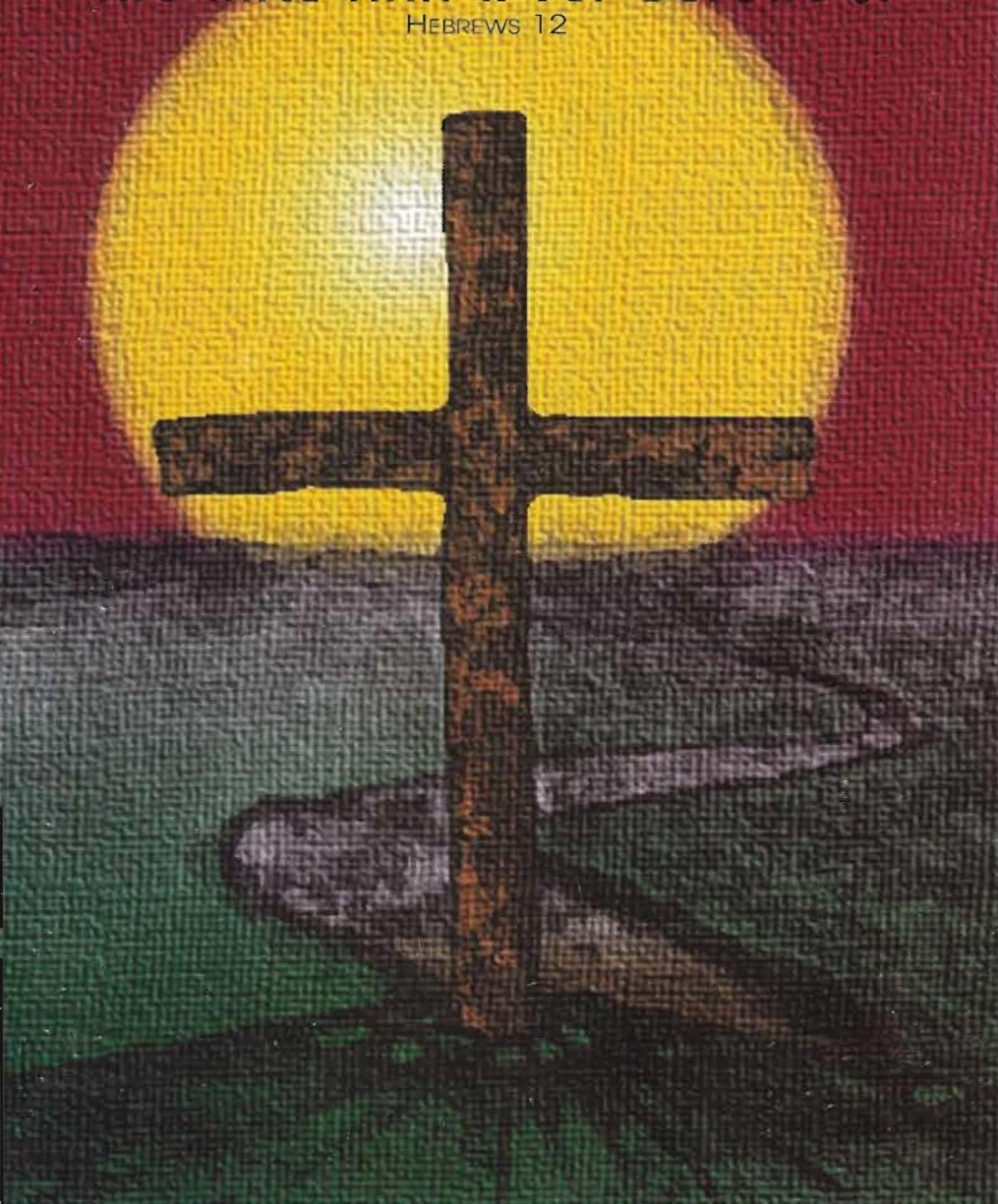


THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL
GARFIELD HEIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST
LECTURESHIP

"THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US"

HEBREWS 12



The Garfield Heights Church of Christ

Presents

THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL LECTURESHIP

The Race That Is Set Before Us

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Lectureship Director

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Table of Contents

An Overview Of The Book Of Hebrews <i>Ferrell Hester</i>	5
Background — Hebrews 11 <i>Kenneth Burluson</i>	19
The Race That Is Set Before Us <i>John M. Grubb</i>	34
We Can Be Successful In Running The Race <i>Guy F. Hester</i>	53
The Race Demands Patience <i>Ferrell Hester</i>	63
The Laborers Are Few (What Can We Do To Get Local Brethren More Involved?) <i>Garland M. Robinson</i>	75
The Race Demands Keeping Our Eye on the Goal <i>James W. Boyd</i>	89
Obstacles To The Race: The New Hermeneutic And New Unity Movement <i>Robert R. Taylor, Jr.</i>	97
What Can We Do To Evangelize The World? <i>Garland M. Robinson</i>	111
The Challenge Of Becoming All Things To All Men Without Compromising The Faith <i>Robert R. Taylor, Jr.</i>	123
The Race Demands Humility <i>Guy Hester</i>	137
Multiplying Ministries Movement <i>Holger Neubauer</i>	146

The Spirit Of Compromise Among Us <i>Ronnie Whittemore</i>	157
The Problem Of Immorality In The Modern World <i>James W. Boyd</i>	174
The Challenge Of Maintaining The Home <i>Ronnie Whittemore</i>	183
Hindrances To World Evangelism <i>Holger Neubauer</i>	203
The Race Demands Keeping A Proper Attitude <i>Dean Buchanan</i>	214
Overcoming Persecution In Running The Race <i>Kenneth Burleson</i>	230
The Race Demands An Unwavering Faith <i>Joe Gilmore</i>	245
The Hindrance Of Discouragement And How To Overcome It <i>Dean Buchanan</i>	256
The Challenge Of Maintaining Our Personal Bible Study And Prayer <i>Gary Colley</i>	272
False Concepts Of Church Growth And Modern Missionary Societies <i>John M. Grubb</i>	284
Christ, Our Perfect Example In Running The Race <i>Joe Gilmore, Jr.</i>	312
Obtaining the Crown <i>Gary Colley</i>	324

Chapter 1

An Overview Of The Book Of Hebrews

Ferrell Hester

I claim no originality in the views that will be expressed in dealing with **“AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS.”** I have referred to the works of such scholars as Albert Barnes, Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, Robert Milligan, B. W. Johnson, Johnny Ramsey, Roy Deaver, and have freely “borrowed” from all of them. The book of Hebrews has generated a lot of discussion as to its authorship. Concerning this matter I quote from B. W. Johnson:

That this Epistle is entitled to a place in the New Testament Scriptures has been discussed but little in comparison with the question of its authorship. It is quoted at large by Clement of Rome before the close of the first century, by Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and others in the second century, is found in the Versions of the second century, is named in the Ancient Canons, and is affirmed to be a part of the Holy Scriptures by the Council of Antioch (A.D. 269) and of Nice (A.D. 325); as well as by later councils.

On the other hand, both the ancient and modern church have been divided concerning the writer to whom it is to be ascribed. Contrary to the usual custom the writer's name is not given in the opening verses, now

in the closing salutations. It differs somewhat in style from any other portion of the New Testament. Some have thought it improbable that Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, should have addressed an Epistle to Hebrews; for these, and perhaps other reasons, many devout critics have held that it was written by Barnabas, or by Apollos, or by Luke, and even Clement of Rome has been named as the author. In the ancient church the East with one consent declared in favor of Paul while the West asserted that it belonged to some other writer, though in modern times the Latin Church has decided the question by the weight of infallibility in favor of the apostle to the Gentiles. Luther and Calvin both held that was not Pauline, and have been followed by many moderns.

The limits of this work will not allow details concerning this discussion, and I will content myself with briefly stating reasons why I think it is to be ascribed to Paul. (1) There is no proof whatever, of any kind, that any one else was the author. There is only conjecture. (2) Paul is named as the author in the second century by Christian Fathers who were the disciples of men who had sat at the feet of the apostles. (3) The greatest of the Ante-Nicene Fathers who make mention of its authorship affirms that it was written by Paul. (4) It was written in Paul's lifetime, for the temple was evidently still standing; it was written by a friend of Timothy, written from Italy, and evidently by one who was a prisoner. (5) The salutation or benediction with which it closes is found in the other thirteen epistles of Paul, and is found in the New Testament epistles of no other writer.

Paul alone invokes grace upon those who he addresses as his farewell words. (6) The second Epistle of Peter, an Epistle evidently written to Hebrews, declares that Paul had written an Epistle to them. "As our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him hath written unto you; as also in all his Epistles," etc. This refers to some particular letter, sent to the same persons whom Peter was addressing, and hence there seems to be little doubt that there existed, before Peter died, an Epistle to the Hebrews written by Paul. (7) The argument is thoroughly Pauline. There can be no doubt, even if the language is not Paul's, that he inspired the thoughts. Hence, we are justified in concluding that the Epistle is really one of Paul's, even if his thoughts are in part clothed in the language of another writer.

It is addressed to HEBREWS; evidently Hebrew Christians; probably not so much those of Jerusalem as the "Dispersion," the multitudes of Jewish Christians in Gentile lands. It shows that those addressed were persecuted, were in danger of being tempted to all way, that they had not yet shed their blood for Christ, and in order to strengthen them the superiority of Christianity to Judaism is demonstrated by showing the superlative excellence of Christ. He is (1) superior to the prophets; (2) superior to the angels; (3) superior to Moses. (4) His priesthood is superior to that of Aaron, being a priest after the order of Melchizedek. (5) The superiority of the New Covenant to the Old is shown, being a better covenant based upon better promises. This is shown in Chapters 8,9,10, and then follows in the remaining

chapters an exhortation to steadfastness, based upon faith and strengthened by examples of the heroes of the faith.

It is evident from the closing words, whatever may have been the writer's reasons for not incorporating his name in the Epistle, that he was well known to those addressed. He asks their prayers, prays for them, speaks of visiting them with Timothy, and closes with the usual Pauline farewell benediction.

Because I firmly believe that the book of Hebrews is Scripture "inspired of God" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), whether the author is Paul (which I personally believe it to be) or some other inspired writer, will be discussed no further in this study. Since the Holy Spirit is behind every syllable, therefore, every thought contained therein is applicable to us today.

Chapter One

Chapter one deals with the supremacy of Christ over the Old Testament prophets. "*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*" (Heb. 1:1-2). Christ is "God's man for this hour." He no longer speaks to us through Moses, Aaron or any of the prophets, but through His Son.

He is superior to the angels.

⁴Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. ⁵For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall

be to me a Son? ⁶And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. ⁷And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. ⁸But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. ⁹Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. ¹⁰And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: ¹¹They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; ¹²And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. ¹³But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? ¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:4-14)?

Chapter Two

Chapter two tells us that we are the recipients of the “great salvation.”

¹Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. ²For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; ³How 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 (Heb. 2:1-3).

If we do not “give the more earnest heed” (pay the closer attention to) “the things which we have heard” we will “let them slip.” The American Standard Version says, “drift away from them.” Peter wrote:

¹⁰Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: ¹¹Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. ¹²Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The truth remains constant. We are prone to neglect this great salvation which the prophets foretold and the angels desired to look into.

The love of God, the sacrifice of the Son and the fact that we must follow Christ as the captain of our salvation are graphically and beautifully illustrated in verses 9 and 10.

¹⁰But 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. ¹¹For it became him, for whom

are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

The word “captain” in this passage literally means “trailblazer.” So actually this tells us that Christ has paved the way for us to follow. Peter said, “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²²Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*” (1 Peter 2:21-22).

Jesus not only *told* us how to live but by his example he *showed* us how to live, hence he is the captain of our salvation.

Chapter Three

In chapter three we are told of the superiority of Christ over Moses.

¹*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*
²*Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.*
³*For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. ⁴For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.*
⁵*And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; ⁶But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end [Heb. 3:1-6].*

Moses was a servant but Christ is a Son. Moses was in God's house but Christ is head over God's house.

Verses 9 through 11 are a quotation from Psalm 95:7-11,

⁷For 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, ⁸Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: ⁹When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. ¹⁰Forty 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: ¹¹Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

The Hebrew writer quotes this Psalm to the need of a close walk with God in order to avoid the pitfalls that Israel fell into. He then, in verses 15 through 19, reminds us of the failure of the Jews under Moses. Many failed to enter the promised land because of unbelief.

Chapter Four

This same thought (from chapter three) is continued in chapter four pointing out that it is possible for us to miss the promised land of heaven. The writer mentions three rests in this chapter. Verse 4 speaks of God's Rest on the seventh day after creation. In verse 8, mention is made of the rest of Canaan into which the Israelites were led by Joshua. Then in verse 9 he talks about the rest that remains for God's faithful children.

The term "rest" in verse 9 comes from a word (*Sabbatismos*) which means according to Thayer's Lexicon: "The blessed rest from toils and troubles

looked for in the age to come by true worshippers of God and true Christians” (p. 565). As a reference Thayer gives Revelation 14:13.

In verses 12-16 of this same chapter we learn of the help we have to remain faithful. Notice if you would in this last part of the chapter these four incentives to loyalty. (1) The power of the Word. (2) The all-seeing eye of God. (3) The perfect example of Christ. (4) The comforting strength of prayer. Let us always avail ourselves of these powerful aids to righteous living so that one day we can enter God’s rest!

Chapter Five

In chapter five the writer speaks of the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek. This fact was prophesied of by the Psalmist in (Psalm 110:4) “*The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*” The Hebrew writer refers to the Genesis record and makes an application to Christ (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:1-12).

Verses 8-9 teach the necessity of obedience and the value of eternal salvation. Other passages of Scripture give the same emphasis (Phil. 2:5-11; Eph. 1:20-23; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rev. 22:14).

In verse 11 he rebukes the Hebrew Christians to whom the letter was addressed for their lack of spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 3:1; Gal. 1:6; 3:1). They were incapable of comprehending the priesthood of Christ Jesus because they had not studied carefully the oracles of God. They had failed to make a difference between right and wrong. They had not received enough spiritual exercise (1 Tim. 4:7-8). Even though they should be teachers, someone needed to teach them the first principles all over again. Their diet, spiritually, consisted of milk instead of meat. They were babes when “by reason of time” they should have been men

[1 Cor. 16:13]. How well this describes some of us today. We need to so develop ourselves as Children of God so that we will be able to effectively teach others the unsearchable riches of Christ [Eph. 3:8]. Consider the great commission as given by Christ to each Christian individually as well as collectively [Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47].

Chapter Six

In chapter six there is an admonition in verse 1 to leave the “*first principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection.*” That is, we are to “leave the foundation stones of the gospel and build thereon the super-structure of Christianity.”

Verses 4-6 informs us of the result of indifference. This passage informs us that one can fall from grace and be eternally lost. A child of God can become so hardened by sin [1 Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 28:27-28; 2 Peter 2:20] that he will actually put the Lord to an open shame. If it were possible, he would even crucify Christ again. As long as a person holds this attitude “*it is impossible to renew him unto repentance.*” There is however, a difference in the backslider and the apostate; there is a distinction between the drifter and the departed.

In verse 9 we find the tender word, “beloved” used for the only time in Hebrews to manifest faith, patience and growth in the service of the Master. One tremendous motive for this earnest endeavor is the hope we have if we are devoted workers for Christ. We know that heaven can be attained because our forerunner, even Jesus, has already entered the holy of holies. This fact, along with the promise and oath of God, provides us with an anchor for the soul.

Chapter Seven

In chapter 7 the development of the priesthood of Jesus “*after the order of Melchisedec*” is dealt with. For a thorough study of the similitude of Christ’s priesthood and Kingship to that of Melchisedec, I would suggest that the reader obtain a copy of the Third Annual “**Labourers Together With God**” lectureship, 1995 “*TYPES AND ANTITYPES*” Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies.

Chapter Eight

Beginning with chapter eight and continuing to chapter 10, the Hebrew writer portrays quite vividly the fact that the old law has been abolished to make room for the second. He tells us of the vast distinction between the two covenants. The old was a shadow, the new the substance. The old had a remembrance of sins, the new sins are forgiven. The old had animal sacrifices, the new has Christ’s blood. The old was temporary, the new is permanent. The old had Moses as mediator, the new has Christ as our mediator. The old had Aaron as high priest, the new has Christ as our high priest. The old only had Levites as priests, the new every Christian a priest. Under the old there were many sacrifices, under the new there is only one. The old was imperfect, the new is perfect. The old was abolished, the new is age-lasting.

Thus, we have the blood of animals versus the blood of Christ; the cleansing of the flesh versus the purifying of the conscience; we see service in dead works as opposed to service unto the living God.

Notice again the nature of each testament: The old was written in stone, the new is written on the heart. The old had ignorant citizens, the new intelligent citizens. The old the sins were remembered, the new

sins are forgiven. The old was entered into by a natural birth, the new is entered into by the new birth.

Chapter Nine

In chapter nine we see the same thought continued that Jesus was both Priest and Sacrifice. The Hebrew writer points out the futility of the sacrificial system under the Levitical set-up. The day of atonement [Leviticus 16] forever proves that it took the shedding of Christ's blood to redeem mankind. ¹⁵*“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance...”* ²²*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission”* (Heb. 9:15,22).

Chapter Ten

Beginning with chapter ten and continuing through the remaining part of the book we have an exhortation toward godly living. The purposes of these verses is to impress upon us the need of enduring faithfulness in the vineyard of the Lord. In verse 24 we learn that we are to *“consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”* We learn from verse 36 that each Christian has *“need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”* We learn from verses 38 and 39 we must *“have faith unto the saving of the soul.”* Without this *“conviction of things not seen as yet,”* it is impossible to please Jehovah.

Chapter Eleven

To help induce us to live faithfully before God, we are given the zealous example of the heroes of the faith ³³“*who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong...*” [Heb. 11:33-34].

Chapter Twelve

In chapter twelve the writer is urging us to look toward these great stalwart men of valor, always remembering to look unto Jesus. Notice in verses 1-3,

¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Also in chapter twelve we are to understand the purpose of chastisement in our lives. It is axiomatic that discipline helps to control our spiritual lives before God. In fact, an absence of this element in our life would prove that we are not true children of Jehovah. “*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*” [Heb. 12:6].

In the later portion of chapter twelve we are encouraged to learn that servants of Christ are citizens

in the immovable kingdom [Daniel 2:44]. We are not partakers in the transient events that surround Mount Sinai [Exodus 19] but we are members in the church of the first born enrolled in heaven.

Chapter Thirteen

In the closing chapter we find that we should be kind to our fellow man [13:1-3], thankful unto God [13:15] and loyal to our spiritual overseers [13:17]. Other passages of Scripture give the same emphasis [2 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 12:7-21; Matt. 25:41, 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 20:28].

Written to Jewish Christians, the grand and eloquent treatise called Hebrews is a rare jewel in God's divine treasure chest of Scripture. No book of the Bible is more beautiful in literary splendor nor more comprehensive in doctrinal depth. No matter how often one reads its pages it is always a blessing.

Chapter 2

Background — Hebrews 11

Kenneth Burlison

Introduction

Hebrews chapter eleven serves as a tremendous background to chapter twelve. Those named in chapter eleven serve as proof that one can be faithful to God no matter how tough the road. Many of the characters of the Old Testament went through difficulty after difficulty and yet remained faithful servants of God and, therefore, were winners. The Hebrew Christians to whom this book was written, could also be winners if they would remain faithful and not turn back to Judaism.

The Hebrew Christians were compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. This is a reference to the Heroes of faith in chapter eleven. If the Hebrew Christians will develop this kind of faith, then, they will be winners. This is the exhortation given by the writer in chapter twelve. If we have their kind of faith we will win.

The Heroes of faith in chapter eleven could serve as an encouragement to faithfulness to the Hebrew Christian. The same is true with us. *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope”* (Rom. 15:4).

In the Olympics only one wins and receives a corruptible crown. But, in the Christian race all will

win if they have an obedient faith and receive, not a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible crown.

What kind of faith did the Heroes of faith have? It is outlined in chapter eleven. It is the faith defined in 11:1, and illustrated by what they did. Theirs was not a dead faith but an active faith. This will be developed in greater depth in the body of the lesson.

Faith Defined

The kind of faith that leads men to the winners circle, in the spiritual realm, is defined in Hebrews 11:1-3. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

“Substance” — sub - under - stance - foundation. Substance is the foundation that stands under. Faith is the foundation that stands under the things for which we hope.

“Evidence” — conviction - this carries the idea of a strict proof or demonstration — when one’s understanding is thoroughly convinced by the evidence his will is determined by the same.

“Hope” — Hope is the anchor of the soul. *“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil”* (Heb. 6:19). **There is one hope.** *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling”* (Eph. 4:4). **Christianity is based on hope.** *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Cor. 15:19). **Hope is a desire with expectation.** *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for”* (Rom. 8:24)? *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Cor. 15:19). **We are saved by hope.** We hope for, that is, we desire: (1) Resurrection from the dead. ¹⁷*“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. ¹⁸Then they also*

which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:17-19). (2) The second coming of Christ. “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 1:11). (3) Eternal life. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). (4) We also hope to avoid eternal destruction. ⁷“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9). **There are some reasons for expectation in our hope.** (1) God has promised. “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25). (2) God’s oath to us. “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb. 6:18, 19). (3) Christ is our hope. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1). “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). (4) There is eternal interest in us. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). Faith is the foundation which stands under, or the assurance of, the things for which we hope.

"*Things not seen.*" There are many things which we have not seen. Faith is the conviction that the things which we did not actually see, really did occur. Note some of these.

1) Creation of the world as recorded in Genesis one. One can surely see the evidence by the world's existence — "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1).

2) The world wide (universal) flood Gen. 7-8. There is evidence of this by the existence of sea shells on mountains. The different layers of soil in the earth found by those who drill into the earth, especially the water laid clay.

3) Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Exodus 12-14.

4) The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

We have not seen any of the things mentioned above, but we have faith that they really occurred. The Bible teaches that we walk by faith not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Some one may say, "I have not seen these things, therefore, I do not believe them." I would ask that person if he had seen George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, or Benjamin Franklin? His answer would of necessity be, No! Then, I would ask him if he has faith that these people lived? I would also ask did you see the "Big Bang" advocated by false science? The answer would have to be No! But you believe that, yet, you cannot believe creation. Shame, shame, shame.

Thayer's Greek English Lexicon — "*Pisteuo* — believe, conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah — the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ." In this definition one can see three ideas, conviction, trust and obedience. Faith and believe are used interchangeably (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:13-17; 4:20).

"For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds are framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:2,3). By this kind of faith the elders obtained a good report or name and reputation from God as well as from the people. Not only the elders in authority but also the Heroes of faith. By this kind of faith we are convinced that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

The Power Of Faith As Manifest By Those Named

Faith in God led all these great characters to obey what God said. Faith alone was not good enough then and it is not good enough now. Faith without works is dead. *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:26). Now let us read and learn.

By faith Abel offered. *"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 being dead yet speaketh"* (Heb. 11:4). He did it by faith. Did what by faith? Offered the sacrifice approved of God. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). To offer it by faith he must have heard the word of God. God had told them the type of sacrifice. Cain disobeyed and Abel obeyed.

By faith Enoch was translated. *“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”* (Heb. 11:5). *“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters”* (Gen. 5:22). *“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him”* (Gen. 5:24). Walking with God means that he followed God, therefore, his faithfulness was rewarded by being translated into heaven without passing through death.

By faith Noah prepared an ark. *“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”* (Heb. 11:7). God told Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. He was to put rooms in the ark. He was told to pitch it within and without with pitch. The dimensions were also given, three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. A window and a door was to be put in the ark, the window above and the door in the side. The ark would have three stories. Did Noah do what God said or did he change it to please himself? Let the Bible answer. *“Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he”* (Gen. 6:22). Noah not only saved himself but his family also. It was to the saving of his house. The difficulties must have been great. Noah overcame those and allowed his faith to lead him to obey God. A saving faith is a faith that is active. A dead faith does not accomplish anything. When God warned Noah of the coming deluge he believed the word of God. His faith was active, he was moved with fear and prepared the ark as God had directed him. His example of faith was a rebuke to all those who did not exhibit the same. Noah became an heir to all the blessings promised to all those who are counted righteous through faith. Those who are

counted righteous through faith are those who obey the commands.

“Abraham, father of the faithful.” When one studies the following passages about him he will readily see why Abraham is called the “father of the faithful.”

By faith Abraham obeyed. *“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”* (Heb. 11:8). *“And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there”* (Gen. 11:31). Read also Gen. 12:1-4. While Abram was in Ur of Chaldees he was commanded to leave his land, kindred and father’s house unto a land God would later show him. Abraham obeyed this call through faith. What a tremendous example of an active faith.

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacle with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him in the same promise” (Heb. 11:9). The deep faith of Abraham is manifest in his willingness to sojourn in a land that had been promised to him and his descendants. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelt in tents. They were heirs to the same promise. (1) To Isaac.

³*Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; ⁴And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen. 26:3,4).

[2] To Jacob. *“And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that they mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham”* (Gen. 28:4).

¹³And, behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed [Gen. 28:13,14].

Abraham *“...looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Heb. 11:10). Abraham was not only looking for a permanent home for his descendants but far beyond that to an eternal home with God in heaven.

By faith Abraham offered up Isaac. *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from when also he received him in a figure”* [Heb. 11:17-19]. Abraham’s faith was tried by the sternest test received by any man. This was not done for God to be certain of his faith but that all the spiritual children might profit from his great example of faith. Abraham trusted God. He believed that God would raise up Isaac from the ashes of the altar. Isaac was his only child by marriage. He was the promised son. Isaac was the heir of all the promises God made to Abraham. What a trial of faith. His faith was rewarded. The lesson to us, we must obey the

commands of God and trust in His promises, nothing less will be accepted and rewarded.

The faith of Sara. *“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”* (Heb. 11:11). Sara was about ninety years old when she conceived. This was beyond the years for child bearing. God gave her the strength to bear the child of promise. The kind of faith manifest in Sara brought about a tremendous reward.

The faith of Isaac. *“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”* (Heb. 11:20). Prophecies (Gen. 27-28).

The faith of Jacob. *“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of this staff”* (Heb. 11:21). In blessing the sons of Joseph he understood that both Manasseh and Ephraim would be tribes of Israel.

Joseph’s faith. *“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones”* (Heb. 11:22). He had faith and trust in God’s promise that the children of Israel would go up to Canaan for a home. He was so sure that he gave command for his bones. His command was carried out. *“And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph”* (Josh. 24:32).

The faith of Amram and Jochebed, (parents of Moses). *“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.”* The king had made a decree to cast

all the sons born to the Hebrew women into the river but save every daughter. The parents of Moses disobeyed the king's order. They were not afraid of the king. When they could not hide him any longer his mother made an ark of bulrushes and put the child in the ark and laid it in the flags by the river bank. Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and saved him. The mother of Moses was chosen to care for Moses after his sister encouraged Pharaoh's daughter to do so. Their faith in God led them to do what they did.

By faith Moses made the correct choice. *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter”* (Heb. 11:24). This would mean that the kingdom inheritance was lost. He did not want to be numbered with the heathen nation of Egypt. There was something far more important to him. *“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Heb. 11:25). What a lesson for the Hebrew Christians and for us. Willing to suffer while serving God instead of living with ease among all the material things of Egypt. He knew the things of the earth would come to naught, last for a season. But there was something that would last eternally. *“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward”* (Heb. 11:26). Any reproach one may endure through faith in the promises of which Christ is center, is called the reproach of Christ. This was of more value than all the treasure of Egypt because he was looking for something permanent, the recompence the heavenly abode with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and saints of all ages.

By faith Moses forsook Egypt. *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”* (Heb. 11:27). It was by faith that Moses led the children of Israel across the Red sea out of Egypt. He was not afraid of

the wrath of the king. The unseen God of Israel was present with him. This gave Moses the strength needed to endure the hardships ahead. His was a difficult task. It took a man of deep faith and courage to take on this task of leading Israel across the Red sea and through the wilderness toward the promised land. Moses was permitted to look in but was not allowed to enter the promised land.

Through faith he kept the passover. *“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them”* (Heb. 11:28). God commanded the keeping of the passover. Moses believed God’s commands and obeyed them. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door posts. Moses believed the promise of God that the sprinkling of the blood on the door posts would protect the first born and he obeyed. He not only believed in the type but also in the antitype, which is Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.

By faith they passed through the Red sea. *“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned”* (Heb. 11:29). God parted the waters and commanded the children of Israel to pass through as on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to do the same, God caused the walls of water to collapse and they were drowned. *“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”* (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down. *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days”* (Heb. 11:30). The word “after” is very important. “After” they did what God said, they fell. By faith alone they did not fall down. When their faith prompted them to march around the wall one time per day for six days and seven times the

seventh day the walls fell down. It was not by some natural happening that they fell down but when they obeyed God's commander He caused them to fall.

