describes the ascension of Jesus from the earth. Another passage, Daniel 7:13-14, describes his arrival in heaven. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).

The text we read at the beginning tells us Jesus is coming again. First Thessalonians 4:16-17 also tells us he is coming again: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

When will this coming take place? No man knows. As we approach the end of our millennium many prognosticators are claiming to know, but they are mistaken. Jesus himself said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). Some think they see signs pointing to the time of his coming in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, but the signs given there are pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in A. D. 70. If God had wanted us to know the *when* of his coming he would have revealed it to us in his word.

The question we will consider at this time is, Why is Jesus coming again?

DISCUSSION**I. NOT TO DIE FOR OUR SINS.**

- A. He did that the first time. First Corinthians 15:3 says that Christ "died for our sins according to the scriptures."
- B. Hebrews 9:27-28: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:27-28).

II. NOT TO SET UP HIS KINGDOM OR TO REIGN ON DAVID'S THRONE.

- A. He also set up his kingdom and began his reign on the throne of David the first time he came.
- B. If he didn't, there are people on earth today who would make Methudelah seem like a spring chicken. "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).
- C. The church is the kingdom.
 1. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).
 2. "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for

the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9).

III. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO RAISE THE DEAD.

- A. First Corinthians 15:20-23: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."
- B. First Thessalonians 4:16: 1 Thessalonians 4:16 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

IV. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO CHANGE THE LIVING.

- A. When we say all will die, we must remember that the exception is that generation of people who will be living on the earth when Jesus comes again. They will not die.
- B. First Corinthians 15:51-54: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

V. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO JUDGE THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE.

- A. Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:"
- B. Second Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."
- C. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."
- D. Revelation 20:11-15 "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
- E. Yes, there are some who scoff at the idea of the Lord's coming in judgment. 2 Peter 3:3-11 "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with

fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

- F. This judgment is just as sure as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Acts 17:30-31 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

VI. JESUS IS COMING TO DESTROY THIS EARTH.

- A. 2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
- B. Jesus will never set foot on earth again. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
- C. The earth will not be here, as we have seen from Second Peter 3:10.

VII. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO RECEIVE THE SAVED INTO HEAVENLY MANSIONS.

- A. John 14:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."
- B. Matthew 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

VIII. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO CONSIGN THE UNSAVED TO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

- A. Matthew 25:40 "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."
- B. We can get a glimpse of this eternal punishment in Luke 16.

IX. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO DELIVER UP THE KINGDOM TO GOD.

- A. 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 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. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."
- B. He will cease to reign, not begin to reign, when he comes again.

CONCLUSION

It is certain that Jesus will come again. We do not know when, but we know he is coming. Notice the words of our invitation song:

There's a great day coming, A great day coming,
There's a great day coming by and by;
When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left,
Are you ready for that day to come?

There's a bright day coming, A bright day coming,
There's a bright day coming by and by;
But its brightness shall only come to them that love the Lord,
Are you ready for that day to come?

There's a sad day coming, A sad day coming,
There's a sad day coming by and by;
When the sinner shall hear his doom, "Depart, I know you not,"
Are you ready for that day to come?

If you are not ready for that day to come, prepare now, before it is too late.

Why Peter Failed

One of greatest success stories in the N.T. has to do with the apostle Peter. He stood before an audience of perhaps 100,000 & preached. About 3,000 obeyed the gospel on that day.

But he had not always succeeded, even in his own faithfulness. In fact, a little more than seven weeks earlier he had actually denied knowing the Christ which he preached on this day, crying & swearing that he did not.

Our lesson has to do with Peter's failure - his denying the Lord. I will mention four reasons for Peter's failure.

Discussion

I. Peter Failed Because He Boasted Too Much

- A. After instituting the L.S. Jesus had told his disciples "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now." Peter had replied, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." (Jn. 13:37) Our Lord's response was: "Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice." (Mt. 14:30)
- B. According to Lk. 22:33 he said: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."
- C. Mt. 26:33 - "Though all men shall be offended, because of thee, yet will I never be offended."