The faith of Rahab. *"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace"* (Heb. 11:31). Rahab did not perish with the unbelievers when Israel conquered the city of Jericho because she believed and protected the spies. Therefore, they spared her household.

Other Heroes Of Faith Though Not As Detailed

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Heb. 11:32).

"Gideon." He destroyed the altar of Baal. He by the power of God used only three hundred men to defeat the huge army of the Midianites.

"Barak" subdued the Canaanites, but he would not go against Sisera unless Deborah went with him.

"Samson" was given special powers to perform certain feats in his life time. It is said that he slew more Philistines in his death than in his life time.

"Japhthae" is probably remembered more so by his rash vow than his faith. But Jephthah (another spelling for Jephthae) is remembered by the inspired writer for his faith. He had a motto that every Christian should have. *"I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back"* (Judges 11:35).

"David" the man after God's own heart. He is the only king mentioned. The fact that he was a man after God's own heart did not stem from his horrible sins but from his willingness to accept God's law and repent and confess that he had sinned and seek God's forgiveness.

David was a great king and the greatest king of all, Jesus Christ, is a descendant of David.

“**Samuel**” was a great man of God. Samuel was the last of the fifteen judges. One thing in particular against Samuel was parental indulgence of his godless sons.

“**And the Prophets**” includes all the inspired men whom God used to make a difference in the lives of the people of God. Some were used to make a difference among the heathen.

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb. 11:33). Some of those mentioned subdued kingdoms, some wrought righteousness others obtained promises. It does not mean that all of them subdued kingdoms. It seems that Daniel was the most remarkable in stopping the mouths of lions.

“Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. 11:34). It was Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who through faith quenched the power of fire. Jeremiah, Elisha and Elijah escaped the sword. Gideon and Jephthah rose from weakness to being strong, Gideon from being least in his father’s house to being deliverer of Israel and Jephthah from being a despised son of a harlot to Israel’s judge. Most of the great commanders of Israel’s armies with God’s power *“waxed mighty in war.”*

“Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). Examples are the widow of Zarephath 1 Kings 17:17-24 and the Shunamite 2 Kings 4:18-37. Many were tortured.

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder,

were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" [Heb. 11:36,37]. Many people had horrible things happen to them because of their faith in and dedication to God.

"(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" [Heb. 11:38]. When the world rejects the good it shows its unworthiness. They fled to escape the immoral pollution of the world along with its persecution.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise" [Heb. 11:39]. Their faith gave them the power to live holy and heroic lives. They have left a tremendous example for all. But, they all died without seeing the fulfillment of the coming and reign of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" [Heb. 11:40]. The New Testament is a better covenant. They needed the realization of the promise in Christ to make them perfect; by that promise we also are saved. Without the shedding of the blood of Christ the heroes of faith could not be saved nor the Hebrew Christians nor ourselves.

Conclusion

When one studies the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews he is made to realize its importance in relation to chapter twelve. The inspired writer uses it to exhort the Hebrew Christians to faithfulness. He holds those heroes of faith up as proof that their kind of faith causes one to win and to gain the reward. As they lived so can we, if we will allow the word of God to produce their kind of faith in us. Theirs was a saving faith, therefore, an active faith.

Yes, chapter eleven serves as a tremendous background to chapter twelve. The writer encourages the Hebrew brethren to persevere in their begun Christian race. They can do it if they follow the example of those who had gone before and especially by following the example of Christ.

Chapter 3

The Race That Is Set Before Us

John M. Grubb

¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1,2).

Introduction

It is a privilege to have a part in this lectureship. It is our hope and prayer the lessons in this book will do much good in helping the reader to better run the Christian race.

In the two earlier chapters, you have already studied the overview of the book of Hebrews and the background for this lesson from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

In this lesson, we will discuss what is involved in running the race that is set before us.

An Examination Of Key Words

“Witnesses.” These witnesses mentioned in this passage do not refer to spectators, but those who could

testify to the race we must run. Chapter 11 gives us a catalog of these witnesses.

“Lay aside every weight.” In ancient times, runners wore practically no clothes in the races. We are to set aside any sins that would prevent us from successfully completing our race. Those weights might include doubt, pride, fear, etc.

⁵If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. ⁷For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord (James 1:5-7).

¹⁵Love 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

“The sin which doth so easily beset us.” In the context of the book, this could refer to those who were going back to Judaism. For us, it may be that sin that continues to plague us in our lives. Whatever it is, it is to be set aside.

¹I 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. ²And 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 (Rom. 12:1,2).

¹¹*“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11,12).*

“Run.” The meaning of this word is to “keep on running.” This is the same meaning of “walk in the light” and “confess our sins” mentioned by the apostle John. That is, “keep on walking,” and “keep on confessing.”

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. ... ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7,9).*

“With Patience.” This phrase emphasizes the importance of steadfastness and endurance. We must run the race all the way to its completion. God gives us the strength to continue this race. *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22). “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).*

“The race that is set before us.” This race is always ahead of us. We are not concerned about what is already behind. Our course is always ahead. *“And*

Jesus said unto him, *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" [Luke 9:62].

"Looking unto Jesus." As we run this race, we are to keep our eyes on Christ. He is our goal. He is also the perfect example we are to follow.

¹³Brethren, 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, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13,14).

²¹For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²²Who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: ²⁴Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Peter 2:21-24).

"Author and finisher of {our} faith." Christ is our leader in this race. He is the perfecter or completer of the faith. The word "finisher" only appears this one time in the New Testament. This "faith" refers to the system of faith, the gospel. "*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].

“Endured the cross....” We have an example and help of Him who has already been through it.

⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross [Phil. 2:5-8].

“Is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The writer finishes verse two by telling us what Peter tells his hearers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:30-36).

³⁰Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. ³¹He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. ³²This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ³³Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. ³⁴For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand. ³⁵Until I make thy foes thy footstool. ³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ [Acts 2:30-36].

Running The Race Means “Counting The Cost”

If we are going to successfully run the race that is set before us, we must first count the cost. Jesus makes it clear to us what is involved in counting the cost. In Luke’s account, He said:

²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ²⁹Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26-33).

Matthew also records our Lord’s words on this subject as well. In this passage Jesus further clarifies the cost of discipleship. He said,

³²Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. ³³But whosoever shall

deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. ³⁴Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ³⁵For 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. ³⁶And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. ³⁷He 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. ³⁸And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. ³⁹He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:32-39).

If we are not willing to pay the price of being a Christian, we will be unable to complete the race successfully.

Running The Race Means “Putting Off The Old Man And Putting On The New Man”

The apostle Paul gives a splendid explanation of “putting off the old man” and “putting on the new man” in his writings.

¹If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ²Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. ⁵Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil

concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ⁸But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ⁹Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: ¹¹Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. ¹²Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. ¹³Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. ¹⁴And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. ¹⁵And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. ¹⁶Let 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. ¹⁷And 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 [Col. 3:1-17].

Paul points out the battle that takes place between “walking in the flesh” and producing the “fruit of the Spirit.” We must give up “walking in the flesh” in order to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:13-26).

Running The Race Means “Having Our Faith Tested”

As we run the Christian race, our faith will be put to the test. We will encounter a number of obstacles as we run this race. James tells us this is one of the ways we develop patience. *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”* [James 1:3]. Those who have gone before us have left us an example to follow in longsuffering and steadfastness.

⁷Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. ⁸Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. ⁹Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. ¹⁰Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ¹¹Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy [James 5:7-11].

The Christian life is a life of testing. If we are going to make it to heaven, we have to overcome these trials. *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* [2 Tim. 3:12].

¹²Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of

Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. ¹⁶Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf [1 Peter 4:12-16].

EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO DID NOT RUN THE RACE WITH PATIENCE

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Israel

We know that Israel was faithful on many occasions, but it was because they did not continue to be faithful that many died in the wilderness and could not enter the promised land.

¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; ¹⁵While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. ¹⁶For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by

Moses. ¹⁷*But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness (Heb. 3:12-17)?*

Achan

Achan and his family were put to death because of the sin he committed in the conquering of the city of Jericho (Joshua 7).

Korah And His Followers

Korah and his followers are an excellent example of those who did not understand what was involved in living faithfully to the end (Numbers 16:1-50). There are many today, like Korah, who do not realize when they rebel against God's appointed leaders, they are rebelling against God (Heb. 13:17).

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot did not finish the race set before him. The Bible describes Judas' character in the following passages:

¹*Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. ²And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. ³Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. ⁴And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. ⁵And they were glad,*

and covenanted to give him money. ⁶And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude [Luke 22:1-6].

“This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (John 12:6).

Ananias and Sapphira

We are all familiar with the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. It was their desire to have the praise of men and to keep part of the money from their land sale that caused them to lie to God and have their lives taken from them.

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ²And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But 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? ⁴Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. ⁵And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. ⁶And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. ⁷And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. ⁸And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?

And she said, Yea, for so much. ⁹Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. ¹⁰Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. ¹¹And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things [Acts 5:1-11].

Demas

Demas is an example of one who started the race and ran it successfully for a while. Paul mentions him along with Luke in his closing words in the book of Colossians [Col. 4:14]. It is at the close of the apostle's writings that we learn of Demas having left the faith. Paul says: "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*" [2 Tim. 4:10]. Demas would be classified with those in Galatia, who ran well for a while, but fell away. "*Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth*" [Gal. 5:7]?

EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO DID RUN THE RACE WITH PATIENCE

Old Testament

To learn of those in the Old Testament who ran the race successfully, we need only turn to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The writer gives us a "who's who" of the faithful in the Old Testament.

In speaking of the patriarchs, the Bible tells us the motivation of "running the race set before them."

⁸By 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. ⁹By 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: ¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹Through faith also Sarah 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. ¹²Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. ¹³These 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. ¹⁴For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶But 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 (Heb. 11:8-16).

They were not looking for a permanent home on this earth, but were looking for a home in heaven. This is the kind of attitude we must have to “run the race that is set before us.”

New Testament

John the Baptist

As we look at examples of those in the New Testament who ran this race we are discussing, John The Baptist immediately comes to mind.

John understood his mission on this earth. He said: *"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah"* (John 1:23). *"He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all"* (John 3:30, 31).

In doing the work God sent him to do, John was not afraid to rebuke sin where he found it, even if it meant losing his life.

¹⁶But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. ¹⁷For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. ¹⁸For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. ¹⁹Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not. ²⁰For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly (Mark 6:16-20).

The Apostle Paul

When we think of someone who has successfully run the Christian race, we always think of the apostle Paul. Not only did Paul recognize his own responsibilities, he was diligent to tell others of what God expected. He made this clear to the elders of Ephesus. He said,

²⁴But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. ²⁶Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. ²⁸Take 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. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. ³¹Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. ³²And 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 20:24-32].

Paul also recognized the importance of self-discipline and self-examination. He told the Corinthians:

²⁴Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: ²⁷But 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 Cor. 9:24-27].

It was because Paul was diligent in his service to God that he was able to look back on his life and know he had lived it successfully. He also pointed out this was also true for others who had “run the race set before us.”

⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [2 Tim. 4:7,8].

Conclusion

In running this race, we always have to be mindful of the possibility of quitting. Because of this, the writer closes the tenth chapter of Hebrews with a warning and words of encouragement to Christians to continue to race to the end.

³⁵Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. ³⁶For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. ³⁷For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. ³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ³⁹But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:35-39).

We encourage you to read the rest of the chapters in this book to benefit from the lessons that expand upon the theme we have set forth in this lesson.

It is our hope and prayer that the contents of this book will encourage you to determine to “run the race set before us.” Our lives depend upon it. Only those who continue to the end will be saved. “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7). “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14). “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” (Rev. 2:10).

²¹Not 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. ²²Many 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? ²³And then will I profess unto

them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

“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” (Heb. 5:8,9).

Chapter 4

We Can Be Successful In Running The Race

Guy F. Hester

Under the theme, “The Race Set Before Us,” My subject is: “*We Can Be Successful in Running the Race.*” I would like for us to look at Hebrews 12:1-2,

¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In this passage we are given the formula or plan that will enable us to be successful in running the race: 1) Lay aside every weight; 2) Lay aside...besetting sin; 3) Patience in running the race; 4) Keeping our eye on the finish (Jesus); and it is around these four points that we shall build our lesson.

In New Testament times, the races were great sporting events, comparable to the Olympics of our day. It has been estimated that a hundred thousand people would gather as spectators for these races. Because the people of that day were familiar with these races, the Hebrew writer compares the Christian life to a race.

Now in a race there are rules that must be followed. If one does not follow the rules in the Olympic games he cannot win. Just so, in the Christian race one must strive lawfully or he will not receive the crown. Paul said, *“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Tim. 2:5). It is not enough to “strive” but we must be sure that we are following the rules. A few years back, an American who thought that he was a winner in the Olympic races, was denied the gold because he had violated the rules of the games. Many who seek to enter the Christian race will be denied the crown of victory because of rule violation. Jesus said, *“For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able”* (Luke 13:24). In the Olympics, there is one rule book. The contestants would not think of arguing, “You run your way and I will run mine.” In the Christian race it is also necessary that we run by the same rules. Paul said to the Philippians: *“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing”* (Phil. 3:16). The rule book for the Christian race is the New Testament.

¹⁵*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶*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 Tim. 3:15-17).

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; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. ⁶For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [2 Tim. 4:2-8].

One cannot run in a race without complying with the terms of entrance. One enters the Christian race through obedience to the gospel. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death*” [Rom. 6:3]? “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” [Gal. 3:26-27].

Lay Aside Every Weight

To be successful in running the race there are some things that are of absolute necessity. The first of which is to get rid of all hindrances to the race. Get rid of those things that are weighing us down.

There are many who are unsuccessful in running the race because they are trying to do so while burdened down with guilt. Every burden must be laid at the feet of Jesus. He has offered to bear our burdens for us. He has 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*" (Matt. 11:28-30). Regardless of what our past may have been, Jesus will bear the burden of our sins if only we will turn our lives over to him and *"live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."* We have the promise: *"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"* (Heb. 8:12). When our sins have been buried in the sea of God's forgetfulness, then we can be free of the weight of a guilty conscience. Paul said, *"Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"* (Acts 23:1).

Some years ago, a lady would respond to the invitation every few months confessing a sin that had been in her life several years before. One Sunday when she came forward and told me the same story of her past life, I said to her, "That is the same sin that you confessed last time." She answered, "Yes, but it is still weighing on my conscience." I told her, "Your problem is that you have not forgiven yourself, when you first repented and asked God to forgive you, He blotted it from your record. He cannot forgive you of a sin that you no longer have against you, you must forgive yourself."

There are the weights of bad habits that must be laid aside if we are to be successful in running the race. "The best way to break a bad habit is to drop it!" However there are some habits that are easier to rid ourselves of than others. But the Lord will help us if we will allow Him to. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1). Peter said, *"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you"* (1 Peter 5:7).

One cannot successfully run the race while weighted down with such things as: anger, malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings. *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice"*

(Eph. 4:31). *“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings”* (1 Peter 2:1).

We must practice self-control while running the race. Paul said,

²⁴Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: ²⁷But 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 Cor. 9:24-27).

Lay Aside...Besetting Sin

We must *“lay aside...the sin which doth so easily beset us.”* That is, that sin which meets us at every turn. There are some sins which are relatively easy for us to resist. There are some sins that just have no appeal to us. Others are harder to overcome. Some things are by their very nature a greater temptation to us than are others. The devil is well aware of our weakest point and that is where he will make his attack at every opportunity.

If our problem is temper, Satan will see to it that there are frequent occasions for us to lose our tempers. Paul has cautioned us: *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath”* (Eph. 4:26). There is nothing wrong with temper, it is the failure to control it that is the sin that so easily besets many people. Because of inability to control temper, little children have been severely injured and even killed by

their own parents. Families have been destroyed and churches divided by uncontrolled tempers.

“The sin which doth so easily beset” many is the misuse of the tongue. Cursing and swearing, taking God’s name in vain, hasty words, and gossip are just a few of the misuses of the tongue that so many, even in the church, are guilty of. James declared, *“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].

Drinking is another besetting sin of thousands. The Bible says, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”* [Prov. 20:1]. Because it has such a strong pull on so many we are told, *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright”* [Prov. 23:31]. Christians are commanded, *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* [Eph. 5:18]. Drunkenness is a work of the flesh and *“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* [Gal. 5:19-21].

Of course, *“The sin which doth so easily beset”* will vary from person to person. But perhaps the most prevalent of all is the sin of unbelief. Now I am not talking about atheism. I am talking about unbelief on the part of members of the Lord’s church. *“I don’t believe one has to attend all the services of the church!”* What does the Bible say? *“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”* [Heb. 10:25]. *“I don’t believe that how much I give will make any difference in the salvation of my soul!”* What does the Bible say? *“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” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). “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 Cor. 9:7). “I don’t believe that preachers ought to be so negative in their preaching and condemnation of sin!” What does the Bible say?

¹I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ²Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ³For 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; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Paul asked the question: “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect” (Rom. 3:3)? Whether we believe or not will not change God’s word. We need to pray: “Lord... help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

If you will carefully examine your heart, you will know what “*The sin which doth so easily beset*” you is. To be successful in running the race, you must lay it aside. With the help of the Lord you can do it.

Patience in Running the Race

“And let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Yes, there has to be patience, faithfulness to the end. The Lord promised the crown to those who

stay in the race unto death. *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). The Christian life is an endurance test. *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Matt. 24:13).

We should begin the race as early as possible in life. Solomon said, *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them”* (Eccl. 12:1).

You must put everything that you have into running the race. Run with all your might. You cannot be successful in running the race if you only run half-heartedly. To be successful, you must run to win. Notice the following passages from the apostle Paul: 1 Cor. 9:24-25, *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”* Gal. 2:2, *“And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”* Phil. 2:16, *“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”* Acts 20:24, *“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”*

We can be sure that Satan will do his best to hinder us and make us fail. But he will only be successful in his efforts if we allow it. Paul said to the Galatians, *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth”* (Gal. 5:7)? We do not have to give Satan an advantage in our lives but we will

if we are ignorant of his devices. Paul said to the Corinthians, "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*" [2 Cor. 2:11].

We are not running the race against anyone else, but against ourselves. Against our own records, our own past achievements, failures, etc. We are not running against the preacher, elders, song leader, Bible class teacher, etc. But each of us must do the best WE can, while seeking to improve.

Some will stumble, faint and fall out of the race. We must "*run with PATIENCE the race that is set before us*" (Heb. 12:1). It may take years, but we can reach the goal if we put forth the effort. Paul said,

⁷Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. ⁹And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:7-9).

That simply means that we will be successful in running the race if we do not slacken in our efforts or give up.

Keeping our Eye on the Finish (Jesus)

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." We must run with our eye on Jesus. Some try to run with their eye on some hypocrite or on the "average member of the church." Our goal is not to be better than the hypocrites or as good as the average church member. Our goal is to be as much like Jesus as we possibly can. He is our perfect example. Peter said, "*For even hereunto were ye called: because*

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Conclusion

Let us say with the apostle Paul, ¹³*"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, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:13-14).

Then, one day, we will finish the course like Paul did and receive that glorious crown of righteousness that awaits the faithful.

⁶*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).*

Chapter 5

The Race Demands Patience

Ferrell Hester

The writer of the Hebrew letter said in chapter twelve,

*¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with **patience** the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that **endured** such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be **wearied** and **faint** in your minds (Heb. 12:1-3).*

Perhaps the thing that is lacking in the lives of many Christians is *Patience*. We note that it is declared in the text we have just read that we must “run with *patience* the race that is set before us.” Yes, as stated in our subject, *the Christian race demands patience*. The word *patience* is defined by Webster as “the capacity, habit or fact of being patient.” Then he defines the word *patient* as “bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint; manifesting forbearance under provocation or strain or adversity. Able or willing to bear.”

Many give up in their efforts to live the Christian life, friendships are destroyed, marriages broken up, and churches divided because of a lack of patience. Let us remember, from our text, the patience of the Lord while on earth that is to be exemplary in our lives:

*²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that **endured** such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be **wearied** and **faint** in your minds [Heb. 12:2-3].*

Admonitions to Patience

There are many admonitions for patience on the part of Christians in the New Testament. The apostle Paul admonished: *“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men”* (1 Thess. 5:14). If I would have others to be patient and tolerant of me in my weaknesses and shortcomings, then I must learn to exercise patience toward others. The apostle Peter listed “patience” as one of the eight Christian graces that are to be added to our lives to keep us from falling (2 Peter 1:5-11).

Our need for patience is further emphasized by the writer of the Hebrew letter in Hebrews 10:36, *“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”* I am afraid that the attitude of many of us is like the man who prayed for patience and said, “Lord, I want it NOW!”

Solomon said that the patient in spirit are *“better than the proud in spirit”* (Eccl. 7:8).

In the parable of the soils, in Luke chapter eight, Jesus said with reference to those who represent the

good ground, *“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience”* [Luke 8:15]. It takes time for the very best of soil, when it receives the seed, to produce a harvest. It takes time and patience for the Christian to bear fruit. Many give up for a lack of patience. The Lord said, *“In your patience possess ye your souls”* [Luke 21:19]. The salvation of our own soul requires patience on our part.

The very hope of our souls depends upon whether or not we have exercised patience in our lives. The hope and expectation of eternal life in heaven is the thing that keeps the Christian going in this life. The apostle Paul speaks of the *“hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* [Titus 1:2]. Then again he said that *“we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”* [Titus 3:7]. When faith becomes sight, then hope becomes reality: *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”* (1 Cor. 13:13). But now notice the part that patience plays in our eternal hope. Paul said, *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”* [Rom. 8:24-25].

God of Patience

The fact that our heavenly Father is a God of patience is taught in the Bible: *“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus”* [Rom. 15:5]. Now since our God is a God of patience, we cannot be like him if we do not exercise patience in our own lives. Certainly we could not expect to go to heaven if we do not live God-like lives.

Timothy was admonished by the apostle Paul, ¹¹*“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow faith, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. ¹²Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hath professed a good profession before many witnesses”* (1 Tim. 6:11-12). One of the things that is necessary to fighting “the good fight of faith” and laying “hold on eternal life,” is to follow after “patience.” To follow after patience means to be in pursuit of it. The implication is that patience is an elusive thing. We may have it and then lose it if we are not very careful.

The Lord will only deliver those who patiently endure trials and difficulties. ¹⁰*“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, ¹¹Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me”* (2 Tim. 3:10-11). Then the Lord in his letter to the church at Philadelphia said, *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”* (Rev. 3:10). Christians are admonished to be “patient in tribulation” (Rom. 12:12). When the going gets hard, it is then that we with patience must possess our souls. Paul admonished the aged men to be sound in patience (Titus 2:2). It is through faith and patience that we may inherit the promise of eternal life (Heb. 6:12). It was through patience and endurance that Abraham received the promise (Heb. 6:13-15).

In running the Christian race, those Christians whose lives are characterized by patience are commended by the Lord. In his letter to the church of Ephesus he said,

¹Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; ²I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted [Rev. 2:1-3].

The Lord will either commend us or condemn us and patience is one of the important determining factors.

Things Necessary to Running the Race with Patience

In running the Christian race we will encounter trials and tribulations. However we are told by Paul that these can work patience. He said to the brethren at Rome:

¹Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope [Rom. 5:1-4].

The more patience we exercise in the face of tribulation the more patience is produced through tribulation. If there was ever a New Testament character who was qualified to speak on this subject, it was Paul.

Our hope of life eternal worketh patience. *“But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”* (Rom. 8:25).

The examples of patience in the Old Testament will help to encourage us to have patience in running the race. This is one of the main purposes for our reading and studying the Old Testament today: *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Rom. 15:4). The things which were “written aforetime” that Paul here refers to are the Old Testament scriptures. Often the question is asked, “Why is it important to study the Old Testament since we do not live under it today?” Of course there are many reasons, but one of the great reasons is that as we study and learn of the Old Testament characters and observe their patience in their faithfulness to God and all that was involved in bringing Christ to the world that the world might come to Christ; it will bring patience and hope to our lives.

The trying of our faith will work patience as we run the race. James wrote, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing”* (James 1:24). Then Peter said, *“that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:7). When our faith is tried we ought to count it a joy more precious than gold because every time our faith is put on trial it works patience for us.

Examples of Patience

The Thessalonian brethren were commended for their patience. Paul said, *“We give thanks to God*

always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of LOVE and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thess. 1:2-3). Then in his second letter to them he said, *"So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure"* (2 Thess. 1:4). These Thessalonian brethren are examples for us in running the Christian race.

The husbandman, of James chapter five, is another example of patience. James wrote, *"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"* (James 5:7-8). Also in this same chapter, James holds up the prophets as examples of patience. *"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience"* (James 5:10). "The patience of Job" is spoken of by James in the very next verse. *"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy"* (James 5:11). The very mention of the name Job and we immediately think of patience. We just naturally think of him as the great example of patience. To most people Job epitomizes, or sums up, patience. When someone demonstrates great patience under hardship, we say, *"He has the patience of Job."* Do you remember Job's attitude when word was brought to him that all his wealth was lost and his children dead? His attitude is expressed in Job 1:21, *"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD."*

Later, when sore boils covered Job from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, his wife begged him to curse God and die. Job replied, "*But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips*" (Job 2:10). Job's trials were indeed great but through it all Job continued to persevere. In the end, God blessed him with more than he had ever enjoyed before. Why did God do this? It was because of his patience. Patience that caused him to wait for the will of God to be done.

Who would deny that Job is truly a great example of patience and that we would all do well to follow the example of this patriarch, a great man of God! However, there is even a greater example of patience given us in the Bible and we are instructed to follow the example of him who is infinitely more worthy of being followed than Job.

Who is this one whose example is even more worthy than is Job's? I speak of none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Job's suffering in reality was for his own good. But the suffering of Jesus was for you and me. Instead of God requiring us to suffer, he allowed his Son to suffer and be the sacrifice for all who would accept it. Because Jesus did this and did it perfectly, he is held forth as our perfect example. Peter said,

¹⁹For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow

his steps: ²²Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: ²⁴Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed [1 Peter 2:19-24].

Yes, God instructs people of the Christian dispensation to walk in the footsteps of Christ. There was a time when the example of Job's patience was good enough to follow. But now we have a far greater example in Christ.

Areas Where Patience is Needed in Running the Race

As we run the Christian race, there are some particular areas where patience is especially needed. Patience is needed when it comes to dealing with people.

Elders in the race need patience in dealing with the people under their care. In giving the qualifications of elders, Paul said, "*Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; **but patient**, not a brawler, not covetous*" (1 Tim. 3:31). Patience is just as much a qualification as "not given to wine" or any of the others that are mentioned.

Preachers and teachers need to remember that we likewise are in the race and need to be patient. "*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient*" (2 Tim. 2:24). It will help the preacher and teacher learn patience when we remember that we can only plant and water and it is up to God to give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). We must

also remember that God's word will not return unto him void. *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"* (Isa. 55:11).

All of us need to be patient toward the faults and misgivings of our fellowman. *"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men"* (1 Thess. 5:14). Notice the parable of the Lord:

²³Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. ²⁴And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. ²⁹And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt (Matt. 18:23-30).

If we would have others exercise patience toward us then we need also to exercise patience toward all others.

We even must have patience with God. God is patient and longsuffering with us. *"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"* [2 Peter 3:9]. *"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"* [Rom. 2:4]?

We need to have patience with God when it comes to him answering our prayers. This is when some people lose patience with God. Paul waited some two or three years for God to answer his prayer about going to Rome [Rom. 1:9-10].

The Psalmist said to wait on the Lord. *"Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it"* [Psalm 37:34]. *"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry"* [Psalm 40:1].

We must exercise patience in the trials, disappointments, tribulations and sorrows of life. *"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer"* [Rom. 12:12].

It will help us to be patient in running the Christian race, if we will remember that *"tribulation worketh patience"* [Rom. 5:4]. That patience is acceptable to God [1 Peter 2:20]. It means that we are partaking of the nature of God and Christ [1 Peter 4:13]. The joy of being in Christ enabled John to be patient even in tribulation. *"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"* [Rev. 1:9].

Yes, the Christian race demands patience if we would be successful in running it. Our eternal destiny depends upon our faithfulness. If we are faithful in

everything else, but fail in patience, then all is in vain. The Lord summed it up for us in 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.*"

Chapter 6

The Laborers Are Few [What Can We Do To Get Local Brethren More Involved?]

Garland M. Robinson

The subject under consideration in this lesson is a vital topic. It is one that is faced by every congregation, eldership and preacher. What can be done to get the local brethren involved? How can we get them committed to faithfully living the Christian life every day. How can we get them off the pew and into the community teaching the Gospel?