- D. Elder brother: "So, these many years...." (Lk. 15:1)
- E. Publican (Lk. 18) "~~God~~ Father, I thank thee...."
- F. 1 Cor. 10:12 "Wherefore, let him...."
- G. Gal. 6:1 "Brethren, If a man...."
- H. Let us be careful to exercise humility
 - 1. Jas. 4:6 "God resisteth the proud...."
 - 2. Lk. 14:11 "For whosoever ~~exalteth~~ himself...."
 - 3. 1 Pet. 5:6 "Humble yourselves...."

II. Peter Failed Because He Prayed Too Little

- A. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. The disciples waited for him, but no indication they prayed. Instead they slept. (Mt. 26:40)
 - 1. Said specifically to Peter: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (v. 40).
 - 2. Then he added: "Watch and pray...." (v. 41)
 But Peter didn't pray. Went back to sleep (v. 43)
- B. Do You Really Want to Succeed in Living the Christian Life?
 - 1. Mt. 6:13 "And lead us not into...."
 - 2. Note the Lord's admonition to Peter: "Watch and pray...." (Mt. 26:41).
- C. Remember: Prayer is not the mere saying of words, but an expression to God of the sincere desire of the heart.

III. Peter Failed Because He "Followed After Off." (Lk. 22:54)

- A. His sympathies were with Jesus, but he personally wanted to keep a safe distance. Not too close. might get involved in some disturbance.

B. Some today. Sympathies are with the church, the side of truth, of right. But observe from a distance without ever getting involved.

1. Yrs. ago, when the battle was raging over methods of benevolence & church cooperation, a preacher whispered to me his appreciation for the stand I took & the writing I was doing. Why whisper?
2. Some follow to save conscience, but follow far off to save their reputation.
3. Do not want to get much involved in work of church, but satisfy conscience by being members of church.

C. Songs we sing: (Are We Sincere?)

1. Just a closer walk
2. Nearer my God to Thee
3. Nearer Still Nearer
4. Draw Me Nearer

IV. Peter Failed Because of the Chose His Companions Carelessly.

A. Lk. 22:54 "And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them." Probably to keep from being identified as a disciple of the Lord.

1. If you want to hide your identity as a Xian, this is one way.
2. The cursing he did later is another way (Mk. 14:70-71). "But he began to curse & to swear

B. Bible has much to say about imp. of choosing right kind of companions.

1. 1 Cor. 15:33 - "Be not deceived: evil communi...."
2. 1 Cor. 5:6 "Know ye not that a little leaven...."
3. Prov. 13:20 "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
4. Look what happened to Sat (Dan. 19).
5. Ps. 1:1 "Blessed is the man...."

Conclusion

One might say that there is really no difference between Peter + Judas. But there are two great differences:

- (1) The sin of Peter was unintentional, through fear and weakness of faith; Judas sinned according to plan + purpose.
 - (2) Judas did not repent in order to be forgiven; Peter repented, and gave the rest of his life in faithful service to the Lord he had denied.
- Friend, do not make the mistakes Peter made. Of more importance, do not make the mistake of not repenting + obtaining God's pardon.

withdrafel

QUESTIONS ABOUT WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP

II Thessalonians 3:6; Ephesians 5:11

This morning I must speak to you on a subject that is not very pleasant for us to think about, but which is an essential part of God's will: Withdrawing Fellowship.

Please listen with more than casual interest. Because of an announcement that will be made at the close of this service, you need to pay very special attention to the lesson from the word of God that will be presented during the next few minutes.

I believe one of the very best ways to study any subject is by asking and answering questions on that subject. Please consider with me some questions about withdrawing fellowship and the Bible answers to those questions.

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT IS WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP?