So many things ought to be considered. We hope those discussed below will encourage you to be more involved in the local work of the congregation. You will no doubt be able to add several points to those we wish to explore in this lesson.

What Does The Bible Say?

One of the first things that comes to mind in contemplating how to get members of the congregation more involved is to set forth what the Bible teaches about it.

The Lord's plan is for **every member of his kingdom to be involved in bearing fruit unto Him**. Jesus set forth this point plainly in John 15 with the account of the vine and the branches.

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ²Every branch in me that

beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ³Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. ⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ⁸**Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples**" (John 15:1-8).

Every Christian, regardless of age, sex or ability, is to do his/her part. As we measure things, some are able to do more than others, while some are not able to do as much. But this is not the point. It is immaterial as regards to the *amount* of work done, the ease with which it is done, or what some may consider the *level of importance* of a particular work. God does not look upon these things. What is important is that each individual is doing his part — doing what he can.

This principle was set forth to the church at Corinth. Notice what the Holy Spirit said to our brethren there:

¹⁴*For the body is not one member, but many.*

¹⁵*If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?* ¹⁶*And if the ear shall say,*

Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? ¹⁸But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹And if they were all one member, where were the body? ²⁰But now are they many members, yet but one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²²Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: ²⁵That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. ²⁸And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? ³⁰Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? ³¹But covet

earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way [1 Cor. 12:14-31].

Every single member is vitally important! Every member has a work he/she can do. You need to find that work and then do that work to the best of your ability! Never think the work you perform is unimportant. It all fits into the overall plan of the work of the church. For example: the task you perform makes it possible that another is able to do his work. And, without you doing your part, they are not able to do theirs. His part is not more important than yours. It takes the *whole* process to get the job done and perform the work God has commanded to be done.

We may consider a nail to be a very small thing in comparison to the job it performs. It holds in place a shingle. The shingle in turn covers the decking on the roof. The roof covers the building. The building houses valuable contents. The contents provide a means of support to the owners. How important is the nail to the owners? Every part has a job to perform and every part must do its job for the whole to be complete.

Every member of the church has a job he/she can perform — maybe more than one. No one can look to another and say you are not important, we have no need of you. Every member makes up the body and the body functions as a whole.

Brother? sister? do your part! Find a work (or works) you can do and do it. Be content with your work. Remember who you work for — the Lord, not men (cf. Eph. 6:6). You are important! The work you do enables others to do their work which in turn enables still others to do their work. “*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples*” [John 15:8].

Prayer is involved for more laborers. On the sending out of the limited commission, we read:

¹After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. ²Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: **pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest** [Luke 10:1-2].

The Lord desires that we pray! We should pray that more laborers would enter the field to work. Fathers and mothers must pray that their children will be faithful in the Lord's kingdom. They should pray that their sons would become faithful preachers, elders, deacons, laborers — that their daughters would become faithful preacher's, elder's, deacon's wives and laborers themselves. And, when we have prayed, we should work to accomplish that about which we have prayed! It is true that we must *pray* as if everything depended upon God and then *work* as if everything depended upon us.

We must speak often about the Lord and his glorious work of saving the lost. We speak of such before our families. We show it is the most important thing in our lives. We train our children to follow in the Lord's footsteps. We train them to be laborers.

Work is involved in being a laborer and to gain more laborers. Those who are members of the Lord's body must work. None can be idle and meet with the Lord's approval. There is no place for some to work while others rest. Each one must do his part. Whatever talents [abilities] we have must be put to use or the condemnation of God rests upon us. The parable of the talents vividly shows this is true [Matt. 25:14-30]. The principle by which we all live is "...that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).

As our nation recruits its army, even so must we recruit men and women into the army of God. There are no draftees. Every servant has eagerly enlisted in this great work. The Lord's army is completely made up of willing volunteers. Everyone is invited and can be a part of the great army. Jesus said,

²⁸Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

None are coerced into this army and would do no good if they were.

*¹⁶Know 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? ¹⁷But 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. ¹⁸Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).*

It is a work in which each one is fighting a host of spiritual wickedness, even though wickedness often resides in high places.

¹⁰Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this

world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ¹³Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ¹⁵And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:10-18).

The weapon we use is the power of the Gospel. Paul said, "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" [Rom. 1:16]. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved **it is the power of God**" [1 Cor. 1:18].

Teaching is involved for more laborers. Instructions must be given to both those who are laborers and to those who would be laborers. The command to teach is clear.

¹⁸And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo,

I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

Those who are taught need also to be informed of the hardships that accompany faithful labors in the Lord's vineyard. There will be persecutions and difficulties. "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Tim. 3:12). Faithfulness in the Lord's house comes at a great price but also reaps great reward. Each one needs to know what to expect so they can properly "count the cost." Jesus said,

²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ²⁹Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or eise, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:25-33).

Laborers must be taught there is no “middle ground.” Jesus said, “*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*” (Matt. 12:30). But, when we faithfully serve the Lord, we shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away (cf. Rev. 2:10).

When the apostle Paul was soon to be put to death he said,

7I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [2 Tim. 4:8].

Training is involved for more laborers. One may sit in the class room for weeks, months and even years, but the task will not get done while we sit. There must be instruction regarding the work of laborers, yes, but there must be also the “hands on training” that comes only from experience. We’ve studied about it, let’s now go out and do it!

Jesus taught his apostles and trained them as they went day by day. He then sent them out to perform what they had learned. Far too often we convert people and then leave them to themselves. We must teach and train them to live the Christian life and convert others.

Example is involved in having more laborers. The example of the faithful in the first century shows they were laborers for a lifetime. There were some defectors, deserters, but they did not receive the prize. Only those who held on to the end received the reward. Wherever we go and whatever persecutions we face along the way, the Lord instructs us as he did the church at Smyrna,

*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** (Rev. 2:10).*

The **right attitude** is involved in getting local brethren more involved. We must show and teach the proper respect toward God, the church, the Bible, others and self. We must not have "respect of persons" toward any. "*For there is no respect of persons with God*" (Rom. 2:11; cf. Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; James 2:1,9; 1 Peter 1:17). We must be fair and treat all as we would like to be treated. "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...*" (Matt. 7:12).

Laborers Are Involved Every Day

The religion of Jesus the Christ is not just a Sunday religion. It involves labor and work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is never a break or vacation from the Lord or his work. His work involves being faithful, living right, helping others, teaching the Truth all the days of our lives. Faithful Christians show the kind of living the Lord desires.

There is no time to take a break and rest! One cannot sit down and hope to be dragged along by those who are busy working. To do so means that one has defected and forfeited his hope of eternal life. Quitters do not win and winners do no quit! Invite, bring, teach classes, help in classes, use the telephone, never cease in this most urgent work!

Satan Is Our Adversary

The devil seeks to hinder and stop the servants of the Lord at every turn. We must be aware of this and his insidious ways to accomplish it. *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Cor. 2:11).

Laborers do not involve themselves in the affairs of this life lest they be hindered in their service to the Lord. ³*“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”* [2 Tim. 2:3-4].

Show The Rewards Of Faithful Labor

The rewards of faithful labor are many. It will keep you humble [cf. Matt. 18:4], cause you to pray [cf. Acts 4:31], drive out selfishness [cf. Phil. 2:2-4], give you real purpose in life [cf. 1 Thess. 2:19], keep you from backsliding [2 Peter 1:10-11], give you great joy [cf. Acts 5:41; 8:39] and cause you to study more [cf. 2 Tim. 2:15].

In that last great judgment day the words of the Lord will be, *“...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* [Matt. 25:34]. *“...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”* [Matt. 25:21].

Show The Consequences Of No Labor

Every person must be made to realize Christ is coming again to judge the world.

³⁰“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but **now commandeth all men every where to repent:** ³¹Because 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 17:30-31).

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.** ¹¹Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

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. ¹⁰But 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. ¹¹Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, ¹²Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:9-12)?

Christ Jesus is the **Savior**. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a

Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" [Acts 5:31].

He is the **Lord**. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" [Acts 2:36].

He is the **Judge**. "...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth...whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day...it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" [Acts 10:38-42].

Without labor and bearing fruit unto Him for His glory, there can be no favor with God. Jesus said,

²"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit **he taketh away...** ⁶If a man abide not in me, he is **cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.** ⁸Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. ⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. ¹⁰**If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.** ¹¹These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that **your joy might be full**" (John 15:2,6,8-11).

⁶"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. ⁷Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? ⁸And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it

alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: ⁹And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down”
(Luke 13:6-9).

Conclusion

Are you a faithful or unfaithful laborer? If unfaithful, do you want to be cast away as a worthless laborer? Are you using your talent(s) (Matt. 25:14-30)? Are you bearing fruit or will you be cut down? The choice is yours! You can repent and turn to God for forgiveness before it's too late, or, you can continue in rebellion and non-productivity. Which will it be?

If you are not a Christian, a child of God, you must obey the Gospel and become a faithful laborer. If you truly **believe** in Jesus the Christ (John 8:24), you must **repent** of your sins (Acts 2:38), **confess** faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37) and be **baptized** (immersed) into water for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). You must then live faithful unto Him all the days of your life (1 Cor. 15:58).

If you are a Christian but have fallen away and have become unproductive, you must **repent** and return to your first love (cf. Acts 8:18-24). Why wait any longer, repent today!

Chapter 7

The Race Demands Keeping Our Eye on the Goal

James W. Boyd

The race to which reference is made in the title is the one mentioned in Hebrews 12:1, “...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Having presented to us the great company of faithful witnesses in the previous chapter, we are persuaded that we, as Christians, also must be faithful, and the Christian life is illustrated as a race. This race is the theme of our lectureship.

In a race you run to reach the goal and win the prize. To be a winner demands patience, steadfastness, faithfulness, and laying aside all hindrances. The goal is before us “and let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). Every epistle urges us to be faithful.

In this lesson we shall discuss what our goal is, and why that is our goal, how that goal can be reached, one essential that reaching the goal involves which is the necessity of maintaining constant focus on the goal and remembering the way to reach it.

The Holy Spirit through the writer of Hebrews gives us a very informative illustration of the Christian life. We understand the nature of a race and its requirements. We also readily grasp the desirability of reaching the goal. Being a Christian is something like running a marathon with one important exception. In a marathon there is but one winner. However, in the

Christian race, all who complete the course faithfully are victors.

Our Goal

What is the ultimate goal of the Christian life? We understand that there are many blessings, spiritual and material, that are ours to enjoy from the bountiful hand of God even in this life. But the climatic goal and target of living for Christ is heaven. Heaven is the wonderful spiritual home of the redeemed soul. It has been the goal and sought for prize of the faithful of every age.

It is recorded with reference to Abraham, Hebrews 11:10,16, ¹⁰*“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God... ¹⁶But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.”*

Moses made the choice in life that he did *“esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward”* (Heb. 11:26). This has reference to the ultimate goal.

Paul wrote, 2 Timothy 4:6-8,

⁶*For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give unto me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

This is another anticipation of the heavenly goal.

Paul wrote that he had the desire to depart and be with Christ which was very far better (Phil. 1:23). This

is why he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God (Phil. 3:13). It was Paul who exhorted that we strive to win the prize of the incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:24), and to strive lawfully (2 Tim. 2:5). To reach the goal and win the prize one must abide by the law of the Lord, being faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10).

Scripture teaches there is life after this one. *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”* (2 Cor. 5:1). Because of our hope in Christ we do not sorrow at death as do others who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Jesus spoke of our goal in John 14:1-3,

¹Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In 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. ³And 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.

It is clear that our goal is heaven.

Why Heaven Is Our Goal

The song declares, “There’s a beautiful place called heaven.” There is the Paradise of God, the location of the tree of life, where there is comfort, rest, reward, companionship with the saved of all ages. In heaven there is escape from hell, no more pain, sorrow, suffering, tears, sickness or dying. Heaven is eternal and will never end.

In this life we are as straying pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). We are sojourners passing through on a journey never before travelled. Each of us can say, “All I want

to do is to go to heaven.” This establishes our ambitions and priorities. This is why we seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Our salvation is the end (the final result) of our faith (1 Peter 1:9).

How The Goal Is Reached

There are many essentials we must believe and do to reach heaven. Our obedience to the gospel is the initial part. Being a faithful child of God is work and worship is the continuing part. Focusing attention, being alert, keeping our eye on the goal is also necessary.

We must have the same resolution, dedication, conviction, and determination as did Jesus when he “set his face toward Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51) to go there and accomplish the Father’s will. If we do not keep our eye on the goal we are in danger of slipping and drifting off course to condemnation (Heb. 2:1).

Hebrews 12:2 tells us how to focus on our goal. *“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”* By and through the Christ we keep our eye on our goal. While we do not literally see heaven, by faith we see it afar. It matters where we are, but it also matters the direction we are going. Are we moving closer toward the goal, or away from it? Are we not aware that the devil provides detours, roadblocks, distractions to cause us to lose focus of our journey and get sidetracked that will be our doom? Some years ago a football team played a game in a post-season bowl and was expected to win, but they lost. The coach explained how his team had become sidetracked from the major purpose for them being there, with all the gala entertainment, news media, etc. They took their eye off their goal and were losers.

Do we not hear from many quarters that there are alternative routes, easier paths, that will take us to our

eternal destination? We cannot look to the world, to any man, not even to our own feelings, but only to the Christ to keep our goal in view.

We must be resolved as were the wise men at the time of the birth of Jesus who wished to visit Him as an infant. They saw the Star of Bethlehem and they followed that star until they reached their desired destination.

Why Look to Jesus

The reason we look to Jesus is because only through Him do we have access to the Father. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). This means Christ, only Christ, and no other will suffice. This is a truth that our world of multi-culturalism and manifold religions must learn. He is not only a way we may go, He is the only way we must go whereby we reach the eternal glories of the Father in heaven.

We can place our trust in Him because, even though He was tempted as we are (Heb. 4:15), he never sinned. He is the perfect One. Therefore, He is our example and we must follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). We should imitate Him in His use of the Scriptures (Matt. 4). We must worship as He taught (Matt. 4:4; John 4:24). He went about doing good, and Luke wrote of the teaching and good works of Jesus (Acts 1:1). Especially is He an example of obedience (Heb. 5:9). As we consider to Whom we look to keep our proper perspective in life, we hear Him say, *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life"* (John 6:63). We ask, therefore, as did Peter, *"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68).

We look to Jesus because He is the One through Whom the Father now speaks to man (Heb. 1:1,2).

Indeed, "*Hear ye him*" (Matt. 17:5), is the need of our age.

Hebrews 12:2 teaches He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the originator of it, and the One who perfectly demonstrated it. He brings God's scheme of redemption, which was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4; 3:11), which God gradually delivered (and the record of it is in the Bible) to its final fruition and the accomplishment of its purpose. Without the Christ, the whole plan fails and collapses.

It is He who came to this world, lived the perfect life, proved Himself to be God's Son, suffered and died, only to be raised from the dead. In spite of how much He suffered and was humiliated, He endured. This is what we must do. He never quit, but faithfully pressed on doing God's will. Eventually, He was exalted. He bore the opposition, but conquered. Under Him the course begun can be completed for us. We can place full confidence in Him because He has shown us how. He is a winner. So shall we be winners in Him. With our eyes on the Christ, we have our eyes on the goal. We dare not look away.

Looking unto Jesus calls us to remember His cross. It means we respect His authority as the Son of God. It involves our recognition that Jesus knows the way, is the way, understands us, knows our hearts, sympathizes with our weaknesses, offers forgiveness on His terms, and like the Good Shepherd, provides for His sheep, leading them in paths of righteousness, into the green pastures, beside the still waters, nourishing the soul, and ultimately into the eternal safety of His fold.

How Do We Come To Know This One?

Now that we are secured in the knowledge of the necessity to look unto Jesus, how do we come to know this Jesus to Whom we look? We have the noble

example of the noble Bereans who “*searched the Scriptures*” to learn what was so (Acts 17:11). Keeping the eye on the goal means learning and conforming to the will of the Father as given through the authority of the Son, now recorded in the infallible, inerrant, all-sufficient, authoritative, verbally inspired Scriptures. ¹⁶“*All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness,*” ¹⁷“*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work*” (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

A cardinal matter that our world, even the religious world, must come to understand if they be saved, is that the only source of reliable information we have about the One to whom we look in order to keep our eye on the goal is the Bible. We cannot accept books written by men, latter day revelations, the many creeds produced through the years, nor the subjective and emotional feelings within ourselves or others, often created by artificial means. While some scoff, “A Bible, a Bible,” as does the Book of Mormon, that book is THE book that informs us of where we came from, why we are here, how to live while here, where we are going, how to get to the place we desire, and upon whom we keep our eye as we make our way through life.

The Way To Keep Our Eye on the Goal

Keeping our eye on the goal of heaven reduces itself to keeping heaven before us with all its blessings, doing this by looking unto Jesus, knowing of Him as we search the Scriptures, believing and obeying.

An Illustration

Picture in your mind a sailing vessel as it plows through the uncharted waters in the darkness of night. A young sailor is at the helm. He has not gone this way

before, nor knows how to go. On board is the experienced captain of the ship who knows navigation and who has knowledge what to do and how to do it. The sailor asks, "How can I keep on course during the night?" The captain responded by pointing toward a certain star, and saying, "Keep that star before you. Never let your eye off that star. Never let it out of sight, and you will stay on course and all will be well."

We are like the young sailor in need of guidance. Christ is the captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), but more than that. He is the "bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16) on which we keep our spiritual eye. If we will follow Him all will be well with our souls and we will reach the heavenly goal.

An Invitation

Many years ago, as Moses was leading the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage toward the promised land of Canaan, he was visited by an in-law. Moses knew what he was doing and precisely where he was going, and who was leading them. At that time he said to his in-law, "*We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel*" (Num. 10:29). Those of us who are blessed to be Christians extend a similar invitation to all the world. We, too, are on our journey and heading toward our promised goal. How wonderful if others would go with us.

Chapter 8

Obstacles To The Race: The New Hermeneutic And New Unity Movement

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

It is always a supreme joy to appear on this great lectureship at Garfield Heights in Indianapolis, Indiana. Genuine gratitude is hereby expressed to Charles Blair, a loyal and dear friend for many years, the elders here and all the congregation for the extension of this invitation to appear on the 1996 lectureship program.

Vivid and graphic indeed are the various figures employed within Holy Writ descriptive of the Christian life. One of these is the running of a race. Paul frequently alluded to such. He did in the closing verses of 1 Cor. 9. There he contrasts an earthly race (like the Olympic) with the race Christians run. The Galatians were running a race. He conceded their having "run well" for a time but hindrances or obstacles had been placed in their runway (Gal. 5:7). Relative to the Jerusalem Conference he spoke of his running, whether with success or in vain, determined by whether Judaism was to be bound on Christians or fullness of liberty granted in the Lord (Gal. 2:2ff; cf. 5:1ff). He spoke of running in Philippians 2:16 with the deep desire that his Philippian converts be saved ultimately lest his race among them be in vain. He spoke to Timothy of running with diligent striving and doing it lawfully (2 Tim. 2:5). In a threefold summary of his own Christian pilgrimage in his final chapter he affirmed his finishing the course — an allusion to

running [2 Tim. 4:7]. I have long believed and defended Paul's authorship of Hebrews. In Hebrews 12:1 he admonished his fellow Hebrews, and all future Christians, to "*run with patience the race that is set before us*" (Heb. 12:2). Judaizers had put all kinds of obstacles before Hebrew saints and many of them were floundering in their faith.

There can be obstacles in *our* running the race for our Redeemer. The title so indicates. An obstacle is a hindrance, an impediment, a blocking of the way, a discouragement or failing to receive needed encouragement as we do run the prescribed course. In this study I shall be dealing with two such obstacles or hindrances — the new hermeneutic and the new unity movement. An entire volume could be written about each one. Therefore brief or concise will be my treatment of each. They both are insidious to the nth degree and then some! Advocates of both are composed of many who ran well in earlier life but now are sidetracked and they want to sidetrack the whole church. Such is one of the sad ironies of our day. We now have to fight men who once fought at our side and advanced well the Cause of Christ. Now they have become enemies of Calvary for a surety (Phil. 3:18,19).

The New Hermeneutic: An Odious Obstacle

Hermeneutics is not as common a word as we use daily but that to which it refers is as common as sunrise and sunset. We use such daily in our study of the Bible and its apt application to our life. The term deals with the science of interpreting the Bible and making the right application of Biblical matters to our lives. One of the most practical courses I had at Freed-Hardeman College (now University) in the early 1950's was Hermeneutics taught by the late and lamented Frank Van Dyke. We used as a textbook Dungan's book entitled, *Hermeneutics*. But hermeneutics did not begin with

the penning, publishing and perusing of Dungan's book on this timely topic. Hermeneutics did not begin with a course taught by a gifted professor as Van Dyke surely was. It is as old as God's revelation and men's attempts to understand it and correctly apply these sacred principles to life.

Now comes along the new hermeneutics. Implied on the very surface is a signal dissatisfaction with the old hermeneutics of determining Bible authority by command, example and inference or implication. Jehovah, the Christ and the Holy Spirit, The Timeless Trinity, have always spoken to man explicitly, i.e., plainly, directly, clearly, in a straightforward way or implicitly, i.e., by our inferring what God has implied. **Implication is a gigantic NO NO** to the advocates of a new hermeneutic. Minus implication we would not know that any of the Bible has been addressed to us. Our names are not in the Bible. I cannot go to a single Bible passage and find, "Robert R. Taylor, Jr., you are hereby commanded to hear Christ, accept ardently His Deity, repent of your sins, confess with courage and conviction His Deity and cause someone to baptize you into the noble names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Yet by implication I can be just as sure that I must do the foregoing as if my own twentieth century name were to appear in every cited passage inculcating these divine directives. But here the new hermeneutic movement demurs. To them the old revered hermeneutics which brought the church to us and kept it here for us is old hat, outdated, outmoded and needs to be discarded instantly. They are leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to do this very thing. They have well financed colleges, papers, book publishers, lectureships, affluent congregations and denominational alliances all in their corner and eager to spread the tenets of the new hermeneutic propaganda. A Biblically illiterate brotherhood, to a great extent, is swallowing their liberal pitch,

hook, line and sinker. This is sad; it is inexpressibly sad.

The bottom line of the new hermeneutic is a rejection of Biblical authority. A plea for the old paths such as Jeremiah admonished of his Judaeen and Jerusalem peers was a regal recognition of the authority of God's Word (Jer. 6:16,17). To the new hermeneutic advocate today, this is old hat, antiquated, outdated, outmoded and minus any and all validity. Rubel Shelly even demands to know where we came up with such a concept. We got it from the same place he did when he preached it in his sound days — from the Bible! I would be interested in knowing where he obtained authority for its rejection!

Pattern authority is a gigantic NO NO to the advocates of the new hermeneutics. Yet God had a pattern for Adam and Eve in Eden. They were to multiply and replenish the race; they were to dress and keep the garden; they were forbidden to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:1-25). God had a pattern for patriarchs. Genesis makes this crystal clear. God had a model for Moses and a pattern for the prophets. In constructing the tabernacle, Exodus 25-40, Moses was told to make it according to the pattern showed him in the holy mount and this he did much to the delight of God. The entirety of the Old Testament is filled with Biblical authority. One would have to be blind in one eye and unable to see with the other to miss this most obvious point!

The New Testament is filled with more of the same. John the Baptist had a norm to which he was loyally bound. The early chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John so affirm. Jesus Christ, the very Lord of Glory Himself, had a pattern from the Heavenly Father and to it He subscribed lovingly and loyally — the Word of God (John 6:38; 12:49,50). Those sent out on the Limited or Restricted Commission in Matthew 10; Mark 6 and

Luke 10 were bound by a pattern. They were told to whom not to go and to whom they were to go; they were told what to preach; they were told what to do and what not to do in the prosecution of the plan. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:47; John 20:22,23 constituted their pattern, their norm, their standard. They gave the fullest of allegiance to it as we see unfolded in Acts, the epistles and regal Revelation. There was the pattern in *becoming a Christian* (Rom. 6:17,18). There was the pattern for *worship* (John 4:23,24). They had a pattern of *Christian living* (Matt. 5:3-12; Gal. 5:22,23; Titus 2:11,12; 2 Peter 1:5-11). They had a pattern for *preaching* (2 Tim. 2:2; 4:2). They had a pattern of *doing good works* (2 Cor. 8,9; Gal. 2:10; 6:10; James 1:27). They had a pattern for *fellowship* (Matt. 12:46-50; 1 John 1:6-9). They had a pattern in *restoring erring children of God* (Acts 8:22; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9). They had a pattern for *the mission of the church* — evangelism, edification and benevolence (Mark 16:15; Jude 20,21; Gal. 6:10). Yet in any of these or all of them in aggregate the new hermeneutic proponents have nothing but blinded vision and vocal disdain.

What is their agenda? It can be delineated with a degree of definitiveness from what they preach and practice. They want any and all opposition to mechanical worship to cease among us and cease permanently. Unless he changes drastically, there will be NO more Shelly-Dunning Debates on the sinfulness of mechanical music in worship. Shelly is now in Dunning's camp. They want to revamp baptism and its purpose, viz., remission of sins as per Acts 2:38. The pious unimmersed are NO longer void of current approval by God and future hope as per their advocacy. One does not have to know the clearly stated purpose of baptism prior to being baptized as did those in Acts 2:37-41 for baptism to count as being valid.

They want a much broader approach to marriage, divorce and remarriage. War has by them been declared upon such passages as Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9 and 1 Cor. 7:15.

They are for a new approach to fellowship with Protestant denominationalism in general and the Christian Church in particular. Shelly is at home with all kinds of denominational people in Nashville and many other places as well. So is Max Lucado. So is Joe Van Dyke down in Florence, Alabama.

The expanding role of women is on a front burner in their agenda. She should not be denied any role men are authorized to fill in the church. Lynn Mitchell and Robert Randolph see no problem in women elders. They took that view at a Freed-Hardeman University Forum some years back. They were opposed by Ralph Gilmore and Don McWhorter. The pulpit is already open to women among many of our people. It is a sad spectacle to observe some of our most conservative brethren putting women in the pulpit by the side of a missionary and letting him preach half the time and her preach half the time. What Paul forbade in 1 Cor. 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11,12 they permit! Minus question or quibble they have greatly weakened our whole case against expanding roles of women in leadership roles among churches of Christ.

In the name of the new hermeneutic we now have congregations raising money by car washes, bake sales, garage sales, etc., instead of following the apostolic teaching of 1 Cor. 16:1,2. You have it here in your state; we have it in my home state of Tennessee. In the name of the new hermeneutic, we now have congregations observing Christmas, Easter and combined Thanksgiving services with denominations. You have it here; we have it in Tennessee much to my chagrin. In the name of the new hermeneutic, congregations have big programs, bring in a big name compromiser and change agent like Shelly and charge so much per

person who attends. Such gatherings have no qualms at all in allowing women to teach in mixed classes.

They want us to preach in such a way that no one goes away offended. Allow everyone to leave feeling good about himself and others.

All of these plus many other liberal practices are on their agenda for a surety.

An Ancient Sin In A Modern Setting

The so-called new hermeneutic is not really new at all. It just has new personnel with their well-oiled agenda of overhauling the Christian system, of restructuring the church of the Lord. It is really as old as the race. Its roots go back to Genesis 3 when the first human couple rejected the Divine Pattern, the Heavenly Norm, for the blatant blandishments of the sly serpent, Satan himself. Examples abound in both Testaments of those who were bent on digression determining to rid God and His pattern from their lives. From Cain in Genesis 4 to Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem in one of the last penned books of the Old Testament, Nehemiah, we see this infamous rule at work. From the Herods, to Judas Iscariot, to the Judaizers and to the Gnostics in John's sunset days we behold this wholesale rejection of the authority of God's Word infamously portrayed. Nineteen centuries plus of Christianity on earth have seen little or no abatement in this rebellious work as majored in by daring dissenters in every generation minus exception.

The new hermeneutic is not new among us. Stalwart soldiers of Christ have been doing battle with such for a great deal longer than just during the 1980's and the 1990's.

Since the new hermeneutic crowd has declared war on implication, it would be highly interesting to have them tell us how they KNOW any of the Bible is applicable to them. Their names are not inscribed therein;

neither are ours. It would be of further interest to have some of the new hermeneutic propagators tell us where God ever explicitly told them to reject all implication in the momentous matter of ascertaining Biblical authority. Where did Jehovah, Jesus or the Holy Spirit ever tell ANY of them explicitly that He only authorizes explicitly, i.e., in so many plain words. Is ascertaining Bible authority just by command with no authority at all in example or by inference (implication)? Scriptural proof please!