- A. It is the ultimate or climactic act of church discipline.
 1. I would emphasize that withdrawing fellowship is not the sum total of church discipline.
 2. Church discipline involves a great deal, but this lesson is not on the subject of church discipline; it is on the ultimate or climactic act of discipline, the withdrawing of fellowship.
- B. Withdrawing fellowship is exactly what the words suggest.
 1. To *withdraw* something is to take it away, or take it back, or remove it.
 2. *Fellowship* is companionship. But it is a special kind of companionship. The *New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the American Language* gives the following definition of fellowship: "The companionship of individuals in a congenial atmosphere and on equal terms."
 3. To withdraw fellowship is to withdraw that companionship.
- C. For example, it means if you and I have been playing golf, or going fishing, or going out to eat together, the withdrawal of fellowship from me would mean you could no longer do those things with me.
- D. We practice withdrawal of fellowship only in connection with those who are our brethren, and not in connection with those who are of the world.
 1. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (I Corinthians 5:9-11).
 2. A word of caution: Even in our associations with those in the world we should never do anything that might leave the impression we endorse anything that is out of harmony with the will of God.
 3. We need to remember also the words of First Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."
 4. While it may be necessary for a Christian to stop associating with certain of his former friends in the world for various reasons, what we are here discussing is withdrawing from brothers and sisters in Christ who have ceased to be faithful.

II. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP?

- A. To bring to repentance a brother or sister who has become unfaithful.
 1. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Corinthians 5:4-5).
 2. Some get the impression withdrawing fellowship is an act of vengeance, or is cruel. But it is for the purpose of saving the soul, just like baptism.
 3. The parent who exercises proper discipline is not being cruel or taking vengeance.
 4. In the case of the man at Corinth who had taken his father's wife, it worked. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (II Corinthians 2:6-7).
- B. A second purpose for withdrawing fellowship is to keep sin from permeating the church.
 1. Notice what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth as they were tolerating the sinful man in their fellowship instead of withdrawing from him: "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (I Corinthians 5:6).
 2. What do we say about one rotten apple in a barrel?
 3. When sin is tolerated, it encourages others to sin. Withdrawing from impenitent delinquents encourages faithfulness.
- C. A third purpose for withdrawing fellowship is to protect the good name of the church in the community.
 1. "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as it is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife" (I Corinthians 5:1).
 2. The term *Gentile* is here used to designate those who have no thought of pleasing God, that is, the people of the world. The idea is not literally that such people never are guilty of such sins, but that even they do not approve of it.
 3. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15).
 4. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).
 5. The only way the church can maintain its good name in the community is for it to exclude from its fellowship those who persist in sin and will not repent.

III. WHAT KINDS OF SIN REQUIRE A WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP?

- A. Sins of immorality. The man Paul discusses in First Corinthians 5 is an example.
- B. Sins of causing division and offenses by the teaching of error. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).
- C. The sin of non-attendance. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (II Thessalonians 3:6).
 1. Some falsely reason that one who quits attending has already withdrawn himself, and therefore, we cannot withdraw from him. But remember what withdrawing is, as we have pointed out.
 2. "Disorderly" is translated from a form of a Greek verb which is used of soldiers' quitting

the ranks. I do not know of anything a child of God could which would more nearly be described by that word than simply stopping his attendance.

IV. WHO IS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP?

- A. The answer to this, of course, is the elders of the church, the same ones whose responsibility it is to lead the congregation in every phase of its activities.
 - 1. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).
 - 2. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).
 - 3. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:1-3).
- B. No congregation which has elders can successfully withdraw fellowship from anyone if the elders do not take the lead in the action.

V. WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO CARRY OUT THE ACTION OF WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP?