The New Unity Movement: A Second Odious Obstacle

The famed wall builder, Nehemiah, was invited to descend to the plains of Ono for a unity movement with Sanballat and Geshem. Courageously and decisively, he said O NO to the compromising proposal! The Judaizers in the first century had a cleverly-worked-out agenda for unity with them squarely in the driver's seat. But the apostles and elders at Jerusalem were not buying it as we see exhibited in Acts 15 (Luke's account) and Galatians 2 (Paul's account). Paul said the apostolic defenders of the most holy faith did not give place to such for as much as one hour or one particle [Gal. 2:4,5]. They knew that compromise spelled the doom of their work for the Lord. They were not open to any of its deadly perils. Would God we had more brethren, an entire army of them, so characterized today.

When the Restoration Movement began some two hundred years ago, the Protestant clergy and their denominational devotees would like to have silenced every plea for the old paths. They knew that the success of this clarion cry spelled doom for their denominational organizations. Just how effective would have been the voices of Campbell, Stone, Scott, Smith, Johnson, Franklin, Fanning, Lipscomb and a host of

others had they been willing to come to terms of unity upon a sectarian basis and within denominational frameworks? The question is rhetorical; it contains its own built-in answer. Nil would have been their influence: zero would have been their spiritual success!

There could have been instant peace and unity a century ago if our brethren had been willing for the digressives to call the shots and establish the frameworks of such peace and unity. Just go along with the mechanical instrument in worship; just go along with the missionary societies; just go along with open membership contentions; just go along with a more loose and lax approach to Biblical authorization. But the price tag was entirely too high for solid and sound brethren and they were not buying peace and unity at any price when truth was at stake. They still subscribed to an Old Testament exhortation of buying the truth and selling it not (Prov. 23:23). Like Paul stated in 2 Cor. 2:17 the gospel was not for sale to the highest bidder or to any bidder as far as that matter went.

During the twentieth century there could have been peace and unity relative to premillennialism, the anti-movement, the invasion of Pentecostalism, Cross-roadism, theistic evolution, the re-baptism controversy, the new hermeneutics, expanding roles for women in religious leadership, the wide acceptance and defense of pseudo versions, the social gospel and a host of other issues if we had allowed those pushing such isms free reign and silenced any and all opposition as they asked us to do. But peace at any price is entirely too expensive for marketable acceptance. In the latter part of James 3 that inspired penman analyzes the wisdom that comes from above and contrasts it in mighty fashion with the wisdom that is earthly, sensual and devilish. He establishes a crystal clear and preciously positive one-two order of priority — first purity and then peace (James 3:17).

During this century there have been many flawed attempts between some among churches of Christ and some from the Christian Church denomination to work out so-called plans for unity. During the first half of this century and especially during the 1930's there were efforts along this line by Claude E. Witty from churches of Christ and James de Forest Murch of the Christian Church denomination. William Woodson assesses this movement in a straightforward way,

Driven mostly by an emotional plea for restoration of unity among alienated brethren, these efforts stressed prayer, survey of common faith and practice, friendliness, cooperation where possible, along with study and discussion together, and culminated in various national unity meetings in strategic cities. Although all concerned were aware of the seriousness of the divisive issues of instrumental music and missionary activities little effort was addressed to resolving these problems; instead, it was apparently hoped the fervor of the participants would overcome the unresolved problems which produced the division and, somehow, unity was expected to result.¹

With but scarce deviation the same description pretty well fits the last dozen years of meetings between some of our brethren and members from the Christian Church beginning with the totally misnamed, yet highly publicized, Joplin SUMMIT during the mid 1980's. The personnel is different; the meeting places were somewhat different; the agenda remained the same with but few, if any, exceptions.

Before leaving these efforts of the New Unity Movements of the 1930's, it is well to refer to a speech given by H. Leo Boles right here in Indianapolis,

Indiana, May 3, 1939. It was a lengthy speech lasting about one and one-half hours. The heart of his straightforward sermon was the way of unity between the Christian Church and churches of Christ. The late and lamented Boles said with force, fervency and finality,

Brethren, this is where the churches of Christ stand today; it is where unity can be found now; it is where you left the New Testament; it is where you left the churches of Christ, and it is where you can find them when you come back. On this ground and teaching, and only on this, can scriptural unity be had now; on these basic principles of the New Testament, Christian unity may always be had...Brethren, put away the organ and you will be where the pioneers stood when the unity of God's people was enjoyed. The churches of Christ are standing now on this item just where the pioneers stood before its introduction in 1859; there was unity then on this point and there can be unity now at this point when the organ is pushed aside. Brethren, if you think there will be a compromise or surrender by the churches of Christ on this point, you are mistaken.²

W. L. Totty, longtime preacher of the gospel in this city, assessed it to be one of the greatest speeches since the Restoration Movement began. I concur with brother Totty one hundred per cent.

During the 1960's I went to preach in a gospel meeting in a northern state. At that time there were numerous meetings being conducted by some of our brethren and Christian Church preachers. As I now recall our brethren involved in such had not thinned the ranks of ANY of the Christian Church preachers. Their pianos and organs were still blaring away at all their

services. Pianos and organs in their worship have always been their golden calves and they are adamantly opposed toward giving them up to achieve any type of unity with churches of Christ. Of course today there are many other differences between loyal churches of Christ and digressive Christian Church groups. This is beyond any questioning or quibbling to the contrary.

Then came the Ketcherside-Garrett efforts along these same lines. When I first began to preach during the late 1940's, there were but few these two fellowshipped. When they swung from the ultra right to the ultra left they could scarcely find anybody they would not fellowship except loyal churches of Christ which they bashed in their day much like the Change Agents are doing in our day. Gospel/doctrine distinctions became their cup of tea. Unity was to be found in gospel and not in doctrine — a manmade distinction they worked out with no Scriptural validity attached to it at all. I remember when they said one preached to the world — not taught it, and taught the church and not preached to it. Their effort was to unite churches of Christ, the Christian Church and to a degree the liberal Disciples of Christ. Each of these militant men had a paper. Ketcherside had his *Mission Messenger*; Garrett had his *Restoration Review*. In earlier years Garrett had a little paper called *Bible Talk*. It was a lot of talk with little or no Bible interwoven! By these literary devices they peddled their prattle relentlessly. Throughout all their efforts they had the Christian Church wearing a halo of glory and they castigated churches of Christ unmercifully. Their influence lives on. Ketcherside is now dead; Garrett is still alive and as rank as ever. Newer voices have taken up their gospel/doctrine contentions with gospel essential toward unity and doctrine unnecessary. The New Change Agents have Big "F" and Little "f" or upper and lower grades of fellowship. Or it may be the core gospel or the bull's eye approach to unity as propagated by men like Bill

Love and Rubel Shelly and their puppets or robots who follow slavishly these Pied Pipers. They define their own terms.

Since 1984 there have been numerous forums between some of our brethren and Christian Church preachers. The 1984 Joplin Summit was a fiasco in the judgment of many of us. The ones which have followed have been more of the same. I was invited to participate in one of them. I told the liberal Change Agent who extended the written invitation that I was not interested. I had more important things to do with my time than to descend to the plains of Ono where compromise is so abundantly available. Like Ephraim in Hosea's day the Christian Church denomination is wedded to her modern idols and they are not about to become iconoclastic in their eradication of the same.

Conclusion

We need the *old* unity, not a new unity plan. We need the unity for which Jesus prayed so fervently in John 17:20-23. We need the unity for which Paul made such a strong plea at Corinth in 1 Cor. 1:10ff and 2 Cor. 6:14-18. We need the unity which Paul outlined in Ephesians 4:3-6 and in Philippians 1:27. This is the New Testament counterpart of that unity Israel's Sweet Singer praised so highly and exalted so mightily in Psalm 133. Such unique unity is both good and pleasant.

ENDNOTES

¹William Woodson, *Settled in Heaven, Applying The Bible To Life*, Freed-Hardeman University Lectures. 1996, p.p. 502,503.

²H. Leo Boles, *The Way Of Unity Between "Christian Church" And Churches of Christ*, Tract,

Getwell church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee, 1984 —
a reprint of the Boles Speech. p.p. 6,12,13.

Chapter 9

What Can We Do To Evangelize The World?

Garland M. Robinson

In Isaiah 6:8-11, we read:

⁸Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. ⁹And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ¹⁰Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. ¹¹Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, ¹²And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

Though this is an Old Testament passage, it speaks of a principle that is certainly true today: Preaching the Word of God!

Show Commands

Surely, when brethren know better they will do better. Every Christian must be made to understand

he/she is not exempt from the work of evangelizing. One of the purposes for which one has been saved is to teach others that they may know of the salvation to be found in Christ Jesus.

The Great Commission is a universal order.

Even before the church began, Jesus set forth what some have called the Lord's "marching orders" and others, "the great commission." After his resurrection and before his ascension, Jesus told the eleven apostles,

...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

Though this command was initially to the apostles, it was (and is) also directed to every child of God. The Lord's instructions to the apostles were to: 1) "**go,**" 2) "**teach all nations,**" 3) "**baptizing them,**" 4) "**teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**" In the process of teaching converts to "*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,*" they would be instructed to likewise "*go ...teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*" This is a self-perpetuating command — it will last indefinitely as long as the world stands!

Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16, "*...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*"

The message of the cross is a crucial and imperative message. From the text of Isaiah 6:8, we learn that Isaiah was touched by the urgency of the need of preaching the Word of God. He was made aware of the need and looked to himself in filling that need. If every child of God would do the same, far more preaching and teaching would be done and the continual work of evangelizing the world would prosper.

The apostles and brethren of the first century recognized the urgency and seriousness of the command to go into all the world preaching the Word. Therefore, in their lifetime, with their limited resources of no television, radio, printing press, airplane, train or car, the gospel "...was preached to every creature which is under heaven..." [Col. 1:23]. If they could manage and accomplish the task, can not we do the same? Yes, we can, when brethren of every congregation will take unto themselves the whole armour of God and get to work!

¹³Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ¹⁵And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

¹⁶Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ¹⁹And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰For which I am

an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak [Eph. 6:13-20].

Have missionaries visit the congregation frequently and report on their work of preaching the gospel. By this means, brethren not only have been taught what the Bible says about preaching to the whole world, they actually are able to see and hear from one who is doing it. The traveling evangelist wields a great impact upon young and old alike. Children are thrilled to be able to meet someone who has actually traveled and lived in far away places. It instills impressions and seeds of interest in their hearts that may well grow and develop till that someday they too will seek the carry the blessed gospel to all the world.

I've often seen missionaries bring back small coins or articles from some distant place and give them to children who are thrilled to be able to have them. It serves as a reminder of the time when that missionary came by and talked to them about the Lord's work of preaching the gospel to the whole world. Years later, they will be reminded of his visit.

The New Testament reveals occasions when missionaries reported on the work being done. On the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, we read of their return to Antioch in Syria from whence they had begun their trip. We read,

*²⁷And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, **they rehearsed all that God had done with them**, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. ²⁸And there they abode long time with the disciples [Acts 14:27-28].*

Show The Need

Saints in the early church went into all the world with the Gospel because they understood plainly that people in every place are lost because of their trespasses and sins. The brethren at Ephesus had been reminded of the time in their life when they

²...walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:2-3).

There is an urgent need of preaching the gospel because **no one is exempt from sin**. “As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:10). “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 John 1:8). “*...The whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19).

Sin is the transgression/violation of God’s Law. “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*” (1 John 3:4). “*...For where no law is, there is no transgression*” (Rom. 4:15). “*...Sin is not imputed when there is no law*” (Rom. 5:13).

Sin separates one from God. Isaiah 59:2 says, “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*”

Sin brings death, spiritual death. The inspired James says, ¹⁴“*But every man is tempted, when he is*

drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

If we die in a state of separation from God we will be eternally lost in the devil’s hell — a place of torment, anguish and pain — “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44,46,48).

Once death takes a person from this life, there is no coming back because “man goeth to his long home” (Ecc. 12:5). There is no changing or repenting on the other side, it’s too late. There is no second chance!

There is more than a passing glimpse shown of “life” of the other side of death. Luke 16:19-31 gives details regarding two individuals who died and what they experience on the “other side.”

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: ²⁰And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, ... ²²And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; ²³And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. ²⁵But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. ²⁶And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from

hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence (Luke 16:19-20,22-26).

The rich man died and found himself in hell (*hades*, the abiding place of disembodied spirits). Both he and Lazarus were there — Lazarus in comfort, the rich man in great pain, agony and torment. The flames leaping up around him caused great torment in so much that even a drop of water would give some relief if touched to his tongue. All the rich man could do was *remember* his time on earth when he had plenty and had not used it wisely, having no pity on Lazarus which sat at his gate every day. Now, the tables are turned, except that it's too late to do anything about it — for either himself or Lazarus. Their abiding place is *fixed* so that neither one could leave where they were.

Seeing the impossibility of altering his circumstance, the rich man desires that his five brothers be informed of his present condition "*lest they also come into this place of torment*" (v.28). But it's not possible to grant such a request and would do no good if it were granted.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. ³⁰*And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* ³¹*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead* [Luke 16:29-31].

If this account of life after death, along with all the inspired Word of God records about it, does not convince men and women everywhere to repent and turn to God, then nothing will (cf. Luke 16:31). If this account does not impress upon our hearts the urgent

and compelling need to preach and teach the unsearchable riches of Christ while we have the opportunity, then nothing will! Jesus recognized this need when he said, *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4).

Dear brother or sister in the Lord, are you working? Do you see the need? Do you see the seriousness and urgency of it? Are you busy or are you like the rich man?

Show Examples

Far too often it appears brethren are ashamed of the Gospel and do not teach it. But in the first century, when persecuted severely, brethren fled for their lives taking the gospel with them. *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4).

They were not ashamed of the Lord. They knew Jesus said, *"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels"* (Luke 9:26). Paul said, *"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"* (Rom. 1:16). He disputed daily in the school of Tyrannus. *"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"* (Acts 19:10).

The Gospel is God's power to save men, therefore they must hear it. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"* (1 Cor. 1:18; cf. Rom. 1:16 above). *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe*

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Brethren used every opportunity to teach the Gospel. An unscheduled appointment with the lame man which sat at the gate of the temple called beautiful provided Peter and John an opportunity and they seized it (Acts 3:1ff). When all the people gathered at Solomon's porch, being filled "with wonder and amazement" at the lame man being healed (v.10), we read, "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, *Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk*" (Acts 3:12)? Beginning at verse 13 he preaches a sermon which extends into the next chapter until he is interrupted by the priests, captain of the temple and the Sadducees. They were grieved that Peter and John "...taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

When Peter and John were commanded to no longer speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus, they said, ¹⁹"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. ²⁰For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). Being further threatened and let go, they went unto the brethren and they all prayed,

²⁹And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word. ... ³¹And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and

*they spake the word of God with boldness
(Acts 4:29,31).*

When they continued to preach the Word, the high priest and those with him

¹⁸...laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, ²⁰Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. ²¹And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught (Acts 5:18-21).

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). This seen is repeated again and again throughout the book of Acts.

Stephen, a faithful servant and powerful preacher, when presented with an opportunity to preach/teach, did not back away. As at other times, those who both resisted the gospel and the preaching of it, set themselves against him. False witnesses were hired to lie about Stephen and presented him an occasion where he had an audience to teach. Beginning at Acts 7:2 he was able to speak the “words of life” until his voice was silenced by stones in verse 60.

In Acts 8:1 we read,

¹And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and

*Samaria, except the apostles. ²And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. ³As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. ⁴Therefore **they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word** (Acts 8:1-4).*

Instead of silencing the preaching of the gospel, Stephen's death fanned the flames even higher. Brethren were scattered in fear of their lives but they carried the gospel with them. Their zeal and determination was bolstered to cease not. The wickedness of these evil doers who killed Stephen, made it ever more clearer to the brethren the urgency of preaching the gospel.

The first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas was begun because the Holy Spirit said, "...Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

*⁴So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, **departed unto Seleucia;** and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. ⁶And when they had gone through the **isle unto Paphos...** (Acts 13:4-6a).*

They traveled to Perga in Pamphylia, then to Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-14). All along the way, they preached the blessed gospel of the Lord. At Antioch we find recorded much of their preaching which takes up most of chapter 13. From there they went on to Iconium (14:1), Lystra (14:8) and Derbe (14:20).

*²¹And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, ²²Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. ²³And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. ²⁴And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. ²⁵And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: ²⁶And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for **the work which they fulfilled** [Acts 14:21-26].*

Conclusion

Are we fulfilling the work God has given us of carrying his gospel into all the world? Are not the commandments of the Lord enough for us to be busy in evangelizing the world? Can't we follow the example of our brethren in the first century, who under great threat and persecution, even to the extent of hazarding their lives [Acts 15:26; cf. 14:19; 16:19-24; 2 Cor. 11:24-27; Phil. 2:30] and suffering the loss of physical death, ceased not to preach and teach Jesus Christ [Acts 5:42]?

Shall we not keep before us all the urgent need to sow the seed of the kingdom because people are dieing and slipping into eternity every hour — even as we speak?

Chapter 10

The Challenge Of Becoming All Things To All Men Without Compromising The Faith

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Astute students of Holy Writ will promptly recognize the title as derived from Pauline statements made to the Corinthians. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians about A. D. 57, evidently the spring of that year, from Ephesus [1 Cor. 16:8]. Paul wrote tersely and truthfully,

¹⁹For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. ²⁰And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; ²¹To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. ²²To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you [1 Cor. 9:19-23].

Kept In Context

It is always vastly important to keep every text in its context. A text taken out of its context becomes a mere pretext. There is the immediate context; these are the verses right before the text and those immediately subsequent to the text. There is the remote context; the part of the Bible before said passage and the part of Sacred Scripture thereafter as pertaining to the topic at hand.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul defended his apostleship. It was being undermined at Corinth by some of the members in general and the Judaizing element in particular (1 Cor. 9:1,2). He defended his right to have a wife and lead her about, i.e., take her with him on his journeys for Jesus as Cephas, the other apostles and the Lord's brethren — James, Jude, Simon and Joses — did. Barnabas had that same right also Paul affirmed.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul defended his and Barnabas' right to forego a secular occupation (such as his tent-making — Acts 18:1-3) and be supported by the brethren. Paul was not adverse to receiving support for he accepted such gratefully from Macedonian churches while at Corinth and from the Philippians while incarcerated in Rome (2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 1:5,7; 4:10-19). Yet he had chosen not to accept remuneration from Corinth. He told why in 1 Corinthians 9:14-18; he dealt with the same matter again in 2 Corinthians 11. He knew, and knew well, the Corinthian mindset in general and the Judaizing mindset in particular. He knew they would be quick to allege Paul was among them for the physical support thus received if he accepted pay for his work. They would cast him as a mere mercenary with gold and silver on his materialistic mind. His foregoing this right was an accepted part of his becoming all things to all of them that the gospel be not hindered and that more effective would be his evangelism among them. He was at Corinth to tell them about God — not

collect gold; he was there to acquaint them with Christ as Saviour — not collect coins and take in their silver for his own personal use.

What The Pauline Passage Does Not Mean

The very title under which I write suggests one very vital limitation — not compromising the faith. The faith is the gospel as Paul often used the comprehensive term [cf. Gal. 1:23,24; 3:23ff]. Jude does the same in verse 3 of his one-chapter book.

Becoming all things to all men did not mean that Paul was a compromiser. He was as opposed to that cowardly disposition as any man who ever served the Lord Jesus Christ. It did not mean that he refrained from full gospel proclamation while in their Corinthian midst. He pursued the same philosophy at Corinth as he did at Ephesus, writing site of 1 Corinthians. He told the elders from Ephesus when he met them at Miletus that he shrank not from declaring to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26,27). At Corinth he determined to know nothing among them save Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). He preached the gospel that saved them and kept them saved as per 1 Corinthians 15:1ff. It did not mean that he held back unpleasant truth lest he be offensive to them. In 2 Corinthians 2 he recounted his feelings as he penned 1 Corinthians to them. He wrote it with anguish of heart and with precious tears staining his saintly face. It did not mean that he held back needed reproof and essential rebuke. In nearly every chapter of 1 Corinthians he dealt with problems. He dealt with division and party names in chapter one. He dealt with matters touching inspired revelation in chapter two. In chapter three he dealt with the spirit of carnality at work among them. In chapter five he dealt with wife theft and their glorious toleration of this heinous sin. In chapter six he touched litigation among brethren and various matters of

immorality. Marital matters are dealt with in chapter seven. Chapter eight touches matters of liberty. Chapter ten deals with a medley of matters. The veiled woman and Lord's Supper abuses occupy the limelight in chapter eleven. Spiritual gifts — named, terminus and regulation — occupy chapters twelve, thirteen and fourteen. Resurrection difficulties surface and are solved in chapter fifteen. Needed admonitions permeate chapter sixteen.

Pauline Limitations Relative To This Principle

There had to be imposed limitations else Paul would have compromised truth. Some of these will now be presented and highlighted.

Subsequent to his conversion in Damascus of Syria and later at Jerusalem he sought to win to Christ his former cronies in crime, those who aided him in persecuting the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prior to conversion he had been a bitter persecutor himself as per Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1,2; 26:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6 and 1 Tim. 1:13-15. He forsook all such persecutions when he converted to Christ. Yet he sought to win his former Pharisaic colleagues to the truth as it is in Christ. Boldly, he preached the Christ in the Syrian synagogues at Damascus (Acts 9:20-22). This ultimately led to Pharisaic determination to kill him in the very city of his conversion to Christ — Damascus (Acts 9:23,24). When he returned to Jerusalem the first time subsequent to his conversion to Christianity, he sought to win his former associates to Christ but they were highly unwilling to be persuaded by one they deemed to be a turncoat or traitor to their cherished cause (Acts 9:29,30; 22:17-21). To win them Paul did not become a Pharisaic persecutor of saints again. He did not preside over any more slaying of the saints as he did with Stephen in Acts 7:58; he did not make havoc of the

church as he did in the early part of Acts 8. He did not give his vote for the death of Christ's people as he said he had done in Acts 26:9-11. Had he done any of these or all of them in aggregate, he would have exhibited great disloyalty to Deity; he would have compromised Christianity for a surety.

The Judaizing element sought to coerce all members to accept Judaism. They showed up at Antioch of Syria and began to disturb Antiochian saints by alleging, "*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*" (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas refuted soundly and solidly their poisonous position on the spot there in Antioch. They, plus Jerusalem apostles and elders in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Conference, continued courageously this begun fight for the faith. Paul was adamant against yielding a single inch of contested ground with these forces of falsehood. He wrote the Galatians of his unceasing and uncompromising stance in Galatians 2:4,5,

⁴And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

⁵To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

To have done less than this would have been a lethal compromise of God's glorious gospel. Throughout much of the Galatian epistle he fought the Judaizers who sought to undermine both the gospel and Paul's apostleship. Paul did not become a Judaizer in order to win Judaizers to the truth, nor should he have!

Paul met sorcery in a face-to-face confrontation on the island of Cyprus while he and Barnabas were prosecuting Missionary Journey One. He did not form

any sort of any affinity with Elymas or Bar-jesus in order to win him to Christ. Some of the strongest language Paul ever employed, as per the New Testament record, is found in Acts 13:8-11 wherein we read,

⁸But Elymas the sorcerer [for so is his name by interpretation] withstood them seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. ⁹Then Saul, [who is also is called Paul,] filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, ¹⁰And said, O full of subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Paul was not about to become a sorcerer in order to win Elymas to Christ. Neither did Philip in Samaria in Acts 8 become a sorcerer to win Simon to the Saviour; he preached Christ to him — not Satanic sorcery.

Paul was the specially appointed apostle to the Gentiles. He magnified in a marvelous manner this assigned office (Rom. 11:13). He traveled widely among Gentiles or Greeks of his day. Gentiles and idolaters were almost synonymous terms in that first century. Paul found idolatry flourishing at Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and many other places he preached. He taught against its practice everywhere he found it. At NO time did he become an idolater in order that he might win idolatrous proponents to Zion's Cause. When he went to Athens on his second missionary tour he found that Grecian city of wisdom and learning wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:16ff). Such stirred him into immediate action opposing these practices. He

taught the Athenian people that they were made by the Godhead — not by their lifeless gods and goddesses as per Acts 17:26ff. He turned away many from man-made gods and goddesses in Ephesus, and throughout the Asian province where Ephesus was located, as per Acts 19:26. He listed idolatry as a work of the flesh and one which closes Heaven's door to its devotees in Galatians 5:20. He told people at Corinth to flee idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14). Paul NEVER became an idolater in order to win idolatrous patrons to Christ's Cause.

Paul met immorality throughout the Greco-Roman world of his day. It flourished in Corinth especially. Fornication was their pastime of lasciviousness. The city was inundated with it. Paul wrote more against adultery, fornication, lasciviousness and licentiousness to the Corinthians than to any other group of his day. He taught repeatedly against its practice such as in 1 Cor. 5,6,10 and 2 Cor. 12. Yet, he NEVER became immoral to win the immoral to Christ.

Paul's Own Application Of This Principle

We do not have to go outside the very chapter in which Paul set forth this guiding principle to observe a Pauline application of it. He felt it wiser in his work at Corinth to forego remuneration from them than to receive it (1 Cor. 9:6ff). He alluded to this practice among them again in 2 Corinthians 11,12.

In the matter of eating meats that had been offered to idols and then sold in the shambles or market places, Paul knew that an idol was nothing in the world (1 Cor. 8:4). Paul and certain of the Corinthians could eat, minus any defilement to their conscience as per his comments in 1 Corinthians 8:10. Yet, he was deeply cognizant of what these actions might do to some brethren not as far advanced in knowledge as were they. He would not pursue his liberty in the Lord to eat

such if it became “a stumblingblock to them that are weak” [1 Cor. 8:9]. He continued this vein of thought by saying,

¹⁰For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; ¹¹And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹²But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. ¹³Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend [vs. 10-13].

Paul discussed this matter again in the latter part of 1 Cor. 10. In that setting he wrote,

²³All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. ²⁴Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth. ²⁵Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: ²⁶For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof. ²⁷If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. ²⁸But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: ²⁹Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience? ³⁰For if I by

grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? ³¹Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: ³³Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved (1 Cor. 10:23-33).

These things Paul could do and willingly did in becoming all things to all men that by all means he could save some and yet not compromising the faith (the gospel) in the process.

The circumcision of Timothy is another case in point. Paul converted this goodly young man on his first missionary tour into the central regions of Asia Minor (Acts 13,14; cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). Timothy came from a mixed marriage. His mother, Eunice, “*was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek*” (Acts 16:1). Paul was now on his second missionary journey for Jesus in Acts 16. Timothy “*was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium*” (Acts 16:2). Due to this we read in Acts 16:3, “*Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.*” Paul was willing to do this as a willing concession to the Jews among whom Timothy would be laboring. It would make this work more effective. Timothy’s circumcision had nothing to do with his conversion or sanctification; he was already converted and sanctified by gospel truth. Paul knew and taught,

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love... For in Christ

Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature [Gal. 5:6; 6:15].

Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised in Acts 16 but just a short time before at the Jerusalem Conference refuse to allow Titus to be circumcised? Was this not highly inconsistent on Paul's part? Did he not compromise in one or even in both of these actions. The next section of study will deal with this in somewhat of a comprehensive way.

Paul, Circumcision And Titus

We have two New Testament accounts of the Jerusalem Conference. Luke gives his account in Acts 15; Paul gives his account in Galatians 2. Luke does not mention Titus in connection with this conference. It would be interesting to know why. Could it be the case that Luke and Titus may have been brothers in the flesh? Luke never called himself by name in either of his two books — Luke or Acts. If he and Titus were brothers in the flesh, this may account as to why Luke makes no mention of him. But Paul does mention Titus by name and quite prominently at that. In fact Titus became Exhibit A in Paul's argumentation both at Jerusalem and in his later explanation of it to the Galatian brethren. In a trio of verses the valiant apostle wrote,

¹Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. ³But neither Titus, who was with

me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised [Gal. 2:1-3].

Why circumcise Timothy to please the Jews and adamantly refuse circumcision to Titus to placate the militant Judaizers? Timothy's standing in Christ was not at stake in his circumcision but Titus' standing was. The Judaizers insisted that one had to keep the law of Moses and be circumcised in order to be saved. They desired to rewrite the Great Commission and make it read, "He who is circumcised, keeps the law of Moses, believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Judaism 16:16). But this is NOT what the Christ put into Mark 16:16. The Judaizers, like many today, did not mind adding to or subtracting from the word of the Lord. Had Paul, the Jerusalem apostles and elders given in to the demand of the Judaizers that Titus be circumcised, it would have undermined salvation exclusively by the gospel of Jesus Christ. There was also this major difference in the circumcision of the two — Timothy and Titus. Timothy was partly Jewish and partly Gentile; Titus was wholly Gentile with no Abrahamic blood coursing his veins. By Jewish law Timothy should have been circumcised when he was eight days of age as Paul had been (Lev. 12:3; Phil. 3:5). Being a Gentile, Jewish circumcision was not applicable to Titus when he was eight days old. Perhaps the major reason why Timothy had not been circumcised as a babe was due to his Gentile father's objection. We cannot visualize for a moment that Eunice, Timothy's mother, would have been reluctant in the least to have her precious babe circumcised in harmony with the law to which she gave loving and loyal allegiance. From all the foregoing, and perhaps many other things unknown to us, Paul could and did allow Timothy's circumcision without compromising the faith; he could not and did not allow Titus to be circumcised lest he compromise the faith (the gospel) and compromise it seriously. Paul

knew the difference; Timothy knew the difference: Titus knew the difference; he wanted the Jews and Judaizers to know the difference also. And, they did know it if they listened carefully to Paul and acquiesced in what he taught.

Summing It All Up As Touching Paul

There were things Paul could do and did do in his associations with Jews that would make more effective his proclamation work among them. There were things Paul could do and did do to make more effective his evangelistic outreach to Gentiles — those who never were under Mosaic mandates. There were things Paul could do and did do to make more effective his work among the weak. Romans 14:1-15:3 is another case in point of matters touching meat eating and a menu minus meats as well as day keeping and no day keeping. Yet in NONE of these was Paul allowed, by Jehovah's and Jesus' approval, to do wrong or compromise the faith in order to win people to Christ. It is vastly important that we keep uppermost in mind this cardinal truth. Wrongdoing is not the way to win people to right doing.

The Principle As Applicable To Us

It applies both negatively and positively. In trying to reach Roman Catholics we must not leave the impression with them that we accept Peter as the first pope, that Mary is worthy of having prayers addressed to her or that the Pope is really Christ's true Vicar on earth. There are some points of agreement we have in common with them and these can form a bridge in reaching them with the truth that saves.

In trying to reach Protestants we cannot compromise the truth by telling them that party names are right, that one church is as good as another, that faith

only is a wholesome doctrine and filled with comfort, that mechanical music in worship is acceptable, that baptism is optional pertaining to pardon, that we cannot ever fall from grace after once being saved, that the Holy Spirit operates directly on our hearts in conversion and sanctification, etc. There are common grounds on which we may approach them in our outreach to them.

In trying to reach premillennialists, we cannot agree that Christ failed in his initial mission to earth, that He will establish His Messianic Kingdom the next time He comes, that there will be a long interval between the raising of the righteous and the raising of the wicked, that there will be a Rapture, a Great Tribulation, a physical Armageddon in a tiny Palestinian valley and a thousand year reign of Jesus on an earthly throne in Jerusalem, etc.

In trying to reach the charismatic groups today, we cannot contend for Holy Spirit baptism as currently received, modern day tongue speaking, twentieth century miracles, etc.

In trying to reach Mormons we cannot agree that Joseph Smith was God's prophet, that his poorly constructed book is divinely derived, that God was once a man, that people can be baptized for dead people or any of the other peculiar doctrines they propagate.

In trying to reach atheists, agnostics, infidels, modernists, theological liberals, etc., we cannot compromise the faith and deny God's existence, Jesus Christ and His Deity, the inspiration of the Bible or the realm of Final Things.

In trying to reach Jehovah's Witnesses we cannot agree with them on Jesus as a created being, the nature of man, the nature of the soul, the nature of rewards, etc. We surely cannot agree that they have a reliable Bible which they put out some decades back.

In trying to reach those in the popular cults of the day we cannot agree with them as they replace Jesus Christ with a charismatic leader of their choosing.

In trying to reach those in the occults we cannot agree that our destiny is to be found in stars, that reincarnation is a sound reality in our day or that New Agers have the inside track in today's world with each man becoming his own god.

Conclusion

To reach as many as we can let us make every right concession we can make, minus any and all compromise. Relative to compromise we can never yield truth in any evangelistic efforts.

Chapter 11

The Race Demands Humility

Guy Hester

¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds (Heb. 12:1-3).

As we consider the subject: “The Race Demands Humility,” we take note of the example of the humility of our Savior in our text. Christ, the greatest individual ever to walk on this earth was also the most humble. Paul wrote of Him: “*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil. 2:8) . Certainly, we must be Christ-like in our own humility. “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*” (1 Peter 2:21).

HUMILITY: “A personal quality in which an individual shows dependence on God and respect for other persons.”

Old Testament

The Old Testament connects the quality of humility with Israel's lowly experience as slaves in Egypt — a poor, afflicted, and suffering people. *“And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage”* (Deut. 26:6).

The Hebrew word translated as humility is similar to another Hebrew word meaning “to be afflicted.” In Old Testament thought, humility was closely associated with individuals who were poor and afflicted. *“And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down”* (2 Sam. 22:28).

What God desires most is not an outward show of sacrifice, but a humble spirit. *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Psalm 51:17). *“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”* (Micah 6:8)?

Such a humble spirit shows itself in several ways:

(1) a recognition of one's sinfulness before a holy God. *“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”* (Isaiah 6:5);

(2) Obedience to God, *“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no”* (Deut. 8:2); and

(3) Submission to God, *“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake*

against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD” (2 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron. 34:27).

The Old Testament promised blessings to those who were humble:

- (1) wisdom (Prov. 11:2);
- (2) good tidings (Isaiah 61:1); and
- (3) honor (Prov. 15:33).

The experience of many kings indicated that those who humble themselves before God will be exalted (1 Kings 21:29; 2 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron. 32:26; 33:12, 19). Those who do not humble themselves before God will be afflicted (2 Chron. 33:23; 36:12). The pathway to revival is the way of humility (2 Chron. 7:14).

New Testament

Jesus Christ’s life provides the best example of what it means to have humility. *“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” (Matt. 11:29).*

¹If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ²Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:1-11).

Jesus preached and taught often about the need for humility (Matt. 23:12; Mark 9:35, Luke 14:11; 18:14). He urged those who desired to come into His kingdom to practice humility (Matt. 18:1-4). Jesus taught that the way up is down. *“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”* (Matt. 23:12).

The person with humility does not look down on others (Matt. 18:4; Luke 14:11). In the New Testament humility and meekness are closely connected (Matt. 5:5). While God resists those who are proud, He provides grace for the humble (James 4:6). The one who has humility will not be overly concerned about his or her prestige (Matt. 18:4; 23:12; Rom. 12:16; 2 Cor. 11:7).

Paul believed that the way to restore those who had erred spiritually, hinged on the presence of meekness or humility (1 Cor. 4:21; Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25). The New Testament affirms, as does the Old Testament, that God will exalt those who are humble and bring low those who are proud (Luke 1:52; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Humility is demanded on the part of the Christian who

would successfully run the race set before him [2 Cor. 10:18, Col. 3:12; Eph. 4:2].

Humility demanded

In the great "love chapter of the Bible," the apostle Paul said, "*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*" (1 Cor. 13:4). One of the modern language translations says, "Love does not brag and is not arrogant." Since "*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*" (1 John 4:8). Therefore, it is impossible for us to love in the Bible sense and not be humble, because love is characterized by humility.

There are an abundance of passages that teach us that humility is demanded in the Christian race. "*He forgetteth not the cry of the humble*" [Psalm 9:12]. "*LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause mine ear to hear*" [Psalm 10:17]. "*Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off*" [Psalm 138:6]. "*Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly*" [Prov. 3:34]. "*The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honour is humility*" [Prov. 15:33]. Unto whom then does the Lord show respect to his request? Is it not the humble person? Listen to Him as he speaks through the prophet Isaiah, "*For all those things hath thine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at thy word*" [Isaiah 66:2].

What is it that God requires of a man? Listen to the words of the prophet Micah as he instructs the Jews who were going astray: "*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk*

humbly with thy God" [Micah 6:8]. Who are the ones that are promised that they will receive the blessing of being allowed to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Is it not the "poor in spirit" (humble) that shall be so blessed. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" [Matt. 5:3]. The doors of the kingdom are always open to those who are humble in spirit, but they are closed to the haughty and proud.

On the occasion when the disciples were arguing over who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus taught a great lesson on humility by using a little child as an example.

²And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, ³And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven [Matt. 18:2-4].

There are many other passages that we could mention, but I believe these are sufficient to impress us with the importance of humility.

The humility of which we speak is not a false or hypocritical humility such as was characteristic of the Pharisees. They would have someone blow a trumpet in the streets to call attention to their good deeds, "*that they may have glory of men*" [Matt. 6:2], yet, at the same time deny that they had any tendency toward boasting. They *boasted* of their *humility*! However, they were denounced by Christ in the most severe terms. The truly humble person does not point a finger at himself and say "look at me, see how humble I am!"

What Is Humility?

We could spend hours talking about humility and I am sure that all of us would agree that humility is a good thing to have. I believe that every one of us that desires and expects to go to heaven would want to be more humble. But before we can become more humble we must first understand just what humility is.

What is true humility? There are several Hebrew and Greek words that are translated into our English word humble in both the Old and New Testament. Just about every one of them is used to indicate a self inflicted lowered or afflicted state of mind. To use a New Testament term, it is making yourself "poor in spirit." It is the intentional lowering of one's self. This does not mean that one must constantly berate himself to be humble. To the contrary, the person who goes around telling people how useless he is is merely trying to draw attention to himself just as the Pharisees of old did. This is not humility at all.

Genuine humility is a recognition on the part of man of his dependence on God. A man must come to realize that he cannot do anything in and of himself. In the long ago, the prophet Jeremiah said, "*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23). Man must understand that every breath that he takes, every bite of food he eats, every drink of water and even every time his heart beats, he must depend on God for them. When he comes to fully understand this, he will no longer trust in himself for the things that most people just take for granted. Most certainly, he does not trust in himself for the more enduring things of life. We can see then that humility begins with the proper view of our relationship with God. It develops as we destroy the pride and arrogance that has built up within us. It blossoms forth in beauty as we truly submit our lives to the will of our Father in heaven.

There are some things which we need to remember that will help us in our desire to develop a spirit of humility.

Unprofitable servants

Christians need to remember that at the very best we are only “unprofitable servants.” A remembrance of this will cause one to put away pride and arrogance and be filled with a spirit of meekness and humility. Jesus said, *“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”* (Luke 17:10). As far as the Christian is concerned, that sums up the whole matter. In fact, it pretty much takes care of all of us. Jesus said that it really doesn’t matter if we have done every thing that it is possible for one to do insofar as keeping his commandment is concerned, we have only done our duty and have nothing to boast about. Do you know of anyone doing his whole duty? Don’t most of us fall far short of our duty to God? As Christians, we had better not forget this. To remember it is to remember to be humble. If you are not a Christian, you, of all people, need to get busy in becoming one! Don’t try to excuse yourself by saying, “I’m just as good as old so and so and he claims to be a Christian.” What if you are just as good as he is, will that make the fires of hell any less hot?

If those who do everything that the Lord commands are still unprofitable servants, what are those who are not trying at all? I believe that the best answer that can be given to this question is the one given by the inspired Peter: ¹⁷*“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? ¹⁸And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the*

sinner appear” [1 Peter 4:17-18]? Do you think that it is worth the effort to do your best to do the will of the Father in heaven, and at the same time knowing that if you get to heaven it will only be by the grace of God that you made it? Why is this so? Because even at our very best we are still “unprofitable servants.” Paul said, ⁸“*For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Eph. 2:8-9).

All blessings are of God

We live in an age when it is extremely hard to remain humble, especially when we are being so abundantly blessed with material things. The people of America have too long been hardened in pride. Like Israel of old, we have attributed our measure of success to our own strength. God told Moses to warn the children of Israel not to forget Him when they had reached the land of promise and had become rich and had established their houses and vineyards and when their flocks had multiplied and had accumulated a stock of silver and gold that it was Him who had given them the opportunity and strength to gain all of this.

It was much easier to be humble when we in America had so little that a man could be elected to the office of president on the promise of “two chickens for every pot.” But now, with our houses, cars, and bank accounts, it is hard to be humble. Too many have the attitude of the one who wrote a popular song a few years back, “*It’s hard to be humble when you’re as great as I am.*”

Chapter 12

Multiplying Ministries Movement

Holger Neubauer

The philosophy under consideration has been referred to in a variety of ways. The "Multiplying Ministries Movement" has been known as the "Total Commitment Movement," "Campus Advance," "Cross-roads," and "Boston Movement." Although the "Multiplying Ministries Movement" has been known by various designations, the one designation that should be used to describe this movement is "digressive." There could hardly be a movement that is more fraught with error than this one. Though the last ten years have brought about a complete separation between this cultic body and the true New Testament church, we will do well if we watch for this group, lest what has happened among us ever happens again.

History of the Multiplying Ministries Movement

The origin of this movement can be dated from about 1967 at the old 14th Street Church in Gainesville, Florida. It was there that an effort to evangelize the campus of the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, was commandeered by an ambitious young preacher named Chuck Lucas. Lucas implemented the teachings he learned from Robert Coleman's book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* which was published in 1963. This book outlined the new and strange doc-

trines of the prayer partner, the discipling method, the rooting out of elderships, the working of the Spirit, quiet time, Lordship baptism and total commitment. All these teachings which began with a mere semblance to Bible truth were actually no more than a springboard for leaping into their highly manipulative catechism for "True Discipleship."

The church changed its name to "Crossroads" and so, "the Crossroads Philosophy" became the identifying designation of the multiplying ministry movement. Lucas trained many young men in this philosophy as they infiltrated college campuses across the nation. Where the philosophy went, division resulted. Faithful brethren heralded warnings but because of the number of converts being made, many simply did not believe that anything was really wrong.

However, after about 300 congregations in our brotherhood split wide open, some were finally disposed to speak out.

As Crossroadism continued to spread its doctrine, a marked change took place in its leadership. Because of what was reported as "recurring sins in his life," Chuck Lucas was removed from his position as the preacher for the Crossroads Church. The torch then was passed to Kip McKean, who had been trained by Lucas in Florida. McKean moved to Boston and started his philosophy that took a church of 40 to more than 2,000 in just a few years. The phenomenal growth had just about everyone interested in the method that was used to attract so many so quickly. Alvin Jennings, about the same time, published a book entitled, "How Christianity Grows in the City," in which he supported the Boston Church. It was then that the really bare bones of the movement began to expose itself for what it really was.

The number one characteristic of the movement that keeps everything in line is control from the top. The Boston Church has had only two elders to shepherd

a congregation of 2,000. McKean was clearly in control as the two elders were actually nothing but figureheads in this hierarchial monarchy. The pyramidal structure ensures the power flowing from the top down. Actually the Boston Church is a conglomeration of smaller "house churches" that all receive their directions from McKean. In describing this house church concept, Brother Jim Dobbs wrote the following:

The house church concept is, in reality, a technique of isolation, control, and propaganda. When the Communist Party used this technique on this country in the 1930's, the small groups were called "cells." The cell method of control is what riot police practice when they force lines into large crowds, dividing them in half, and keep repeating the process until they have separated people into small, manageable groups. Management is the name of the game.¹

The abuse in this hierarchal system can be readily seen not only in the "house church" system which sets up many little congregations within a larger congregation, but also in the way other churches related back to the mother church at Boston. The Boston Church is considered the "pillar church" by which the affairs of other congregations are directed. Though the New Testament teaches that congregations are to be independent and autonomous with elderships ruling over their own local congregations, the Boston Church thinks their system is more advantageous to "world evangelism."

The early church was to have elders in "every church" [Acts 14:23]. If one church exercises authority over other churches, then one set of elders rule over another set of elders. Peter charged his fellow-elders to "*feed the flock of God which is among you*" [1 Peter

5:2). This admonition could hardly be obeyed by two elders over 2,000 that assembled more apart from the local congregation than with the local congregation. Certainly the phrase "among you" destroys the doctrine of the "pillar church" idea that places one congregation over another. But, not only does the Bible teach elders to be among their own flock, but also instructs the flock to "*know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord*" (1 Thess. 5:12). The implication of these scriptures stand squarely against the house church concept and the "pillar church idea."

Prayer Partners

In Robert Coleman's book, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, an outline is given on pages 48-49 for the prayer partner arrangement:

"Clearly the policy of Jesus at this point teaches us that whatever method of follow-up the church adopts, it must have as its basis a personal guardian concern for those entrusted to their care. To do otherwise is essentially to abandon new believers to the Devil.

This means that some system must be found whereby every convert is given a Christian friend to follow until such time as he can lead another. The counselor should stay with the new believer as much as possible, studying the Bible and praying together, all the while answering questions, clarifying the truth, and seeking together to help others. If a church does not have such committed counselors willing to do this service, then it should be training some. And the only way they can be trained is by giving them a leader to follow."²

As Coleman outlined his program of personal guidance with new converts, so the Crossroads philosophy implemented this idea with the additional twist. The older brother would direct and pray with the new convert. The new convert would report to the older or senior prayer partner in every aspect of his life. This would include the confession of intimate sins and even thoughts. The junior partner is to confess his sins to the senior partner but the senior partner confesses to no one except to the one that “disciplined” him. The senior partner reports the sins to those in the higher rungs of the system and great control is wielded over the lives of the ones in this line of succession. It is not difficult to see that when they repeat intimate sins to leaders and they, in turn, used that knowledge against anyone “out of step,” that unscriptural control would be the result. No wonder accounts of suicide and depression have come from this method. The Catholic doctrine of “Auricular Confession” is not as anti-scriptural as the Crossroads/Boston brand! James 5:16 teaches the confession of sin. However, Jesus said, “*If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him.*” Since forgiveness is dependent upon confession and acknowledgment of sin, the confessions we make are those which involve those against whom we’ve sinned. It is also possible to sin only against God as David said, “*Against thee, thee only have I sinned*” (Psalm 51:4). So, if we sin against an individual we must confess that sin to that individual and if we sin against the church by not upholding and supporting it we should confess that sin to the church; but private sin should remain private. Jesus taught that when a dispute was between two brethren that they should tell the fault “*between thee and him alone*” (Matt 18:15). The Boston Movement says, “Blab it anyway.” This unscriptural “confession” is the vital link in the hierarchy. When this is removed the entire system breaks

down. This is precisely why the movement has been branded as a cult.

Discipling

One of the characteristics of this movement is the unscriptural usage of the term “disciple.” This can be seen in one of the chief textbooks of this movement, *Discipling: The Multiplying Ministry*. Consider the following:

By studying the word, “disciple,” one can find that it is used in various ways. Most equate “disciple” with “Christian.” However, there is no more reason to equate these two words than there is to equate the titles, “Lord” and “Christ.” These two titles can both refer to the same person, Jesus, but their meanings are different. Similarly, “disciple” and “Christian” can and should refer to the same person, but their meanings can also be different. This can be seen in the early church when “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” [Acts 11:26]. Today, most believers in Christ refer to themselves as Christians. Although they wear the name “Christian” which implies that they have been saved and are of the Christ, the anointed one, often their lives hardly measure up to the identifying characteristics of a disciple as described in the New Testament. In the early church the disciples were called Christians but the question for this study is — “Can ‘Christians’ today be called ‘disciples’?”³

This is simply nonsense. The word ‘Christian’ refers to faithful followers of Jesus and if Christians are truly Christians, they are disciples.

The New Testament equates a disciple with a Christian. In Acts 11:26, the Bible says, "*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*" One cannot be a faithful Christian without being a disciple, nor can one be a disciple without being a faithful Christian.

In Acts 1:15 we find Peter standing in the midst of the disciples. Did Peter stand in part of the assembly where the converts were learning to follow Jesus, while on the other side sat simply Christians? In Acts 6:1 where the Bible says, "*The disciples were multiplied,*" did the Christians remain unmultiplied? Acts 11:29 tells us of the disciples who sent relief to Jerusalem. Did the Christians keep their money in their pockets? In Acts 20:1, Paul met with the disciples. Did he not meet with just the "ordinary Christians?" Surely one can see that this distinction between Christians and disciples is purely conjecture and without Biblical support. The alleged distinction between "Christian" and "disciple" is simply persiflage of the most errant sort.

In commenting further on this unscriptural view of a disciple Coleman says,

Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. ... It requires constant personal attention, much like the father gives to his children. This is something no organization or class can ever do. Children are not raised by proxy. The example of Jesus should teach us that it can only be done by persons staying right with those they seek to lead.⁴

Milton Jones also says,

Probably, the most effective teaching one can do today in disciplining is to spend time with a person in all situations. This will include formal situations like a class or a discipler group meeting. It will include some regularly scheduled times for prayer and sharing. Some of the time will naturally be scheduled for planned evangelistic activities. But much of the time will include some of that informal teaching as one is traveling to a destination, eating together, or going to a social event. The disciples must learn how to function in all types of situations. Therefore the discipler must devote time to be with him in all types of situations.⁵

The quotes from Coleman and Jones over look the most basic Bible teaching of all. Can not the Bible only make Christians only and consequently “disciples only?” The Master Teacher has set His will for us in His Word. The Word, not the teacher, is the essential ingredient in the disciplining process. Jesus was himself the Word Incarnate but now we have the perfect plan for all that will study it and obey it. Jesus told us that the seed of the kingdom was the “Word of God” (Luke 8:11). Since kingdom membership is dependent upon the Word, any man-made attempt to add to that criterion is needless and sinful. The Boston Movement is, therefore, sinful!

Sharing and Witnessing

One of the characteristics of any false movement is the development of a new nomenclature to identify aspects of their beliefs. So the Multiplying Ministry

Movement has developed its own jargon of pseudo-scriptural concepts.

The terms “sharing” and “witnessing” as this movement is concerned have their origin again in Coleman’s book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Please note the following quote:

The multitudes cannot know the gospel unless they have a living witness. Merely giving them an explanation will not suffice. The wandering masses of the world must have a demonstration of what to believe — they must have a man who will stand among them and say “follow me, I know the way.” Here is where our plans must focus.⁶

Though “sharing” is a term that is used innocently by a great number of members of the church, its corresponding “witness” actually teaches that they are the same. There is now no living witness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22). A true witness as revealed in scripture was one that actually saw the events of the Bible as they transpired (Heb. 2:3).

Therefore no one now living can be a true witness for Christ. The term “sharing” became in vogue when “witnessing” received too much criticism. Why do men insist upon designations that are foreign to the New Testament? Jesus told us that we are to “teach” all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). The Bible commands that the Word of God be “preached” (Mark 16:15-16). The language of Ashdod is a characteristic of all false movements and ought to be resisted by those whose intent is to do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things Bible names. The more secularized language is used to attempt to describe things divine, the more Satan will be given a foothold in the church.

Likewise, in the use of the words “pruning,” “shunning,” “soul talks,” “house churches,” or “pillar

churches,” there is simply an attempt to make unscriptural practices sound scriptural.

The Results of the Movement

The “multiplying ministries movement” has now culminated in a complete break off with the church and hence has been labeled as the “International Churches of Christ.” It seems the motivation for the new designation of this movement was at least partially because of the “repentance” of elders of the “Crossroad church of Christ” in Gainesville, Florida. In the summer of 1990 the elders at Gainesville read a statement in Orlando, Florida, at the annual Spiritual Growth Workshop. The elders at Gainesville wanted to distance themselves from the Boston church as the seeds of this digressive movement were sprouting more bad fruit.

The movement has now become a full blown denomination with headquarters in Boston and Kip McKean is its earthly head. Sometime last year the nationally broadcasted 20/20 television program ran an expose on the International Churches of Christ. One of the worship services was recorded in which hand clapping, whistling, yelling and other neo-Pentecostal practices were openly demonstrated. The seeds of this heretical movement have now manifested themselves in the fruit of apostasy. When a movement is based upon something different from the authority of the Word of God, the result will always be something different from the pure New Testament church which houses the saved. May we take note and learn, so that what happened through this heresy never happens again.

END NOTES

¹Dobbs, Jim. *The Current Digression II*, The Second Annual Shanadoah Lectures, p. 21. Jerry Moffit, Editor.

²Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan: Fleming H., Revel, 1963) pp. 48-49.

³Milton Jones, *Discipling: The Multiplying Ministry* (Star Bible and Tract Corporation, 1982; Ft. Worth, TX), p. 9.

⁴Op. Cit., Robert Coleman, p. 47.

⁵Op. Cit., Milton Jones, p. 145.

⁶Op. Cit., Robert Coleman, pp. 116, 117.

Chapter 13

The Spirit Of Compromise Among Us

Ronnie Whittemore

I appreciate the invitation extended to me by brother Blair and the elders of the Garfield Heights church to be a part of the 1996 lectureship. The first week of November has been an highlight of my year for quite some time due to this lectureship and the good fellowship with those of "like precious faith." Our prayers and encouragement are with the elders as they oversee this good lectureship and we ask that God's blessings be with this good church and its good work.

The theme selected for this year's lectureship is taken from Hebrews 12:1: "*The Race That Is Set Before Us.*" The apostle Paul also wrote, "*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain*" (1 Cor. 9:24). The Christian life is a race which lasts a lifetime. It could accurately be called a marathon in which all who finish are declared winners who are given a "*crown of life*" (2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12).

This race or marathon consists of many components and many of these are listed as various topics of discussion for this lectureship. This race includes obstacles which must be overcome. This race includes the acquisition of certain characteristics, such as, patience, humility and self-discipline. Running this marathon includes proper conduct and maintenance in the home. The Christian life means teaching others, visiting the weak, lifting the fallen and helping the

widows and orphans. The Christian life involves many aspects from receiving instructions well to taking heed to warnings.

It is along this line that we focus our attention this hour. If one is to run the Christian race successfully, then he must be aware of the obstacles which Satan has placed in his way. Among these many stumblingblocks is the "*Spirit of Compromise Among Us.*"

The greatest challenge of the church as we near the twenty-first century is to teach and live an *unchanging* gospel in a rapidly *changing* world.

The Call For Change In Society

One cannot talk about the call for change in the church without addressing the call for change in the United States and even in the world. Politics, in recent years, has become even hotter with debate because of the adoption of cultural changes within the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government.

For example, consider the liberal-minded cry for moderation in areas like abortion. Where is there room for compromise when there are two sides to a dilemma which are diametrically opposed to one another? The choice is either one side or the other. A compromise is not possible. Either abortion is the taking of human life or it is not. Either abortion is a matter of convenience or it is not. To say yes to abortion, means caving on the principles of human life. Yet, politicians in our society, especially during election years, cry for moderation or compromise on abortion. What they mean is that respecters of life should cave or give up their principles in favor of disrespect for human life.

Consider this example, the Bible teaches, "*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat*" (2 Thess. 3:10). Have you heard anything lately about reforming welfare? The answer is found in a

Biblical principle as just noted. Now there may be differing methods on how to identify the truly needy, but once men and women are identified as having the ability to work, yet they choose not to do so, the Bible is quite clear as to their lot in life. If “*any will not work, neither should he eat!*” This involves a Biblical principle.

Even now, the Supreme Court has struck down a law, voted on by Colorado citizens, which disallowed *special rights or privileges* for homosexuals. This law did not restrict homosexuals from standard civil rights, but did not allow *special privileges*. The State of Hawaii is presently considering legislation that will allow same sex marriages. In response, there is a rush in many state legislatures to bar such arrangements in their states.

History teaches us that cultural and moral issues that affect society will also influence the church. Hence, it behooves us to pay attention to the political arena wherein moral issues are involved. For example, Bible students, when examining the New Testament epistles, gain a better understanding of its teachings when they also study the background and conditions of the cities or provinces in which the recipients lived. The city of Corinth, a great commercial city wherein a great diversity of people traveled, was influence by the different cultures and religious beliefs of these ethnic groups. The United States has become a “melting pot” of differing cultures and religious influences. That fact must be considered when approaching the subject of change and compromise. It grants one the understanding of where the dilemma originates.

The Call For Change In The Church

A cry for change in the church is nothing new. Every generation faces the challenge of defeating immorality, irresponsibility and false doctrine. The first

century church had to respond to the Judaizing teachers who were teaching that one had to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved [Acts 15:1]. Therefore, Paul, Barnabas, James, the elders of Jerusalem and other concerned brethren met in the city of Jerusalem to discuss the matter [Acts 15:6]. The result of the meeting was a letter from the apostles, elders and brethren to the churches throughout Antioch, Syria and Cilicia [Acts 15:23-29]. This letter was specific; it dealt with the issues and answered the pertinent questions. It did not stop the false teachers, but the letter did provide comfort to its recipients [Acts 15:31].

The New Testament church also faced the false doctrine of the Nicolaitanes as noted in John's writings in Revelation 2:6,15. The teachings of the Nicolaitanes are vague; however, it is assumed that they involved immoral and social issues. The church at Ephesus was commended by the Lord because they stood against this false doctrine and opposed the Nicolaitanes. Simply stated, they "hated their deeds."