- A. That responsibility belongs to every member of the congregation.
- B. I do not know of one verse in the entire Bible dealing with the subject of withdrawing fellowship that was addressed to elders, but to all of us who are Christians.
- C. It can never accomplish any of its purposes unless all members of the church cooperate.
- D. When one fails to cooperate in the action of withdrawing fellowship, it is usually the very one whose cooperation would have been most effective in bringing about repentance.
 - 1. For example, suppose an announcement of withdrawal from you should be made from this pulpit, and the only ones who cooperate in the withdrawal are those who do not even know you. Those who are your friends refuse to cooperate. That withdrawal would not make much difference to you. In such a case you have not actually lost any fellowship at all.
 - 2. But suppose your closest friends cooperate in the action, and stop associating with you in a social way? That would make a difference, and might bring about your repentance.
- E. Be sure you do not help your friend to remain in impenitence by refusing to cooperate in a withdrawal of fellowship. Remember, it is to save him from hell.

VI. WHAT STEPS LEAD TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP?

- A. It must be understood that a withdrawal of fellowship should never be done hastily or without exhausting every other reasonable and practical effort to restore the unfaithful.
- B. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).
 - 1. Notice that: "in the spirit of meekness."
 - 2. Notice also that "Brethren" are the ones charged with the duty of restoring those overtaken in a fault.
- C. Our elders at Adamsville have been very patient, even after they made a decision to start practicing what had for years been neglected--the withdrawing from those who persisted in unfaithfulness.

1. Those who miss services were written letters to tell them they were missed. This first letter contains no rebuke and no accusation of unfaithfulness. I and many of you have receive these letters.
2. When absence persists, then a second letter, and a third are sent.
3. The elders themselves make personal visits to those who continue to absent themselves from the services.
4. If it is determined that the person is not being faithful--that is, is not sick or missing for some other legitimate reason, then other letters are sent, and these are more personal. In these there are offers of assistance, an exhortation to be restored, and an expressed wish that the person would come or call and talk to an elder or to one of our preachers.
5. Other personal visits are made by the elders.
6. The elders then solicit the help of the congregation in restoring those who have not yet responded in a positive way to their efforts. In order to do this, the names of those who need to be restored are announced to the congregation. (This was done here on March 30 of this year (1996).
7. Still other visits are made, and then a letter is sent to the unfaithful telling him that an announcement of withdrawal from his is to take place on a certain date. If repentance is not forthcoming, then that letter is read to the congregation on the date specified, and it is announced that that person or those persons are to be withdrawn from.
8. I do not believe that anyone could rightfully accuse our elders of not being patient and loving in the efforts they have put forth to restore the erring. That includes the announcement of withdrawal of fellowship which is to take place this morning.

CONCLUSION

The home cannot successfully accomplish its mission without discipline. There must be rules, and there must be some appropriate consequences for violating the rules. Otherwise the rules are worthless. Our government has laws. But laws are no good unless there are appropriate consequences for violating the laws. That is one major thing wrong in our society today; law violaters are not dealt with appropriately. But in the church there must also be appropriate consequences for violating God's will. The withdrawal of fellowship is what God has determined is the appropriate consequence of becoming unfaithful and refusing to repent and be restored.

If you are not a Christian

WORDS OF HOPE: LIFTING UP GOD**Psalm 95**

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. (2) Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. (3) For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. (4) In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. (5) The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. (6) O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. (7) For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, (8) Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: (9) When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. (10) Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: (11) Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

We can say without hesitancy that this psalm was written by David, for Hebrews 4:7 says, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This is a direct quotation from this psalm. Hebrews 3:7 quotes from this psalm and attributes what it says to the Holy Ghost. That does not surprise any of us who understand that the Bible was written by men, but its Author is the Holy Spirit of God.

In this psalm a contrast is drawn between God and man. His worthiness vs. our unworthiness. His power vs. our weakness. His greatness vs. our littleness. His goodness vs. our waywardness. An understanding of these will help us to have the proper reverence for god. It will help us to exalt him in our hearts.

As we turn our attention to this psalm, which is a call to worship, to lift up God, to praise him, let us first make some observations concerning worship in general. We will then notice some valuable lessons from this psalm specifically.