During the restoration days (1700's and 1800's), especially in the United States, honest Bible believers were seeking to shed the robes of denominationalism and return to the Bible. Therefore, major battles were waged in all religious circles. As these honest men and women came to the realization that their religious beliefs and practices were in contradiction to the teachings of the Bible, they forsook their religious roots and heritage and turned to New Testament Christianity.

Oddly, since that time with various periods of emphasis, such as, debate over the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, the past liberal teachings of Carl Ketcherside, the changes proposed by Rubel Shelly and other modern day change agents, the Lord's church has faced many challenges from within.

One of the calls for change involves our **worship** to God. This writer finds it hard to believe that preachers would have to preach on a regular basis and emphasize

that the object of our worship is Jehovah God. There was a time when that was a given; however, the thirst for entertainment has driven many brethren to consider themselves the object of their religious activities. Therefore, dramas, music concerts, etc., are used in so-called worship. The influences of denominationalism, television and the craze for entertainment have diluted the minds of "Christian" men and women and corrupted the worship of the church in many places. However, these changes did not come suddenly. They came through the evolution of religious institutions. The church of Christ has a habit in recent years of imitating the denominations. Many times the failed gimmicks and gadgets of secular religion have been warmed over by liberal and misguided brethren who think that drawing a crowd is the same as building a church.

Bill Dillon, a faithful gospel preacher, wrote a short article that appeared in the *Mountain Home Messenger*, April 10, 1996. Please consider his point:

A New Approach

Bill Dillon

USA Weekend (March 15-17, 1996) carried an article by Jerry Skine entitled "New Ways to Pack the Pews?" Specialized churches around the country are trying live rock bands and drama to fill spiritual niches. Evidently to draw a mega-crowd anything is tried. As an example, the article notes:

"Houston's progressive Second Baptist Church (also called 'The Exciting Second' or 'Fellowship of Excitement') has taken specialized services, and membership, to new limits. Sitting on 42 acres, it claims 22,000 members, a 600 voice choir and staff of 500. It's very nearly a community center, with a health

club, hot tubs, aerobics classes, basketball courts, a K-12 school, singles events and parades.”

Several years ago a lady wrote to the famed newspaper editor, Horace Greely, about the sad state of affairs in her church. She stated:

“We have tried everything we can think of — fairs, socials, bake sales, drama clubs and literary leagues — and nothing seems to save our membership from dwindling.”

The crusty old editor suggesting a new approach replied: “Try religion.” This is an excellent idea!

In connection with the article, there appeared an artist’s rendering of Jesus on the cross with the passage from John 12:32: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Friends, that in a nutshell, is our problem today with the efforts of change agents. Their focus has moved away from pleasing God and doing things His way to pleasing men and doing things their way. Now please note, the “changers” have not stopped talking about Jesus. Oh no! They *use* Him and His sacrifice as a means to their end. But talking about Jesus in a superficial way and preaching Christ in order to convert people are two different things (Acts 8:35).

A second call for change involves our **mission to evangelize**. Of course, the call for a change in worship overlaps with a change in mission since worship services are used by the liberally minded to accomplish the other.

The church is comprised of penitent baptized believers (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:16-18) who have counted the cost (Luke 14:28), made sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2) and dedicated their lives to the Cause of

the Lord [2 Cor. 8:5]. Jesus said, “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*” [Matt. 16:24].

The church was purchased by the precious blood of Christ [Acts 20:28] and is rightly His church [Matt. 16:18]; therefore, this divine institution is *not* the property of men to be tampered with and corrupted by the evil devices of deceived men.

The church’s foundation consists of the apostles and prophets with Christ being the chief cornerstone [Eph. 2:20].

The church’s mission is to teach and preach the glorious gospel of Christ bring honor and glory to Him through her efforts [Eph. 3:21].

In short, the church belongs to the Lord, not to men! It should not be redesigned or changed. There should not be any attempts by men to give the church a “facelift” nor is there room for a “new and improved” church. To restructure the church according to the whims and fancies of men is to depart from the eternal purpose of God [Eph. 3:10-11].

Several years ago, a brother told this writer that the “Holy Spirit is interested in numbers and that is why we read of 3,000 in Acts 2 and 5,000 men in Acts 4.” When asked further of his philosophy, he remarked that the church should do *whatever it takes* to draw people. What is lost in this philosophy is the *real mission* of the church. The church is commissioned by the Lord to evangelize, not entertain. The church is to teach and instruct, not engage in various gimmicks like a “used car salesman.” Another misconception is the idea that drawing a crowd is equivalent to conversion. First, a crowd is not the same as a church. Second, conversion is a process left to the individual and the Lord. Attending worship services, even on a regular basis, does not mean that one has been converted. Conversion is a change of relationship and a change in one’s condition. This occurs at the point of baptism

when one is baptized into Christ or he puts on Christ (Gal. 3:26-29). Third, the mission of the church is to teach; the responsibility of conversion cannot be met by the evangelist or concerned Christian. Every person, as a free moral agent, has the duty to accept or reject the gospel of God (Luke 7:29-30). According to the standard of many people today, Noah was a miserable preacher and a complete failure because he only saved eight people from the flood and they were members of his own family! While it is true that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), Noah was a faithful and obedient man of God who had nothing for which to be ashamed. In the first place, he obeyed the Lord (Heb. 11:7). In the second place, his preaching led to the saving of mankind by virtue of his convincing seven others to obey the Lord; otherwise, the human race would have been destroyed in the flood. In the third place, Noah was not charged with the duty of saving the world; he was told to warn the people. God required obedience from the people.

The only call for change needed today is a return to the "old paths" with renewed vigor and determination to fulfill the Will of the Lord just as commanded by God. As Joshua challenged his people in Joshua 24:15: "*...Choose you this day whom ye will serve...*"

Attitudes Of Compromise

There are three attitudes which we want to explore to some degree concerning their effects toward compromise. These traits are responsible for some of the inroads of compromise in the church today.

First, **brethren have become intellectually lazy**. Liberalism is a lazy system of belief. One does not have to believe anything or at least not be very convicted in it to be liberal in philosophy and practice. One of the least likely questions to be asked by those who possess this "spirit of compromise" is: "*By what*

authority doest thou these things" (Matt. 21:23)? The question of authority is nowhere in the manual of compromise.

Some years ago, in a discussion with a preacher concerning his elders' decision to use denominational filmstrips and videos to teach on the family (James Dobson), this preacher was asked, "Did your elders even ask whether they had the authority to do such?" His response was no. They only discussed whether they could handle the criticism. Brethren, this is amazing, but it is actually the mind set of compromisers of truth.

Some brethren are only concerned with whether they have enough money, adequate facilities and enough manpower to complete whatever "program" they have designed.

Some brethren have even stated that in elders' meetings where matters of authority were the subject of discussion that the Bible was never opened. That is being intellectually lazy and completely unconcerned with the souls of others. Yes, it takes study and reading to find the answers to some Bible questions. It takes effort to determine whether or not a certain work is scriptural or not. But it is the lazy way out to develop an attitude that it does not matter as long as we have the money and can handle the criticism. "*O ye of little faith.*"

A second attitude which promotes the spirit of compromise is **the adoption of false philosophies**. Paul warned, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Col. 2:8).

[1] **Relativism** is a widely accepted philosophy and has been applied to matters of religion. Relativism strips away the aspect of authority from religion and substitutes it with one's personal ideas. Relativism denies the power of the scriptures as being binding and

leaves everything to one's personal preference. Relativism is the philosophy behind the misconceptions: (1) We cannot understand the Bible, and (2) we cannot understand the Bible alike. It is at the core of the idea: "One church is as good as another."

(2) **Hedonism** is the philosophy that "pleasure is the chief good in life." From hedonism stems slogans, such as, "if it feels good do it" or "I can do what I want as long as I am not hurting anyone else." Hedonism is the carnality that the apostle Paul addresses in 1 Cor. 3:1-4 when he diagnosed a reason for their division.

(3) **Cowardice** is a third attitude which promotes the spirit of compromise. Some men and women are just afraid to take a stand. They fear losing friends, money, jobs and social status. They fear confrontation and controversy. They live by fear and not by faith.

Areas Of Compromise

Promise Keepers

What is Promise Keepers? *Promise Keepers* is an inter-denominational men's organization begun by Bill McCarney, the former head football coach at the University of Colorado. This religious movement began as a way of motivating men to be better husbands and fathers. On the back of the leaflet of the book, "*Seven Promises of A Promise Keeper*," the following description is given about the Promise Keepers:

"On July 31, 1993, more than 50,000 men sat in a silent, pitch-black stadium and watched a single candle burn. Then it lit another. Each of those lit others. And soon the flames spread across the stadium like wildfire, symbolizing the incredible impact men can make on each other. *Seven Promises of A Promise*

Keeper unites men and calls them to be godly leaders who influence the world for Christ."

In 1995, thirteen two-day rallies were held across the United States with an average of 50,000 in attendance and each paying \$55.00 to attend. In 1996, Promise Keepers hopes to have one million men gather in Washington, D.C.

What Is Wrong with Promise Keepers? Certainly there is nothing wrong with the concept of men wanting to be better husbands and fathers; however, as usual, many brethren have leaped into an organization which compromises the truth of God. Promise Keepers maintains a creed or set of seven principles. They are:

(1) A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(2) A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

(3) A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.

(4) A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.

(5) A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of the church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.

(6) A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.

(7) A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment [see Mark 12:30-31] and the Great Commission [see Matt. 28:19-20].

At first glance, one may reason, "What is wrong with that?" Did you really examine these seven promises? Did you make a careful evaluation of them? Have you considered the environment of these various men and the religious groups which they represent? Is it possible to keep these promises and maintain a religious connection with men of various religious principles and practices?

[1] What is meant by the phrase, "in the power of the Holy Spirit" under promise #1? Some of the leaders of this movement believe in a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. On page 26 of the book, "*Seven Promises of A Promise Keeper*," the author states,

"God still needs men who, like Howell Harris and Charles Finney, will give themselves to prayer and then go and do whatever the Holy Spirit tells them. Revival is the movement of the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary way that causes multitudes to be drawn to Christ. That's what we need today. America needs revival. The church needs revival. Families need revival. Men need revival."

One of the reasons that we hesitate to use the word "revival" in a very open and unqualified way in the Lord's church is because of its widely understood connotation in the religious world. To the religious world, in general, the word "revival" includes a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Can a New Testament Christian extend spiritual fellowship to men who hold such views and teach such doctrines?

[2] Under promise #5, the Promise Keeper "is committed to supporting the mission of the church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources." In what way is a Promise Keeper to support the mission of the church? Which church? What mission of which church is being

considered? Under the umbrella of an inter-denominational group, these missions could vary. First, he is to honor and pray for his pastor. Do they mean preacher or elder? What do they mean by honor? Second, he is to actively give of his time and resources. At \$55.00 per meeting, it would seem rather obvious that this movement possesses a great financial scheme.

(3) Under promise #6, a Promise Keeper is “committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.” How can differing groups of religious organization with its diversity of teachings be united without giving up parts of its doctrine? Are they really seeking religious unity? Or are they promoting “unity in diversity,” that is, agreeing to disagree for the sake of a common goal and financial gain? In “*Seven Promises of A Promise Keeper*,” on page 161, Bill McCartney wrote,

“Now, I don’t mean to suggest that all cultural differences and denominational distinctives are going to disappear. But what I know is that Almighty God wants to bring Christian men together regardless of their ethnic origin, denominational background, or style of worship. There’s only one criterion for this kind of unity: to love Jesus and be born of the Spirit of God. Can we look one another in the eye — black, white, red, brown, yellow, Baptist, Presbyterian, Assemblies of God, Catholic, and so on — and get together on this common ground. We believe in salvation through Christ alone, and we have made Him the Lord of our lives. Is that not the central, unifying reality of our existence? And if it is, can we not focus on that and call each other brother instead of always emphasizing our

differences? Men, we have to get together on this!"

Jesus said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). There can be NO Biblical unity without an agreement on points of doctrine. There can be no real unity unless there are some real, substantial changes and surrendering of false doctrine. The prophet Amos wrote, "*Can two walk together except they be agreed*" (Amos 3:3)?

(4) Under promise #7, the Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (see Matt. 28:19-20). What are they going to teach — the gospel of Paul or the gospel of Billy Graham? Do they understand that to love God means keeping His Word without addition or subtraction?

Friends, this religious movement may be attractive, especially during a time in our society when so many men are neglecting their responsibilities, but this organization is not the answer. The Lord purchased the divine institution through which He receives honor and glory and through which men and women may work and fulfill their obligations. It is called the church which was divinely promised, prophesied, prepared and perfected on Pentecost in Acts 2. Perhaps if these leaders of the Promise Keepers would put as much effort into learning about the true New Testament church as they do into promoting huge programs, then they will come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. In the meantime, we would do well to keep the proper promises in the Lord, without fear and without compromise.

Change Agents

"Change agents" in the church have been very active in their attempts to restructure the church for a

number of years. The following list identifies much of their agenda as promoted through their writings and teachings:

(1) They teach that mechanical instruments of music is a non-issue.

(2) They emphasize grace to the extent that obedience, works, faith, hope, etc. are non-inclusive.

(3) They have re-baked the old slogan of “preach Jesus the man, but not the plan,” by emphasizing Christ and ridiculing the church.

(4) They portray the idea that the church is a “big, sick, denomination.”

(5) They promote an emotional and entertainment style of worship.

(6) They ignore doctrine and needed truth.

(7) They advocate that the Holy Spirit works in some sensational, mystical way.

(8) They ridicule pattern theology, the restoration of the church, and Biblical traditions.

(9) They work, especially through young people, the unlearned, and the fearful.

Brethren, anyone who advocates these positions and others like them, are re-inventing the church. If the doctrine is the changed, then the church is changed. That is why the “New Hermeneutic” movement is so dangerous. That is why the acceptance of so-called “easy-to-read” modern versions of the Bible are is so hazardous. If the Word of God is changed, then the church will be changed accordingly.

The Neglect of Needed Truth

There is a characteristic in the leadership of the Lord’s church that is troublesome. Many elders, preachers, deacons, teachers, and parents have yielded to fear. There are elders who are afraid that they will lose members and contribution and cannot pay off their buildings. There are preachers who are afraid that they

will lose their positions. There are teachers who are afraid that they will offend their students. There are parents who are afraid that their children will not love them IF THEY PREACH AND TEACH NEEDED TRUTH.

So they dabble in truth. There are preachers who dabble in the truth by preaching the non-offensive kind or preach to one class of people because they do not really matter. After all, the elders do not side with them; therefore, their jobs are not in jeopardy, even if they leave. There are elders who allow some truth preached, but not the whole truth. What if the contribution goes down next week? There are parents who teach their children some truth, but only if it is convenient for them and does not contradict what they are practicing. There are some great university professors in so-called Christian schools who will preach some truth, but not needed truth. After all, some of those practices that the young people are engaged in, will burn out after a while.

Some brethren are playing serious politics with the Lord's church. This writer has a philosophy about some brethren. In the 1950's and 1960's, when it was very popular to be sound and stand for the truth, there were hundreds of men who would stand on the truth and kick the slats out of their pulpits with the Word of God. But as the 1960's ended and the 1970's began, it became popular to promote "positive" preaching and men began to "wet their fingers" and see which way the wind was blowing. Then they preached accordingly. Yes, some of these same men who were so sound a few years earlier were moving left. Did they really change or have they always done what was popular? The 1980's ushered in the baby boomer generation and they took over the leadership of educational institutions. Now, the social club mentality began shaping the decisions in churches and schools. The mission of the church was altered from evangelism to entertainment. The church moved from saving the souls of others to

keeping house. Some college presidents, professors and preachers kept their mouths shut when it came to the signs of definite change. The flood gates were being opened, but only silence fell from their lips. In the 1990's, some Johnny-come-latelys have arrived on the scene to lead the opposition against some prominent false teachers. Where were they twenty years ago when they had greater influence and held better positions of authority? Their help was needed then also. This writer has yet to see in any of their writings any regret for their having forsaken the watchman's duty for the past twenty years. Could it be that these men have never changed, but now in this decade, as retirement nears, that it is beneficial to them once again to be sound in doctrine? If that is their mind set, then they should enjoy retirement because that will be their reward (Matt. 6:1-5).

Conclusion

Brethren, it is time to abide by the principles of God and uphold the whole Word of truth. The spirit of compromise among us is devouring the precious souls of men and women. God wants men and women of deep conviction, courage and compassion. If the church is to be strong for the next generation and for the next millennium, then we must all unite under the banner of Christ with sword drawn and refuse to sheathe it until the last enemy of the cross is conquered. We are in a war for the souls of men. We are the soldiers; the Lord is the Commander-in-Chief. We are well able to overcome the land and defeat the giants for we are on the Lord's side.

Chapter 14

The Problem Of Immorality In The Modern World

Romans 1:18-32

James W. Boyd

The faith of Jesus Christ calls upon mankind for many things. There are obligations of worship, good works, and preparing for the judgment and eternity. But there are also matters pertaining to the here and now and our relationships that involve other people. Our manner of life, often called lifestyle today, is an important part of being a faithful Christian. We live in a world that too often is hostile to the things the Christian is supposed to say, do, and think. Therefore, Christians, as well as all others, face problems caused by immorality.

Our concern deals with our manner of life and morality. "*Be thou faithful unto death...*" (Rev. 2:10) is as much a part of obeying the gospel plan of salvation as faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and baptism. It includes and involves moral living. Morals relate to principles of right and wrong in behavior. Morality is a doctrine or system of moral conduct; conformity to ideals of right human conduct. Therefore, immorality is in conflict with moral principles and is in active opposition to what is moral. Immorality is discordant with ethical and moral principles with the refusal to acknowledge moral boundaries. God has given a moral system.

The influences around us can be a help, but can also be a hindrance. Immorality and its influence on us

and those around us is a threat to the spiritual welfare of Christians as they run the race set before us.

Not A New Problem

Immorality is nothing new to the human experience. Such has been in evidence since the Garden of Eden when the first pair decided to go their own way rather than obey God. Especially did immorality reach tremendous proportions in the days of Noah. It is said, Gen. 6:5, "*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.*" Consider the history of the nation of Israel during the period of the judges until their captivities. They were abominable in their immoralities. Our text depicts the moral degeneracy of the Gentile world before Christ, and Romans two shows the Jews were doing the same things.

Immorality is certainly characteristic of our day. We shall not deal with statistics that show the low moral level our nation has dipped because the numbers are so staggering that most do not really comprehend the extent of immorality by seeing numbers. We shall be more concerned with right versus wrong, the causes and consequences of immorality, now and eternally.

Immorality Results From Several Factors

Jesus noted that men love the darkness of evil rather than the light of truth (John 3:19). Moses made a deliberate choice to forsake the "*pleasures of sin*" which still cause many to partake of sin (Heb. 11:25). Evidently, many never consider the ultimate wages of sin, which is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). All they see and feel is the immediate satisfaction they derive from sinning.

At the root of all immorality is the lack of fear and respect for God (Rom. 3:18). Without God there is no deterrent or need to correct sin. Since many mistakenly conclude there is no God, no accountability, no judgment, no heaven, no hell, no right or wrong, no absolute and objective truth, no soul, they find nothing to compel them to restrict themselves from doing whatever they feel like doing. They are, therefore, guided by subjectivity and their feelings and fleshly appetites.

Immorality is the fruit of atheism. Actually, each person becomes his or her own god, lawgiver, and judge. Their god is their belly (Phil. 3:19). Their works are called the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19ff) in contrast to the fruit of following the Spirit.

But one is foolish to contend as some do that if you are not going to be a Christian you should just do whatever you wish. It is true you will not escape hell, but for the sake of society generally, for safety and personal security, for a reasonable degree of orderliness in society, everybody ought to live morally. There can be nothing but chaos without moral guidelines. Additionally, living an immoral life hardens the conscience (Rom. 1:21) until you are reprobate. Most had rather live as neighbors to moral non-Christians than immoral non-Christians. Most had rather live next door to a moral non-Christian than the hypocritical immoral so-called "Christian." Morality is of benefit to everyone while immorality is productive of hardships on everyone.

The Cost of Immorality

Can you even fully calculate the cost of immorality in the realm of health? Note the loss of production due to absenteeism from work, the shortening of life, the handicaps and disabilities caused, the pain and suffering, the financial burdens imposed not only upon the

immoral and their families, but the entire population. And we cannot dismiss the effect of immorality upon the oncoming generations due to financial costs and diseases passed to them because of an immoral generation? How much of our expenditure on better health would be eliminated if people lived moral lives?

Consider the cost in lives lost. The many deaths caused by diseases that were brought on by immoral living is beyond calculation. Lives are lost due to sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drunkenness, illegal drugs, etc.

Do we not know how immorality contributes to the destruction of the foundation of society, the home? Much of the divorce, physical abuse, neglect, and financial ruin is brought against homes because one or more members of the home choose to live immoral lives.

We are not naive to suggest nobody "profits" from immorality, at least financially and materially. Manufacturers and distributors of alcoholic beverages mass huge fortunes with their products. Drug and pornography dealers are among the most wealthy in the world. And, how the television and movie industry accumulates vast fortunes by promoting immorality and appealing to the worst in mankind with their evil products. Even "comedians" make a career out of being smutty and creating laughter over immorality. Casino owners and operators, including state lotteries, advance the cause of immorality, making people parasites on society, being controlled by the criminal elements. These degenerate kind of people make much physical gain through immorality, not caring for decency, but dollars, not wanting God, but gain.

The greatest cost is the spiritual costs, because immorality will cause the soul of immoral persons to be eternally in hell unless they repent and are forgiven. One soul is worth more than all the world (Mark 8:36). If one could gain the world, but lose his soul, he is a

loser. Galatians 5:21 reads, having listed the works of the flesh, that “...*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Immoral people dishonor God, those around them, and even themselves (Rom. 1:24).

Being Specific

Let us name specifically the conduct and immoral deeds and attitudes we have in mind. We can be certain that immorality has invaded almost every realm of human activity.

We all know that television, magazines, and newspapers are overflowing with it. You need only watch for a short time the programs wicked producers and writers of television programs, talk show hosts, and similar human scum pushers produce before you hear some profanity, vulgarity, sexual innuendo, see adulterous conduct implied, consumption of alcohol, violence, murder, rape. You name the vice and these people parade it, and in an acceptable light, with titillating and exciting scenes of wickedness. I actually and seriously wonder if those people whom I have mentioned have ever had a decent and moral thought in their lives. You cannot tell it by what they produce. Much today is being made of ratings and a computer chip called the V-chip. Such may help some and advise of the low level of content, but that will never solve the problem.

Look at the magazines readily available in grocery stores and street corners and observe their themes of degenerate behavior.

In business, politics, government, education, we see the havoc of immorality, which is directly connected with the humanistic philosophy that occupies the space where people’s brains belong. Christians are to be a light in the world, which involves opposing such moral trash. But people are warned, “Don’t cause trouble.” The advance of immorality deserves trouble of the

greatest magnitude before the entire nation and world are completely engulfed in it. It is still true, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Are we so blind and ignorant as to think we shall be the first people that shall repeal or veto the law of sowing and reaping?

⁷Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7,8).

Fornication and adultery are immoral acts. They produce diseases, divorces, delinquents, loss of self respect and disgrace. We hear much of unwanted pregnancy, usually the conception being the result of immorality. Most abortions are performed to remove responsibility for a child conceived in an immoral relationship. The "wise men" of our time propose every solution to these problems you can imagine except the only solution and that is teaching and conforming to God's standard of sexual morality, the sanctity of the home and marriage, and personal responsibility for one's actions. But in our nation of depraved rebels against God that suggestion is considered radical and extreme. A massive problem we face!

Drunkenness has become so commonplace that many even make jokes about it. The use of mind changing and behavior altering drugs that are bought and sold on the streets is characteristic of national life. What havoc this has caused the homes of drug users and drunkards! Poverty, crime to support habits of addiction, deranged minds, irrational conduct, loss of property, limb, and life are all results of this kind of immorality.

But in our “sophisticated and superior age,” crimes committed under such influences are too often dismissed or treated lightly, even excused. The dollar costs created by these things is immeasurable for magnitude. It is bad enough that the immoral suffer, but consider the suffering of the victims of these people, and the potential victims who are innocent of such wickedness! There is no place for these things in the life of a Christian.

More Specifics

Can one find an honest person? It is reported that Diogenes went through the streets of his city in broad daylight with a lantern. When asked why, he said he was looking for an honest man. Have they become that scarce in our own time?

Is lying considered bad? Evidently it is not by many people, even national leaders. In the March, 1996 issue of the *Firm Foundation* we read where a judge in Florida threw out a city ordinance that made it illegal for politicians to lie on the basis that the law was a “blatant” violation of the First Amendment. Is cheating dishonest? It is not according to many students. Is perjury a crime? It is not if you do not get caught at it. People are willing to distort and pervert truth, misrepresent, deceive. How can you have confidence in a person, or a nation whose leaders are so blatantly and perpetually dishonest?

Even some philosophers are becoming alarmed at the violence and murder that is taking place. But such conduct is paraded before the populace as the way to solve conflicts. Like those of Romans one, people are unmerciful toward their fellowman. While using television and other advertisements to effectively sell products, still these same people hypocritically deny that the constant menu of violence and murder has any effect on the morality of the nation. If their bankbook

depends on your blood, so be it, as far as they are concerned. We are not safe in our streets, stores, homes, or schools. When society does not have enough morality about it to discipline itself, you cannot provide enough policemen to control it. The violence is gory and glorified, and those of violence, beatings, stabbings, fights, and murders are heroes to many.

Immorality In The Heart

Greed is a heart problem, as is prejudice. Greed is born of materialism and concentration on this world to the neglect of the next. Luke 12:15, "*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*" But try to tell that to most people and hear them laugh that truth to scorn. Solomon taught that wealth, even in abundance, was vanity. It cannot satisfy the longings and needs of the soul. Stealing is born of greed, an unwillingness to work, and disrespect for the rights of others. Thieves invade homes, cars, stores, burglarizing, looting, pilfering. This is immorality and causes many problems for the modern world. Immorality is one reason we have to have locks, jails, security systems, night lights, 911, neighborhood watches.

A Growing Immorality Made Legal

Gambling is big business, even though usually dominated by the criminal element. The immoral heart that wants something for nothing commits immoral deeds, trampling the dignity of man, creating poverty, scoffing at the sacredness of the work ethic. Winners have brought on their ruin by winning just as losers have been ruined also.

What shall we say more? Cannot we name disobedience to parents, being without natural affection, worshipping idols, envy, backbiting as also listed in

Romans one? The list of immoralities is long and always deadly. They have existed in every age with different appearance.

Is This Not a Problem?

Who cannot see such things are problems for our modern world? Christians are influenced by it because, even though we are not of the world, we are still in the world. We have to go against the grain and swim upstream. Evil companions that corrupt good morals are everywhere.

Immorality creates problems in selecting a marriage partner, choosing a job, selecting a place of residence. Immorality causes godly parents heartaches and headaches because their task in rearing their children is made manifold more difficult.

The only solution is correction by purification of the heart. This does not mean that laws and their enforcement are of no value. The lawless would run rampant over everyone without laws that govern morality. Laws should be for the protection of the innocent and potential victims, which too often is not the case, but usually seem to be designed to excuse and protect the immoral and criminal. But what can you expect when the laws enacted are enacted by people whose minds have been penetrated with humanism, whose hearts are anti-God, and when courts are manned by those who see no evil in much of anything, except that which retards their fame and fortune?

While all this has a telling and calamitous effect on the Christian, we must be reminded of Noah who lived in such immoral times, but retained his faith, and saved his family. Meanwhile, we can expect frustrations of insecurity and injustice, and see our resources dissipated and wasted by a world that seems determined to be immoral. We have a problem, but we can defeat it in Christ.

Chapter 15

The Challenge Of Maintaining The Home

Ronnie Whittemore

The theme under discussion is “*The Race That Is Set Before Us.*” The Christian life is compromised of many facets including responsibilities and duties of the home. Christian men and women in running the Christian race have the obligation to fulfill their roles as husbands, wives and parents in the home.

In the 1970’s, the cultish movement, known as Crossroads, had a detrimental impact on the church. One of the horrible attributes of the religion was its attempt to divide families through “guilt trips” disguised as efforts to be “super-religious.” Many members of this movement were made to feel inadequate as Christians unless they devoted their time and energy to specific guidelines as promoted by the various leaders of this movements which included *quiet times* with their so-called *prayer partners*. In pushing this ideology, members were discouraged from respecting the wishes of parents who were opposed to the movement which divided parents and children. Likewise, husbands and wives were encouraged to put various requirements of this religion above the needs of their spouses and children. Therefore, a wedge was driven in the home.