DISCUSSION**I. OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING WORSHIP IN GENERAL.**

- A. We learn the specifics of Christian worship from the New Testament, but from the Old Testament we learn about the God we worship. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."
 - 1. This is not to say we learn nothing about the nature of God from the New Testament. But think of how much we learn about the kind of God we serve from reading the Old Testament.
 - 2. If you wonder about his power, read about the creation, the flood, and the deliverance from Egyptian bondage.
 - 3. If you wonder about his providence, read about Joseph.
 - 4. If you wonder about his promises, read about Abraham.
 - 5. If you wonder if he is in charge of what happens in this old world, read the book of Daniel and the book of Esther.
 - 6. If you doubt whether he can really over rule everything that happens and make it work out for the ultimate good of his children, then read the book of Ruth.
 - 7. If you think one can sin and get by, read about the children of Israel in the wilderness, the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath, about Uzzah, about Achan.
- B. There is a relationship between the way we worship and the way we live.
 - 1. Lack of reverence for the person of God and lack of respect for the word of God go hand in hand.

2. To say the same thing in other words, the man or woman who is lackadaisical with reference to worship will also be lackadaisical with reference to the way he or she lives.
 3. Is that not evident from what has taken place in our society? For a long time worship in the average denominational church has been little more than an effort to entertain the people, and morality has constantly declined.
 4. Now in the church the same thing is taking place. Some insist on changing worship to make it fit the felt needs of the worshipers.
 5. More emphasis is being placed on what makes the worshiper feel good and less on showing adoration and reverence for God.
 6. How well are we doing in keeping our people from divorce and remarriage, abortion, drug addiction, drinking, immodest apparel? Perhaps a more appropriate question would be, how much preaching are we hearing on these things?
 7. When Isaiah got a vision of God (Isaiah 6) he was then ready to go and do the will of God. We need to see God as he is.
- C. Worship is an act, not just an attitude.
1. Worship must flow forth from the right attitude. This is what is meant by John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - a. "In spirit" means it must flow forth from the proper spirit. It must be from the heart.
 - b. "In truth" means it must be the right act or actions.
 2. Matthew 15:8-9 shows that worship is not merely having the right attitude. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (They engaged in worship, but the attitude was lacking. Worship is not the attitude but the act. In order to be acceptable the act must spring from the right attitude.)
- D. Worship is not something one does twenty-four hours a day.
1. It is true the Christian belongs to God twenty-four hours a day. But worship is something he does at specific times.
 2. If one takes the position that whatever the Christian does is worship, he will have to accept the idea either that there is nothing wrong with instrumental music in worship or else that it is sinful to play a musical instrument at any time.
 3. It is a misuse of Colossians 3:17 to try to make it mean everything the Christian does is worship. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - a. R. C. H. Lenski, in his commentary on this verse says,
To do "all things in the name of the Lord Jesus" means "in connection with the revelation of the Lord Jesus." It means that absolutely everything (even our eating and drinking, I Cor. 10:31) is to be done in the light of the revelation of our Lord and harmonize with that revelation. It ever reveals Jesus as our Savior-Lord to whom we belong absolutely and altogether.
 - b. Dr. James Macknight, in his commentary on the epistles, says Colossians 3:17 means, "*And whatever ye speak or do, do all agreeably to the character and will of the Lord Jesus.*"
 - c. If you buy an automobile or some other piece of property, you take certain papers down to the courthouse and have a title registered in your name. It belongs to you.
 - d. So the Christian does everything he does in full realization of the fact he belongs to Christ. He is himself "in the name of the Lord Jesus," that is, he belongs to him.
- E. Worship is something in which all are to engage.
1. Verse 1 of this psalm says, "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."