However, in running the Christian race, it must be remembered that the home is a large part of one’s fulfilling his or her responsibilities as a Christian. God wants men who are devoted and responsible husbands

and fathers. Christian men put God first, but they also recognize the significance which the family must have in their lives. God also desires women who are loving and responsible wives and mothers. Christian women will always put God first, but they know that serving God faithfully does *not* mean neglecting their family.

Friends, let us consider therefore the roles that God has designated for every family member. For those who faithfully discharge their duties as husband, wife, father, mother, parent or child, there will be marvelous and everlasting rewards in both this life and the life to come.

Marriage And The Home

Marriage was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2:18, 21-24,

¹⁸And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. ... ²¹And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; ²²And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³And 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. ²⁴Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Jesus placed His approval upon this divine arrangement in Matthew 19 when He was asked questions regarding the relationship between husbands and wives. Paul also gives instructions regarding marriage

and the home in various epistles. In Hebrews 13:4, *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”* In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul compares the relationship between an husband and wife to the relationship which Christ has to the church (bridegroom and bride). According to Ephesians 5:23, 25, Paul wrote, *“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...Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”* Paul also instructed husbands to love their wives as they love themselves [Eph. 5:28].

Husbands And Wives

Husbands have certain responsibilities, which if they fulfill, will bring joy and satisfaction for their lives and the lives of their family.

First, husbands are admonished to love their wives. *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them”* [Col. 3:19].

Second, husbands are exhorted to respect and trust their wives. *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered”* [1 Peter 3:7].

Third, husbands are encouraged to be faithful to their wives. ³*“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. ⁴The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife”* [1 Cor. 7:3-4].

Fourth, husbands are charged to support their wives. *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* [1 Tim. 5:8].

Fifth, husbands are urged to comfort and protect their wives. *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered”* [1 Peter 3:7].

Sixth, husbands are implored to be proper examples of righteous living.

¹I 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. ²And 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 (Rom. 12:1-2).

Wives also have responsibilities in the home, which if performed to the best of their abilities, will result in great joy and happiness for the family unit. Their duties include the following:

First, wives are admonished to love their husbands. How interesting it is that Paul writes that this is something that must be taught and learned. *“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands...”* [Titus 2:4].

Second, wives are urged to love their children. Again, this is a trait to be taught to the young women by the older women. *“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children”* [Titus 2:4].

Third, wives are charged to submit unto their husbands. In Ephesians 5:22, *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”* Regardless of the messages of the NOW gang, the teachings of the ERA, and other such movements which influence our society, the wisdom of God teaches

submission. At the same time, husbands are to respect and love their wives which indicates that wives are not to be doormats.

Fourth, wives are to be examples of righteousness. Countless husbands and children have been won to the Lord due to a godly and righteous example set by the wife and mother of the family. Peter reminded his readers of this possibility, saying, *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives”* [1 Peter 3:1].

God Has Placed Responsibilities Upon The Parents To Train Their Children

Jehovah has charged parents with the obligation of training their children. In the Old Testament He commanded Israel to teach their children. *“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons”* [Deut. 4:9]. *“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”* [Deut. 6:7]. In Psalm 78:10-8, the Psalmist testified to the value of a parent’s counsel.

¹Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. ²I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: ³Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and

his wonderful works that he hath done. ⁵For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: ⁶That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: ⁷That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: ⁸And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God (Psalm 78:1-8).

In the New Testament, He also charges parents with similar duties. “*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4). “*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged*” (Col. 3:21).

God has provided us with numerous examples through His inspired Word of parents who fulfilled their responsibilities as commissioned by Jehovah God.

In the first example, **Abraham** has to stand out among all fathers. God did not chose the Israelite nation; he chose Abram (Gen. 12:1-3). He chose Abram because he would teach his people God’s Word.

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 (Gen. 18:19).

In the second example, **Joshua** is another example of the devoted father. In his closing speech to Israel, Joshua admonished Israel to remain devoted to God and also told of his commitment to the Lord, saying,

*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*** [Josh. 24:15].

A third example is that of the parents of Samuel, **Elkanah and Hannah**. “Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there” [1 Sam. 1:28]. In 1 Sam. 2:26, “And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.”

A fourth example involves the parents of John the Baptist or John the Immerser (**Zachariah and Elisabeth**). Concerning this godly couple, the Bible says, “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” [Luke 1:6].

A final example involves the grandmother and mother of Timothy (**Lois and Eunice**). Though Timothy’s father was Greek and in all probability had a part in Timothy’s upbringing, the apostle Paul credits his grandmother and mother for his religious knowledge and training as noted in the following passages: “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” [2 Tim. 1:5]. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make

thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

God established the home and the rules that govern that home. The husband is the head of the family. "*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*" (Eph. 5:23). The wife is to be in subjection to the husband. "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord*" (Col. 3:18). Children are to obey their parents. "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*" (Eph. 6:1).

God Has Placed Specific Responsibilities Upon Parents

The Lord has placed specific duties upon parents in the training and rearing of their children. In Luke 2:52, the inspired record comments upon the upbringing of Jesus. "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*" There are only a couple of events recorded about Jesus' childhood. The first event involves His birth in Bethlehem in a manger (Luke 2). The second event was the visit of the wise men when Jesus was a young child, perhaps as old as two (Matt. 2). The third event was the occasion of His being lost in Jerusalem by His parents at age twelve (Luke 2:41-51). The only comment made about Jesus between ages twelve and thirty is found in Luke 2:52 which implies the areas in which Jesus' parents trained Him.

Let us take those areas mentioned and consider each in light of our responsibilities as parents.

[1] "*Jesus increased in wisdom...*" (INTELLECTUALLY). We live in a society which recognizes the great advantages of education. Education is a major

issue in political circles nowadays, especially on the national and state scenes. For the most part, parents want their children to have the best education possible because they know that their livelihood and future depend upon it. So their education begins early. Good parents will try to teach their children some basic things in the home before they enter kindergarten. They will motivate their children for as many years and through as many grades as possible. Our children need to learn the 3r's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) if they want a good education. Solomon says that "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction*" [Prov. 1:7]. He also wrote, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding*" [Prov. 9:10].

This brings us to another kind of knowledge. It is even more important to know the Word of the Lord. We must learn what the Bible teaches. For that reason, Paul commanded Timothy to study. "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" [2 Tim. 2:15]. Bible classes are extremely helpful in educating our children. They need to learn about the great stories and characters of the Bible. They must be able to put those teachings into practice. "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*" [James 1:22].

[2] "*Jesus increased in...stature*" [PHYSICALLY]. Parents realize that the physical development of the children is their responsibility. They try to feed their children a well-balanced diet. They involve their children in various physical exercises. We all recognize the importance of food. Without food, the body will die from starvation and malnutrition. Therefore, we work to provide for ourselves and our families. "*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his*

own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). We are very practical when it comes to the physical growth of our children. Our society is very conscious about physical activities. Sports and recreational activities are big business in this country. Many children play a number of sports including, baseball, soccer, basketball, football. Certainly, physical exercise has its place. The apostle Paul said: "*For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*" (1 Tim. 4:8). Now Paul may be pointing out that godliness is much more important than physical exercise, but he implies in his statement that bodily exercise is useful to some degree. The Lord wants us to keep healthy bodies and healthy minds.

¹⁹What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's [1 Cor. 6:19-20].

(3) "*Jesus increased...in favor with man*" (SOCIALLY). Sometimes we may forget about this aspect of Jesus' growth and life. He was not always hated by his fellow man. He was not despised for being a carpenter's son or because he came from a poor background. He was hated later because He was/is the Son of God and stole the multitudes away from the prominent leaders of the Jews. "*For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy*" (Mark 15:10). It was for that same reason that the Jews despised Paul and company. "*But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming*" (Acts 13:45).

Parents have the responsibility of training their children, SOCIALLY, so that they can have the right relationship with their fellow man. They should be taught such virtues as: honesty, truthfulness, kindness, gentleness, hospitality, courtesy, good manners, sportsmanship, respect for others, etc. If they are not taught these things, then they will have an extremely difficult time getting along with others. Let us look at a few of these things.

Honesty is a virtue which is used every day in nearly every walk of life. Children need to be honest with their parents, their playmates and classmates, other adults, etc. When they reach adulthood, they will face decisions concerning honesty everywhere they go. They will fill out job applications. They will probably be given too much change at a cash register. (Will they be honest?) They will be asked questions that demand honesty. *“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men”* (Rom. 12:17). *“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”* (2 Cor. 8:21).

Respect is a trait which children must be taught at an early age. Children should respect their parents, grandparents, other adults, and especially the LORD. Very often we see a lack of respect for authority in children today which will transfer into a lack of respect later in life. Children will have a difficult time in obtaining good relationships with others if they lack respect for their parents or for those in positions of authority.

Unfortunately it is so common to see children who lack respect for their parents despite the multitude of commandments exhorting young people to honor their parents. Moses wrote, *“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God*

giveth thee" (Deut. 5:16). Jesus said, "*Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Matt. 19:19). The apostle Paul wrote, "*Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise*" (Eph. 6:2).

(4) "*Jesus increased in favor...with God*" (SPIRITUALLY). The other three areas are important for our children and parents usually recognize their responsibilities in these areas. But when it comes to training their children spiritually, then the story is quite different. Children must be taught HOW to obtain the right relationship with the LORD. They must be taught what sin is and the remedy for sin.

Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). It is also the failing to do what is right (James 4:17). Paul also stated that "*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*" (Rom. 14:23). The remedy for sin is the gospel. It is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). We become God's children through gospel obedience (John 1:12).

Children must be taught *respect* for the Lord. The Psalmist wrote, "*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him*" (Psalm 89:7). We are also reminded by the apostle Paul that we must "*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*" (Heb. 12:28).

Children must also be taught about *purity of life and mind*. In 1 Peter 2:9, the apostle Peter states, "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*" Paul explained that one way to avoid evil is to concentrate on those things which are good.

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 (Phil. 4:8).

Children must be taught about *working and laboring in the Lord's kingdom*. When children reach the age of accountability and they have been taught the gospel and they have obeyed it, then they become part of the kingdom of God. So often the statement is made that "young people are the church of tomorrow" which is true; however, if they are Christians, then they are the church of today. Therefore, they have responsibilities in the Lord's church also. In 1 Cor. 3:9, Paul wrote, "*For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*" He went on to say in his second epistle, "*We then, as workers together with him...*" [2 Cor. 6:1].

What Children Owe Their Parents

Children owe their parents to be respectful and obedient. This is one of the example that Jesus set for us and Peter encouraged all to imitate the Lord. "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*" [1 Peter 2:21]. At the age of twelve, Jesus was subject unto His parents [Luke 2:52]. God has never said, "*Parents, obey your children, Honor thy son and thy daughter...*" Yet this is the rule and procedure in many homes today. If the child's will becomes first priority, then the child learns to be selfish.

Grown children owe their aged parents honor, love, respect, care and financial aid if needed. They deserve to receive some time from their children. Some children who live within easy driving range, never visit

their parents. Others fail to write or call. Many are guilty of post mortem love, that is, they bury their parents with weeping eyes, yet they have never honored them.

Parents deserve to receive financial aid when needed from their children. Jesus scolded the Jews for their practice of claiming no funds by which to support their parents because they gave a certain amount to the temple or other such efforts.

⁹And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. ¹⁰For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death. ¹¹But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. ¹²And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; ¹³Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye [Mark 7:9-13].

Is this not one of the greatest injustices and uncompassionate attitudes in the New Testament? Rather than physically help their parents, many grown children were offering the excuse "I gave at the office." The "loophole-looking" Jews believed that if they gave financially to the temple, then that released them from responsibilities to their aged parents. Paul instructed that children have duties toward their parents and Christians have obligations toward their family members.

⁴But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home,

and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. ... ⁸But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:4, 8).

What Children Owe The Home

One of the problems that faces our society is the lack of courtesy and kindness in the home. Every member of an household should be kind toward one another. Children owe this to their home just as parents do. Solomon wrote, “*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (Prov. 18:24). Paul wrote, “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph. 4:32). True love in the home which includes the parents’ love for their children and the children’s love for their parents is kind (1 Cor. 13:4).

Children should also be dependable. Solomon reminds us our such duties.

²Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. ³For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by multitude of words. ⁴When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. ⁵Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay (Eccl. 5:2-5).

Children owe their home to be pure in thought, word and deed. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" [Matt. 5:8]. Paul admonished the young evangelist Timothy, saying, "*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*" [1 Tim. 4:12]. Later in the same epistle, Paul exhorted Timothy with these words, "*Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure*" [1 Tim. 5:22]. Both young and old are advised, "*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*" [Eph. 4:29]. In Colossians 4:6, Paul wrote, "*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*" Jesus emphasized that everyone must give account for the things which come from the lips. ³⁶"*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.* ³⁷"*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" [Matt. 12:36-37].

Children also owe the home to be prepared for today's world. There are two concepts by which children are trained and by which they learn in order to become responsible adults. The first concept is learning to make a living which includes education and training in some field of endeavor. Usually parents understand the importance of giving their children a good education and encouraging them to accept responsibility in some area of expertise for future work. Therefore, parents make sure that their children do their homework, study for tests and make acceptable grades. Parents will often make great sacrifices so that their children can attend a college or vocational school. In our society, this is the path which has been accepted and which is right. But

it is the second concept which is sometimes lacking on the part of parents and children. This concept involves making a life which includes setting the right priorities, obeying the Lord and become a valuable asset in the Lord's work (Matt. 6:33).

Young people, please take note of this: If you come from a Christian home then you owe that home the joy that can come from your obedience to the gospel. If you do not come from a Christian home, you should obey the gospel and perhaps by so doing lead your whole family to Christ. As a responsible Christian, you will gladly pay the debt that you owe to your parents and to yourselves.

What Children Owe God

There are three areas that we want to notice in regards to what children owe God. First, young Christian people owe their Lord a dedicated Christian life. Paul evidently converted Timothy during his first missionary journey and at the start of his second stated that Timothy "*was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium*" (Acts 16:2). God needs young people who have good reputations and golden character that receive the approval of God (2 Tim. 2:15) and seek to influence others to Christ (1 Tim. 4:12). The apostle John commended some young people in the first century because they had overcome Satan and his influence.

¹³I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. ¹⁴I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young

men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:13-14).

Children also owe the Lord to be faithful worshippers. Wisdom dictates that one devote time each day for Bible study and prayer. *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11). Paul commanded that one *“pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17) which includes times of joy and happiness as well as times of grief and sorrow. In being faithful worshippers, one must assemble with the saints. Young people, decide early that worship is vitally important. *“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

²⁴And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not 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 (Heb. 10:24-25).

Your regular attendance in worship will not only strengthen you, but it will also encourage others. In worshipping God, one must sing with understanding. *“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also”* (1 Cor. 14:15). Therefore, it would be improper to laugh and play during the singing. It would even be a good idea to study the songs and be sure that one understands what he is singing. *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Eph. 5:19). *“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” [Col. 3:16]. In worshipping God faithfully, one must give as prospered. Young people have sources of income: allowance, jobs. All Christians are subject to give as they have been prospered.

¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ²Upon 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 Cor. 16:1-2].

“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 Cor. 9:7]. Another important part of faithful worship is the partaking of the Lord’s Supper worthily [1 Cor. 11:23-29]. In order to partake of the unleavened bread which represents the Lord’s body and the fruit of the vine which represents the Lord’s blood, one must purge himself of sin and remember with reverence and deep gratitude the Lord’s death.

Another debt which even young people owe the Lord is to be serious soul-winners. Sometimes young people have tremendous influence in encouraging others to obey the Lord. This influence is available through good examples of Christian living (Matt. 5:13-16) and by word or conversation. Young people often influence their friends to obey the gospel by inviting their classmates to Bible study classes and worship services as well as discussing the Bible with their friends on a regular basis. The good that young people can do is unmeasurable. With their zeal and enthusiasm channeled in the right direction, the potential is so great for the Lord’s church.

Friends, maintaining the Christian home according to God's design is one of the greatest challenges facing the Lord's church today. Our society seems to be moving in a direction of undermining the home and neglecting the responsibilities that each member has whether parent or child. However, Christians can make the difference. Paul compared the Christian life to running a race and part of that race includes devotion, respect and love in the home. Is your home a Christian home? Are you a Christian? Are you a faithful child of God? If you desire to finish the race set before you, then you must do your part in maintaining a good and solid Christian home.

Chapter 16

Hindrances To World Evangelism

Holger Neubauer

Before our Lord returned to his heavenly home He gave a charge that would forever change the course of this world. The Savior set forth an edict that would turn the world upside down as the entire creation was to hear His gospel message. In Matthew 28:19,20, the divine record says,

*¹⁹Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

In complying with these divine instructions the early disciples preached the message boldly and within that generation the entire world had heard the gospel (Col. 1:23). Since then, each generation has had it incumbent upon itself to evangelize the world. Jesus made it clear that everything he had taught should as well be taught to others (Matt. 28:20). Part of what Jesus taught was to “*teach all nations*” (Matt. 28:19). Therefore, every soul which obeys the gospel is also subject to the admonition to “*teach all nations.*” That being the case there is little wonder why the church grew so rapidly in the beginning.

After the initial obedience of about 3000 (Acts 2:41), the Jerusalem church numbered upwards of 5000 (Acts 4:4). The number was then multiplied by the time that Acts 6:1 was recorded by Luke. The great persecution that the Jerusalem church received actually served God's purposes of evangelizing the world. As the early Jewish Christians were forced to leave their homes they took the gospel with them and 1 and 2 Peter and James were written to these faithful Jewish Christians who had established churches all around the world as a result of that persecution. The establishment of the church and evangelizing of the world is all in keeping with the very purpose of Jesus, as He said, "*For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10).

Satan as a Hindrance

Opposition to the church and evangelism has been present since the inception of the church, for Satan the Devil was present then as he is present now. To the church at Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "*Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again: but Satan hindered us*" (1 Thess. 2:18). Acts 17 records how the Jews at Thessalonica were moved to envy and created an uproar in the city so that some kind of security was taken of Jason. Evidently, the security had to do with the peace of the city being not interrupted. This probably involved the promise that the apostle Paul would not return and hence the record in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 mentions Paul's desire to come to Thessalonica, as he said, "*but Satan hindered us.*" The word "hindered" is the Greek *enkopto*, which literally refers to the breaking up of a road. Satan attempts to set up road blocks against the gospel and he has been successful in his efforts to a large degree. Satan has been prowling the earth since time immemorial (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8) and is presently

interested in the winnowing of souls for his kingdom [Luke 22:31]. His active work involves countless ministers who teach things contrary to God's Divine will [2 Cor. 11:14,15; Rom. 16:17,18].

Satan Hinders When The Gospel Is Not Preached!

One of the most effective tools of the devil has been to make people believe that the message of salvation is outdated and that it ought to be substituted with just about every "felt need" under heaven. The church in many places is presently losing the battle for souls because it is fighting in all the wrong places. An illustration from World War II may assist us here. During the war the Germans occupied many strongholds that surrounded or were close to Normandy. As the invasion of D-Day approached the English were concerned with the concentrated forces of German troops. The commander of the British armed forces and Winston Churchill decided on a plan to try to move at least some of Hitler's forces. It involved the planting of a soldier's body in the Mediterranean Sea that had false information of a planned attack on German forces hundreds of miles away from Normandy. To make the delusion believable, a body was sought for from an English hospital that had died from pneumonia. This was needed so that the body would be believed to have drowned since the lungs would have been filled with fluid. The body was robed in an officers uniform and a wallet stuffed with many personal memorabilia, including theater tickets, family photos and a false document about a planned invasion of the English forces. The Germans found the body as planned and fell for the trick. Now, lets change the good guys and bad guys. Satan has effectively convinced many in the church that the battle is in the social arena. It is not uncommon to hear continual barrage of sermons in the

church that deal exclusively with the immediate felt needs of this generation. So sermons with topics like, fear of failure, financial freedom, co-dependency, anger, self esteem, and how to go shopping with your wife, fill pulpits and actually erode the foundations of the church which should be viewed as the “*pillar and ground of truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15).

No one in the early church suggested a weight loss program to introduce the community to the church. We have no record of a time management class or an aerobic hour extended by the church to reach the masses. This new style of influencing the world is being touted by those like George Barna who sets forth the felt needs agenda in his book *Marketing the Church*. Notice this quote,

To successfully market your product, you have to identify its prospective market. The key to market identification — sometimes referred to as “target marketing” — is to be as specific as possible in selecting the audience to whom you will market the product. By matching the appeal of your product to the interests and needs of specific population segments, you can concentrate on getting your product to your best prospects without wasting resources on people who have no need or interest in your product. ... By knowing the product’s market, the product itself can be developed to address the special needs of that segment, and the entire marketing effort can be designed with maximum efficiency. [*Marketing the Church* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1988), 42-43.]

Barna’s philosopher stands in direct contrast to the New Testament pattern. The apostle Paul was not concerned with testing the market but rather in the

preaching of the gospel. In contrast to Barna's philosophy the divine record says in 1 Cor. 2:1-5:

¹And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. ²For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

The great apostle Paul was not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16,17). He instructed Timothy to "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Timothy was later imprisoned for following Paul's admonishment (Heb. 13:23). Many today like the people described by Isaiah are only willing to hear "smooth things" (Isa. 30:9,10). With a world which is as untoward as any generation since the first century, every herald of God should take upon himself the whole armor of God and not shun the declaration of the whole council of God (Eph. 6:10-17; Acts 20:26,27).

Satan Hinders When Sin Is Not Exposed

Before Isaiah became the brave volunteer to take the Father's Word and proclaim the truth to his people, God showed him the blackness of his own sin. While in the presence of God and overwhelmed with God's holiness, Isaiah commented, "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" (Isa. 6:5).

God's righteousness and man's sinfulness must be acknowledged before the church ever heralds the Word to the world. The present "I'm okay you're okay" mentality has influenced many to believe that salvation may be possible outside the church. Some have become so weak that they dare not say anything about the eternal state of the disobedient masses. In Lagarde Smith's book; *Baptism: The Believers Wedding Ceremony*, this statement is made on page 201,

None of us can presume to know about the eternal destiny of anyone, on the basis of any question of doctrine - be it predestination, charismatic gifts, the washing of feet or even baptism. All we can do is give our best efforts to knowing God's will, as revealed in His written word.

Then on page 206 our brother goes on to say,

Are unbaptized believers destined to hell? Are those who have received only infant baptism in eternal jeopardy? Only God knows. On one level, these are questions we have no right even to ask. As seen in this study, there is an abundance of scriptural language that, on its face regards baptism as an essential part of our turning to God. Never the less, I would hope that God might apply the "common law marriage" approach for those who have lived a lifetime of service in His name without having participated in the wedding ceremony of baptism. [*Baptism: The Believers Wedding Ceremony*, Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co. 1993]

There are some very serious ramifications of brother Smith's teaching on baptism and there are several things that need to be said in response to his errant affirmations.

First, to affirm that no one can know the eternal destiny of anyone regarding any doctrinal position is simply not true. Belief in God and accepting the inspiration of the scriptures is itself a doctrinal position. In the epistle of I John, John refuted the false doctrine that suggested Jesus did not really come to this earth in the flesh (1 John 1:1-3). Those who denied the truth of Jesus were called liars (1 John 2:22). In the previous verse, John affirmed that “no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21). In commenting on these false teachers, John said, “*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*” (1 John 2:19). Then John declared, “*who so ever denieth the Son the same hath not the father*” (1 John 2:23). The God-breathed revelation pronounces eternal judgment upon the basis of a doctrinal issue. Consider Hymenaeus of II Timothy 2:17. Paul denounced the false doctrine he and fellow false teacher Philetus were promoting that denied a literal resurrection. This false doctrine was regarded as blasphemy and Paul said that he had delivered Hymenaeus over to Satan (1 Tim. 1:19,20). Until Hymenaeus would repent of his false teaching he would remain in the clutches of Satan who is the father of all lies (John 8:44). To be delivered to Satan is to be disfellowshipped as Paul told the Corinthians, “*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*” (1 Cor. 5:5). The very process of delivering one to Satan suggests two kingdoms; God’s and Satan’s. Once one is removed from the fellowship of the people of God one has only the association of Satan’s kingdom left. This process is to ultimately regain the soul of the one being disciplined so the “spirit may be saved.” Those that are withdrawn from scripturally are lost brothers and sisters. Hymenaeus was lost because of his false doctrine concerning the resurrection. The scripture again affirms that one can

know the eternal destiny of an individual regarding a doctrinal matter. The marking of false teachers (Rom. 16:17,18) is proof that the eternal destiny of false teachers can be known.

Second, to suggest that we cannot know the eternal destiny of those accountable individuals who are not baptized is to deny plain Bible truth. Jesus said, "*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Knowledge of truth is a prerequisite to salvation. How can one deny that which Jesus demands? Brother Smith's doctrine is very similar to another false doctrine being circulated in the church that says one need not know the biblical purpose of baptism in order for baptism to have its biblical purpose. Such doctrine denies the heart of Bible teaching. When Jesus affirmed, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16), he set forth the conditions of truth in a way that could be understood by those that sought the truth. Jesus said again, "*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine*" (John 7:17). Baptism is a fundamental doctrine which is mentioned as one of the seven planks of unity in Eph. 4:4-6. Paul said there is but "*one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5). If we do not know the eternal destiny of those who do not submit to the Biblical doctrine of baptism, then we have no business making baptism a test of Christian fellowship. If God will extend his grace to those who do not obey his will, then His church certainly should do no less. Yet when the Pharisees and lawyers were not baptized of John they were said to have "*rejected the counsel of God*" (Luke 7:30). Will brother Smith suggest that we do not know the eternal destiny of these Pharisees and lawyers?

Third, the argument that God will perhaps accept some "common law" Christians is to undermine the very nature of God. God had promised us that He can not lie (Heb. 6:18). The Bible affirms that all and every spiritual blessing is found in Christ (Eph. 1:3,7). There

is but one way in Christ (Rom. 6:3,4). If God can be more lenient than His last testament and will states, how do we know that He will not be more stringent than His will teaches? Will God change His law? God had promised that He will not (Matt. 24:35; Titus 1:2).

To press the "common law" marriage from the civil realm is to try to prove a case from illustration. Illustrations can only clarify a position, they do not prove the position. Suppose a couple is considered married by the state after living together for seven years? Should we then accept couples who intend to live together for at least seven years? If one of the couple dies before the seven years are completed, were they married in the state's eyes? Remember, Christians are to conform to "*every ordinance of man*" (1 Peter 2:13), so Christians are to be married with a ceremony according to the states' laws. The "common law" marriage begins in disobedience to God. God had promised to judge "adulterers" (Heb. 13:4). Brother Smith attempts to show that God might accept disobedience because the state does. This simply does not follow. The blood of Christ flows only within His body (Eph. 5:23). Since we are baptized into the body (1 Cor. 12:13) no one can be saved without being baptized because no one can be saved without having received the benefits of Jesus blood (Heb. 9:22).

The basis of the Christian religion is a knowledge of salvation. To suggest that one cannot know the eternal destiny outside the church is also to suggest that one cannot know one's eternal destiny within the church. The scripture is written that Christians may "*know ye have eternal life*" (1 John 5:13). We must know that we have "*passed from death unto life*" (1 John 3:14). Since sin causes death and all have sinned (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), we can know all are lost without a knowledge of the truth and obedience to the truth. Paul said, "*who will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Yes, we can know the eternal destiny of those promoting false doctrines and it is a presumptuous thing to deny what God has revealed for us to believe and practice.

Satan Hinders When We Do Not Send Men To Preach The Gospel

¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? ¹⁷So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. ¹⁸But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Rom. 10:13-18).

So inspiration declares the need for all men to hear the saving message of Jesus. Yet when congregations place little emphasis on training men and sending men to preach, the Great Commission is not fulfilled.

It is estimated that 90% of the world has not even heard the saving message of Jesus. Hopefully, as more opportunities arise to preach the gospel in foreign fields, the church will likewise rise to the occasion.

There are many missionaries who spend years raising funds to go to a foreign field. Some never get out of the States because Churches will not support faithful men. This ought not be. As the apostle Paul

considered the monetary support the Church at Philippi had sent him, he commented in inspiration,

¹⁵Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. ¹⁶For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. ¹⁷Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account (Phil. 4:15-17).

Paul desired that the Philippians brethren bear 'fruit' in the spread of the gospel. In the same way congregations should likewise bear fruit in the support of gospel preachers who endeavor to take the gospel to those who have not previously heard the unsearchable riches of Christ. In North America, we have become building oriented. Many churches are constantly improving physical facilities but fail to increase support for preaching the gospel. The church needs strong, balanced budgets that include a large portion of their funds to go directly to mission work.