2. In some cases worship periods have become periods in which a few put on a show for the audience.
 - a. The only audience we have when we come to worship is God. All of us are participants.
 - b. Efforts to change worship to make it more appealing to the people overlooks its purpose.
 - c. The pressure that is sometimes put on preachers to preach sermons that make people feel good about themselves ignores the purpose of worship.
 - d. If you want to know the real meaning and purpose of worship, then look at the word's first occurrence in Scripture. "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Genesis 22:5).
3. Worship is paying homage to God, with no thought of pleasing ourselves.
 - a. What honor is there to God if I worship him by doing what I want to do. Like the man who buys his wife a new bass boat or new shotgun for her birthday.
 - b. Same thing could be said about arguing there is nothing wrong with the instrument, "because we like it." God is not honored when I do to honor him just what pleases me. It is only by humbly submitting to his instructions for worship that I honor him in worship.

II. **THIS PSALM SPEAKS POSITIVELY, BUT IT ALSO SPEAKS NEGATIVELY.**

- A. Some in our time clamor for positive preaching.
 1. "Tell us about the praiseworthiness of God, but not about the unworthiness of sinful man."
 2. "We want to hear about the joys of serving God, but not about the terrors of being God's enemies."
 3. "Talk to us about heaven for the righteous, but not about hell for the wicked."
- B. God's people should be a happy people, but it is our duty to speak both positively and negatively.
 1. If my computer counted correctly, the phrase, "thou shalt not," occurs 240 times in the Bible.
 2. Eight of the ten commandments are negative (Exodus 20:1-17),
 3. There are two negatives and one positive in Second Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
- C. There is little doubt in my mind that one of the reasons for the moral decline in our society and in the church is because we have accentuated the positive and eliminated the negative, as the old song suggests.

III. **THIS PSALM EMPHASIZES BOTH THE GOODNESS AND THE SEVERITY OF GOD.**

- A. Verses 1-7a emphasize his goodness, greatness, and praiseworthiness. Verses 7b-11 emphasize his severity.
- B. Romans 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Only verse in the Bible where we find the word *severity*, and here it is used twice. Greek means sharpness, roughness, rigor, or (as in AV) severity. Idea of such is found throughout the Bible.
- C. Do we rely too heavily on the goodness of God?
 1. I'm not suggesting we have overestimated his goodness. Impossible.
 2. But something seems wrong when intelligent people are indifferent toward God.
 3. Do people suppose that, because of his goodness, love, mercy, grace, he will overlook our indifference and take us home to glory despite the fact we refuse to take his plan for our lives seriously?

4. Yes, I know what John 3:16 says. Yes, I know First John 4:16 says, "God is love." I know also about passages which talk about his marvelous mercy and his amazing grace.
5. But look what is said in Psalm 103:17-18: But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting [Watch it, now!] upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; [Watch it again!] to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."
6. Yes, Paul wrote and preached about God's other attributes, but in Romans 11:22 he said, "I want you know about God's severity as well as his goodness. I want you to know about his wrath, as well as his mercy."

D. Notice some demonstrations of God's severity.

1. Adam and Eve. "The majesty of divine law must be maintained. For his own good, man must learn respect for order, for Supreme Authority. Must learn submission, subjection, obedience."
2. Cain. "And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (Genesis 4:10-12).
3. Joshua 7. Achan. "Stone that man. Get rid of him. Rebellion and disobedience cannot become the order of the day. It will destroy Israel."
4. First Chronicles 13. More than forty years earlier the ark had been captured, and when it was returned it was returned on a new cart being pulled by two cows. When David became king forty years later, he decided he liked the new way of transporting the ark, so he put it on a new cart and it was pulled by oxen. Two of David's nephews drove the oxen, in disobedience to God's instructions every step of the way. They came to a certain place, the oxen stumbled, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark, and God smote. David was displeased; thought the Lord was unfair. Later he sent the priests to fetch the ark, and told them to bear the ark on a pole on their shoulders like God had commanded them. He said, "For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order" (I Chronicles 15:13). You may call it "old fogey," "traditional," "cultural," "hard line," or whatever you will, but those who will escape the severity of God are those who seek him "after the due order."

E. "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

F. We must be impressed with the severity of God.

IV. NOTICE THE EMPHASIS ON TODAY.

A. "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

V. NOTICE THE WARNING AGAINST HARDENING THE HEART.

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