Elders are to be faithful stewards of the Lord's money, and their primary interest ought never be taken out of the way of the saving of souls. May God help us to remember that Jesus came to "seek and save that which was lost" and the church has set before her the very same mission yet today.

Chapter 17

The Race Demands Keeping A Proper Attitude

Dean Buchanan

No more important subject could be considered than that of attitude. It touches every corner of our lives as human beings. Everyone has an attitude about everything. Even indifference toward something is an attitude. The following definitions will introduce us to our study for this hour.

In our text, the word **“race”** is defined as “an inward conflict of the soul, agony, emotional struggle, grueling.” The word **“attitude”** is defined as “1) The position or posture assumed by the body in connection with an action, feeling, or mood; 2) a manner of acting, feeling or thinking that shows one’s disposition, opinion, or mental set” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). The word **“proper”** is defined as right, acceptable, or constructive for the noun which it modifies. (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*).

How Attitudes Are Formed

Where do our attitudes come from? What makes a man like Adolph Hitler believe the extermination of millions of Jews was the right thing to do? Why did a man like Albert Switzer, brilliant and educated as he was, choose to live a life of service among the jungle tribes of Africa? What caused Abel to obey God, and Cain to disobey? What makes some people follow a

Charles Manson to murder people? Why did over 900 people drink poison and kill themselves just because Jim Jones told them to?

Why did a man with the faith of Abraham lie to the kings or a man with the moral strength of David commit adultery and murder? There are many questions we could raise in a similar way regarding the question of attitudes. It is not within the scope of this study to attempt (even if we could) to delve into the psychological aspects of attitude. Rather we will be approaching the matter from a Biblical standpoint and making a practical application of that teaching to living life as a Christian on a daily basis.

Attitude and faith are closely related. Faith is defined as; "...firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). We can rightly say, then, that our faith determines our attitudes. Consider the difference in the attitude of Paul toward Christians before he met Christ on the road to Damascus and his attitude after that historical event. Before that event he thought he ought to oppose Christ and his teachings in every way he could, even to the point of persecuting Christians by having them imprisoned and even executed (Acts 26:9-11). He promoted Judaism with all his might and zeal, far beyond any of his peers among the Jews at that time (Gal. 1:14). After meeting with Christ, he totally changed his attitude toward the Son of God and the message he had brought into the world. This new attitude is expressed in many places in the New Testament. "*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*" (Gal. 2:20).

The drastic change in the apostle's attitude toward Christ was brought on by a change in his faith. He now believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, and the

Saviour of the world. He was now a member of that group of people he had been persecuting. His faith had changed, so his attitude changed.

Now we know this was a choice made by the apostle. When describing his meeting with Christ to Agrippa he said,

¹⁹Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto that heavenly vision: ²⁰but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance (Acts 26:19,20).

We conclude therefore, that attitude is determined by faith and faith is determined by choices the individual makes.

The words spoken by the wise man long ago, simply state that our attitude is formed by our thoughts. “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). The apostle tells us we control our thoughts and therefore our attitude by his statement to the Philippians.

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 (Phil. 4:8).

When God made man, placed him in the garden of Eden, gave him access to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and told him not to eat of that tree, he made all human beings creatures of free will. We can make choices; and, our attitudes are formed by those choices.

While it is true our attitudes are formed internally by the choices we make, there are factors external that we allow to shape those attitudes. The culture into which we are born, the influence of other people such as parents, teachers and friends, circumstances, situations, prejudices, the weather, physical health, and many other things can affect our attitudes if we allow them to. So the challenge to every human being is to maintain the right attitude regardless of the things external to us.

Our destiny is not determined by those things external to us, but by our reaction to them. This principle is set out by the Hebrew writer in our theme text when he talks about, "*laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us*" (Heb. 12:1). Keeping a proper attitude means getting rid of wrong attitudes. These wrong attitudes are the "weights" that we must lay aside. Let us consider some of them.

Laying Aside Weights

To keep a proper attitude we must lay aside the weight of an attitude of cynicism. The cynic has a deep seated distrust of people, believing that all people act out of selfishness. Such expressions as "it's a dog eat dog" world are the cliches of the cynic. This kind of an attitude is ugly enough in a person who is not a Christian. It is totally out of place in the heart of a Christian. "*Love thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity*" (1 Cor. 13:4-6). Cynicism cannot exist in the same heart with love.

Psychologists tell us that we project in others the same characteristics we ourselves possess. The Bible warns against accusing others of the things we ourselves are guilty of.

²¹...Thou that preacheth a man should not steal, dost thou steal? ²²Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou

commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? ²³Thou that makest boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God [Rom. 2:21-23]?

The cynic attempts to justify his own selfishness by accusing everyone else of being selfish.

Cynicism is a cancer that needs to be cut out of the heart of the child of God. It will destroy a congregation of the Lord's church if it is allowed to prevail. Let us lay aside the weight of an attitude of cynicism.

To keep a proper attitude we must lay aside the weight of an attitude of pessimism. Closely aligned with cynicism is pessimism, which believes the present world is the worst there is, that the worst will always happen and that the evil in the world outweighs the good. The classic Biblical example of pessimism is that of the 10 spies who came back from the promised land and told Moses and the nation of Israel they could not conquer the land [Num. 13:23-29]. This was the reason the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for forty years before they were allowed to enter Canaan.

Think for a moment of the adverse effects of an attitude of pessimism. If we believe that only the worst will happen, we will not be very enthusiastic about anything we do. Even the things we know to be good will be overshadowed by this attitude. The 10 spies did not deny that it was a good land and that everything God had promised was there. They simply did not believe they could occupy the land.

Pessimism throws a dark cloud over everyone and every project. An individual who is a pessimist will not get far in life. A church will slowly die if pessimism is allowed to dominate its thinking. Let us lay aside the weight of an attitude of pessimism and run the race that is set before us.

To keep a proper attitude we must lay aside the weight of an attitude of love of the world.

¹⁵Love 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever [1 John 2:15-17].

Love of the world sets us in contrast to God. The world and all things therein are temporary. God is eternal and we can live with him eternally. To become entangled in things of the world is to lose our soul. *“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”* (Matt. 16:26)? Again our Lord said, *“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matt. 6:24). If we love the world we will hate Christ for he demands that we love him more than the world. *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:26).

This world of ours is a beautiful place. God created it and everything he created was good. *“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good”* (Gen. 1:31). But it cannot compare with heaven and the things that await us there. Especially when we consider the fact that all those things that cause human suffering will be gone. No tears, no sorrow, no heart-ache, no sadness, no hurt — all those things will be gone. But to get there we will have to lay aside the weight of an attitude of love for the world.

To keep the proper attitude we must lay aside the weight of an attitude of criticism. To criticize is to find fault, to judge disapprovingly, to censure, to look for errors, to condemn. Jesus said,

¹Judge not that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. ³And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ⁴Or 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. ⁵Thou 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 [Matt. 7:1-5].

Unrighteous judgment is what Jesus is talking about in the above passage. It is the kind of judgment that constitutes criticism. James talks of the danger of the tongue (James 3:1-18). This is one of the most deceptive sins in Satan's toolbox. Not everyone is a murderer. Not everyone is a thief or an adulterer. But who would be so presumptuous as to say they have never said words that should never have been spoken?

Criticism usually grows out of jealousy, envy or prejudice. It does great damage to all concerned not the least being the person who is disposed to criticize. It can throw a wet blanket on the most optimistic aspirations of an individual or a church. Many a babe in Christ has been discouraged to the point of quitting because of criticism from some negative member of the church who is always looking for something to condemn. Jesus said, "*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*" (John 3:17). Now if

Jesus himself did not condemn, who are we, that we should condemn or criticize?

To keep the proper attitude we must lay aside the weight of an attitude of negativism. The story is told of a little boy coming home from a day of school looking somewhat down in the dumps. The father asks him, "Why are you looking sad, son?" "I think I flunked that math test today, Dad," the youngster replied. "Oh, don't be so negative!" said the father. "Be positive!" "OK," the little boy said. "I'm positive I flunked that math test!"

The attitude of negativism is characterized by doubt and question rather than by approval and acceptance. It won't work, I can't, we'll never make it; that was tried before and it didn't work. These are all cliches used by those poor souls who wear the negative attitude. Christians must be positive. No sooner have we said that, than someone will say, "But we have to preach negative sometimes. Even Jesus preached about sin, to say nothing of hell and eternal punishment."

To have a positive attitude does not mean that we do not deal with things that are negative. Rather it is the way in which we deal with those things. A positive person can deal with negative things. It is difficult for a negative person to deal with positive things. The positive person recognizes there are negative things in the world such as problems. He or she just happens to believe there is a solution to those problems. Jesus did preach much about sin, sorrow, death and hell. Would we say Jesus was a negative person? On the contrary, he was the most positive human being that has ever lived.

Elders and preachers in the church should be positive people, yet they must deal with sin and problems between members in the local congregation. When we talk about negativism we are talking about a

life style, a personality which is dominated by a negative spirit. Let us lay aside the weight of an attitude of negativism and be positive about our salvation in Christ.

Well, by now it is obvious that any sin, any wrong attitude, are weights that we must get rid of before we can possess the right and proper attitude with which to run the race set before us. Now let's look at how we can keep the right attitude for that race

How To Keep The Proper Attitude To Run The Race

Here, as well as in the case of the weights that beset us, we have an abundance of material to work with since dealing with attitudes means we are dealing with every area of a person's life. Therefore, we shall limit our discussion to seven broad topics and leave it to our readers to be more specific in each area. So the remainder of our study will deal with the things that are crucial to keeping the proper attitude to run the race set before us.

First, we must keep the right attitude toward God. Except we believe in God, nothing matters. There are no rules, no standards, no values, no meaning to anything. Only as each person decides in his/her own heart is there any obligation or requirement, and that only applies to that individual alone. Atheists, agnostics and other various stripes of unbelievers do not like to consider this very logical conclusion to their position on the existence of God, but they are forced to it.

The Bible states this very important matter this way, "*Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*" [Heb. 11:6]. There are a lot of people who claim

to believe in God who do not “*diligently seek him.*” The proper kind of faith will do both, believe that he is and seek after him.

The proper faith believes that God created the universe, including the human race, as set out in the book of Genesis. It allows no room for the theory of biological evolution, whether theistic or otherwise, as the manner in which the earth was created. This is the foundation for everything the believer says and does in his/her life as a Christian. When one begins to make allowances in the manner in which the earth was created, it is the beginning of the process of erosion in the spiritual life of the individual.

A proper attitude toward God requires us to recognize the three persons who make up the Godhead — God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all of whom were present in the creation (Gen. 1:26). God the Father is set forth as being our Father in a very personal way. Christ instructed us to begin our prayers by addressing him as, “*Our Father who art in heaven*” [Matt. 6:9]. We should view him in all ways as our Father in the most ideal sense of the term. The good Father who loves his children and wants to take care of them. He should be the one we turn to when times are bad, and when times are good. We must share our joys and our heartaches with him. It is unfortunate that many people turn to God only when they are in a bad way with sickness, tragedy or heartache.

A right attitude toward God demands we accept Christ as being the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. “*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). He left heaven and came to this earth, suffered rejection and abuse, and finally died on the cross in order that we might be saved.

A right attitude toward God also requires we recognize the Holy Spirit as the one who gave us the

Bible (John 15:13). He is the Comforter whom Jesus sent to his apostles when he returned to heaven after his crucifixion. *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, 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). He is the one who makes intercession for us when we don’t know what to ask for, nor which way to turn (Rom. 8:26).

A proper attitude toward God means that our faith remains strong when we don’t understand why things happen the way they do, or why things are the way they are. When it seems that evil wins out most of the time and all our efforts are in vain, we must remember that our Father is in heaven and all things are in his hands. This attitude will cause us to believe that God answers our prayers and supplies us with the things that will be good for us regardless of whether or not the things he gives us are the things we ask for.

Second, we must keep the right attitude toward ourselves. God put a little bit of himself in each one of us. *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”* (Gen. 1:27). This means that we are above all of God’s creation. David expresses this concept in his writings.

³When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, ⁴What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? ⁵For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. ⁶Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet. ⁷All sheep and oxen, yea, and the

beasts of the field; ⁸The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas (Psalm 8:3-8).

In this psalm, David is recognizing the greatness and sovereignty of God by showing how significant he is compared to man, and in making the contrast, he also shows that man is over all the universe because God placed him there in his order of things. We should never forget that we are children of God. We are like him, because children are like their parents. Therefore, we are important to God, even as any good Father's children are important to him.

Jesus set the value of each one of us to him when he said, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost*" (Luke 19:10). Christ left heaven with all its glory to come to earth with all its ugliness in order that we might be saved. Surely we should never forget the importance that Christ placed on just one human being.

All of this should help us to have a healthy self esteem. We should not feel superior to any other human being, nor should we feel inferior to any other human being for we are all of equal importance in the sight of God and his Son. Unless we feel good about ourselves, we will have great difficulty having the right attitude toward others and this right attitude toward ourselves will help us keep a proper attitude toward the race set before us.

Third, we must have the proper attitude toward other people. The first great commandment is that we should love God with all our being and the second great commandment is that we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). This statement by Jesus was in response to a lawyer's question regarding what he should do to inherit eternal life. Our Lord went further to offer the parable of the good Samaritan which

teaches that anyone in need is our neighbor. We are to love, even our enemies, and do good to them [Matt. 5:44].

The Bible tells us how this can be done by using such principles as treating others as we want them to treat us, turn the other cheek, go the second mile, etc. These will help us remember we are all human beings and subject to mistakes. No one is perfect. Therefore we need to put the best construction on what people say and do, giving them the benefit of the doubt.

Much of the worry and stress we encounter is the result of other people not thinking, talking and acting like we feel they should act, think and talk. So, not only will the right attitude toward other people be good for them, it will also be good for us as well. In fact, God so created we human beings that we cannot help others without helping ourselves at the same time.

During his personal mission here on earth, Jesus gave us an example of what we should be. Peter said, "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps*" [1 Peter 2:21]. This example was one of understanding, patience, humility, persistence, holiness, righteousness, steadfastness, compassion, forgiveness, acceptance, encouragement and exhortation. He taught us that God wants all people to be saved and that none should perish [2 Peter 3:9]. Maintaining a proper attitude toward others requires that we be like Jesus in all his attributes.

Fourth, we must have the right attitude toward the church. Established on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, the church is his body [Col. 1:18]. She consists of the saved of all the earth [Acts 2:47]. We must remember the church is not a denomination, a hierarchy, a synod, a council, a convention or a building. In fact, it was not built by man at all, but by the Son of God himself. He is the

author, the architect, the head, the cornerstone and the sustainer of the church.

We must also remember the church is made up of people, each one different, each one with different personalities, culture, background and even prejudices. Yet all members of the church have accepted Christ as their Saviour and committed themselves to follow his teaching. There were problems in the church in the New Testament and there will be problems in the church in the present. There will be disagreements and personality conflicts. Some members will be involved in sin and will have to be confronted with that sin. Some will be led off by false teachers. Yet it is still the body of the Lord Jesus Christ and he has all things in his hands. Therefore the right attitude toward the church is one of respect, encouragement, work and prayer.

When Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, our Lord accused Paul of persecuting Him (Acts 9:5). The only way Paul could have persecuted Christ was to have persecuted Christians (the church) which is what he was doing. When we criticize other Christians, we criticize Christ. When we criticize the church we criticize Christ. Christ bought the church with his blood shed on the cross (Acts 20:28). By the same token, when we build up other Christians and build up the church we are building up Christ. Let us keep a proper attitude toward the church that we may run the race set before us.

Fifth, we must have a right attitude toward factors in life over which we have no control. Some things are inevitable. As long as we live in this world we will have to deal with death, disease, hatred, ugliness, pettiness, crime, sin, storms, accidents and everything else that is common to the world in which we live. About the only thing we have real control over, is our own thoughts and actions. Any control we exert

over anything else is the direct result of self control. Why then should we worry about the inevitable, unpleasant as it may seem? Accepting things over which we have no control, and dealing with the situations as best we can, is the only way to maintain the proper attitude to run the race that is set before us.

Sixth, we must have a right attitude toward sin. Sin is transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4). That includes all unrighteousness (1 John 5:17). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Sin brings on punishment in the form of consequences in this life and eternal punishment in the world to come. The Bible teaches that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). When sin came into the world, human suffering came into the world and has not abated since that time.

We must accept the reality of sin and all the pain and suffering it causes both in our lives and those around us. James wrote concerning sin, *“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 1:14,15). We cannot afford to be tolerant of sin and allow it to edge its way into our lives for it will deceive us. Satan is a master of deceit as is shown in his persuading of Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden.

It was for our sin that Christ suffered and died on the cross. If nothing else portrays the power of sin, that event should stamp in our memories forever just how powerful sin really is. To maintain the proper attitude we must have the right attitude toward sin.

In Summary

Attitude is a choice. We cannot decide most issues in life such as the weather, world events, sickness, disease, death, taxes — and many other things, but we

can decide how we are going to react to them. That is entirely up to us. When a person is baptized, that is the starting gun of the 'race set before us.' It is not an easy race for we must run according to the rules our Lord set out for us. There will be exhaustion, disappointment, discouragement, offense and sufferings of every stripe. But there will also be joy, happiness, peace, good will, friends and family.

And many times, the only thing that determines whether a thing is good or bad, is our attitude. Yes, the race demands that we keep a proper attitude, and with God's help we can do that!

Chapter 18

Overcoming Persecution In Running The Race

Kenneth Burleson

Introduction

God never promised that the Christian race would be easy. As a matter of fact, He warned of difficulties. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned His disciples of persecution to come.

¹¹Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹²Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before me (Matt. 5:11-12).

The inspired apostle Paul said, “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Tim. 3:12). Those who live faithful Christian lives shall be persecuted by those from without the body and, yes, from some within the body. The persecution may not reach that of taking ones life, but one can be persecuted in many different ways. Friends turn their backs upon you, society considers you an outcast, family will shun you and etc. One who lives a dedicated, consecrated, godly life shall be spoken against, lied about, ridiculed, put down, become the brunt of jokes, accused of being a radical, harassed, and such like. We

are to consider Christ. *“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin”* (Heb. 12:3,4).

It is not a matter of we may or might suffer persecution, we shall. The reason one is not persecuted is because he is not living a faithful Christian life.

In running the race it is necessary to overcome persecution. If one cannot overcome persecution he will be overcome by it. The race must be run with patience.

Some Things To Lay Aside In Order To Overcome Persecution In Running The Christian Race

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). In this passage the author says to *“lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”*

“Every weight.” This is sin in general. Every sin must be laid aside. The works of the flesh must be laid aside.

¹⁹*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God* [Gal. 5:19-21].

This does not give an exhaustive list of all the sins that must be laid aside. Any sin weakens our ability in overcoming persecutions. It will cause us to give in and turn away from the cause for which we are working, the cause of Christ. Apostasy preaches the message, "There is nothing to it."

²⁰For 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. ²¹For 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. ²²But 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 the wallowing in the mire [2 Peter 2:20-22].

Lukewarmness renders one incapable of overcoming persecution. A little for the Lord and a little for Satan. ¹⁵"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15,16). When one uses God's name in vain he falls into the hands of the persecutors. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" [Exodus 20:7]. Words either justify us or condemn us.

³⁴O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. ³⁵A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil

man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. ³⁶But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned [Matt. 12:34-37].

Forsaking the assembly will cause one not to be counted worthy to be persecuted by the would be persecutors. *“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.”*

“The sin.” The sin is a specific sin. The sin is that of unbelief. *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”* (Heb. 3:12). The next verse tells us what to do. *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Heb. 3:13).

If one will not lay these things aside he will not be able to overcome persecution. It takes a strong person not to give in to persecution. Sin will not allow us to be strong. The Christian race cannot be run successfully with sin weighing us down.

Some Things We Must Put On [Add] In Order To Be Capable Of Overcoming Persecution In Running The Christian Race

The Christian graces must be added to one's Christian life. This is part of running the Christian race. This will strengthen one to stand against the persecutors and be able to overcome.

⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and virtue knowledge; ⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸For 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. ⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [2 Peter 1:5-11].

The fruit of the Spirit is so important. Without this, no way will an individual be armed to overcome persecution. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” [Gal. 5:22,23].

The apostle Paul calls upon us to persevere in well doing. “And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we will reap if we faint not” [Gal. 6:9]. “**Well doing**” is the duty and responsibility of every Christian. We are to do good unto all men. “As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” [Gal. 6:10]. We are to stay busy working for the Lord. If we are busy for the Lord we will not have time for other things to rob our time. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we

should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8). Good works are to be maintained. There is no better example than that of Christ. He went about doing good. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). We are to follow His steps. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Christians are to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world."

¹³Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. ¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:13-16).

"And let us not be weary." The idea is to persevere in well doing. There are many things to help us grow weary in well doing. (1) Persecution. "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:21). (2) Cares and riches. "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the

word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). Many have become weary. They have proven to be stony ground. (1) The Galatians. "He did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth" (Gal. 5:7)? (2) Demas. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world; and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia" (2 Tim. 4:10).

"For in due season we shall reap if we faint not." This is an incentive for continuing in well doing. The law of sowing and reaping is given in Gal. 6:7,8. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The key is, "if we faint not." (1) One will reap peace. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). (2) Happiness. "Happy is that people, that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15). (3) Especially eternal life. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46).

What Jesus Said About Persecution

As a faithful disciple you will be persecuted, but happy or blessed are ye.

¹⁰Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:10-12).

This can be seen in Mark 10:30. *“But he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”* Jesus said, pray for them that persecute you. *“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”* [Matt. 5:44]. Jesus said there would be those who would be offended by persecution. *“Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended”* [Matt. 13:21].

Jesus Suffered Persecution

After the birth of the Lord, Herod led the persecution against Him. Herod had all the children two years old and younger killed in Bethlehem and the surrounding area. Joseph and Mary fled into Egypt with the child until Herod was dead.

The various sects of the Jews led a constant persecution against the Lord. They tried every way to trap Him but were put into difficult situations by the Lord's answers and His questions for them.

The mock trials and scourging received by our Lord were forms of persecution. Some people even died from such scourgings.

They finally put Him to death on the cruel cross. A most horrifying death, the death by crucifixion. The death of our Lord was for you and for me. It was a vicarious death.

Saul Was A Persecutor, But Became Paul The Persecuted

Saul A Persecutor. Saul was declared to be a persecutor by numerous passages. The stoning of Stephen can be read about in Acts chapter seven. One in particular involved in Stephen's death was Saul of Tarsus. *"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles"* [Acts 8:1]. Paul said he persecuted them even unto strange cities. *"And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities"* [Acts 26:11]. Paul persecuted the church of God. *"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"* [1 Cor. 15:9]. Paul had wasted the church. *"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it"* [Gal. 1:13]. Paul had zealously persecuted the church. *"Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"* [Phil. 3:6]. Paul makes a statement regarding the kind of life he lived before he became a Christian *"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief"* [1 Tim. 1:13]. Jesus appeared unto Saul on the road to Damascus.

³And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined around about him a light from heaven: ⁴And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him,

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me: ⁵and he said, who art thou, Lord? and the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. ⁶And 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 9:3-6).

The account of Saul's conversion is given in Acts chapter nine and verses ten through eighteen. Paul gives an account of it in Acts twenty two and verses twelve through sixteen.

Paul the persecuted. Paul said the Jews sought to kill him. *"For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me"* (Acts 26:21). Paul and Barnabas were persecuted. *"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts"* (Acts 13:50). Paul said he had been persecuted but not forsaken. *"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed"* (2 Cor. 4:9). Paul was persecuted from city to city. *"Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me"* (2 Tim. 3:11). Those who killed Christ and the prophets now persecuted Paul. *"Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men"* (1 Thess. 2:15). Paul uses his persecution as proof that he was not preaching circumcision. *"And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased"* (Gal. 5:11). Paul made the statement that none of these things

moved him. *“But none of the these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God”* [Acts 20:24]. Some of the things that did not move Paul. (1) Bonds and affliction he would receive. *“Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me”* [Acts 20:23]. (2) He was stoned in Lystra and left for dead. *“And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead”* [Acts 14:19]. (3) Beaten and cast into prison in Philippi [Acts 16:19-24]. (4) The Jews of Asia stirred a mob against Paul in Jerusalem [Acts 21:27-40]. (5) He was imprisoned in Rome [Acts 28:16-31]. (6) All of the things in 2 Cor. 11:23-28 did not move him. I believe the use of 2 Cor. 11:23-28 is appropriate to close a study of Paul’s persecutions and trials.

²³Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸Beside those things

that are without that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Other Examples Of Persecutions

Time nor space will allow the mentioning of all those who were persecuted. But some will be named. The people of God have always suffered persecution. Persecution shall continue as long as there are faithful children of God. It is an honor to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name”* [Acts 5:41].

Job was persecuted. *“But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me”* [Job 19:28]? The loss of family and possessions, Job 1. Smitten with boils, Job 2. Consider Job’s reaction to it all. (1) The loss of family and possessions.

²⁰Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped. ²¹And said naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. ²²In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly [Job. 1:20-22].

(2) Satan smote him with boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

⁹Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. ¹⁰But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall

we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips [Job 2:9,10].

James made mention of the patience of Job. *“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” [James 5:11].*

Joseph was persecuted by his own fleshly brothers. The providence of God worked in this, in bringing about the well being of Joseph’s family. Joseph was a man of great character. A man of virtue and purity (Gen. 39:1-23).

David was persecuted by various ones. *“O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me” [Psalm 7:1]. “My times are in thine hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me” [Psalm 31:15].*

Jeremiah, one among many prophets, was persecuted. *“Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: Let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction” [Jer. 17:18]. “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayer and murderers” [Acts 7:52].*

Peter and John were put in hold [Acts 4:3]. They were told not to speak any more in the name Jesus (Acts 4:18). The reaction of Peter and John was clear. ¹⁹*“But Peter and John answered and said unto*

them whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. ²⁰For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” [Acts 4:19,20].

What Should Our Attitude Be Toward Persecution

We will, if we remain faithful, suffer persecution. *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” [2 Tim. 3:12].*

We must not allow persecution to move us. Paul was not, and there were reasons behind his not being moved. We need to have the same characteristics. (1) Paul did not count his life dear.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God [Acts 20:24].

We know that there is something far better for the faithful after this life. *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” [2 Cor. 5:1].* (2) *“That I might finish my course” [Acts 20:24].* Paul had not finished the course at this time but looking forward to it. He later writes the following.

⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,

shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [2 Tim. 4:7,8].

There is the danger of not finishing.

²⁰For 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. ²¹For 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. ²²But 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 [2 Peter 2:20-22].

We must not quit in the middle nor near the end. We must remain faithful until death. We must be willing to be faithful unto death [Rev. 2:10]. This means if the persecution is to the point of putting us to death we must not vacate the cause of Christ.

Conclusion

There have been many who have gone before us that suffered persecution. Strength can be gained through persecution. “*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*” [Gal. 6:9]. We must learn to accept persecution and not be moved by it. Use it to the gaining of strength for the cause of Christ.

Chapter 19

The Race Demands An Unwavering Faith

Joe Gilmore

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven; whereof I, Paul am made a minister [Col. 1:23].

Paul admonishes the brother at Colosse to “continue in the faith” (Col. 1:23). But what is the faith? The Bible speaks of those who “were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Luke says, “And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5). Paul said, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). Jude exhorted Christians contend for the faith (Jude 3). But those scriptures do not tell us what the faith is. Paul declared that he “preacheth the faith which once he destroyed” (Gal. 1:23). What did Paul preach when “he preached the faith?” To the Corinthians Paul said, “Moreover, brethren, I preached unto you, the **gospel** which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand” (1 Cor. 15:1). Hence we see “the faith” is the doctrine, word or gospel of Christ. There is but “one faith” or message that must be preached today. Paul preached “the gospel of Christ.”

1. "The Gospel Of Christ"

"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" [Rom. 1:16].

After the Saviour had taught His apostles for three and one half years of his coming kingdom, and had done many wonderful and miraculous things in their midst to demonstrate His divinity and authority, he died upon the cross. He was raised the third day from the dead, and before His ascension back to heaven He appeared to the apostles again and said *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* [Mark 16:15]. And why? Because *"it is the power of God unto salvation."* Hence whatever the gospel is, it is something that the Lord wants preached to every creature, and when heaven is interested in a message being told to all the peoples of earth, we may be assured that it is something wonderfully worth while.

2. What Is The Gospel Of Christ?

The word "gospel" means "good news," "glad message," or "joyful tidings;" but what good news is connected with the gospel of Christ? Paul said,

¹Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures [1 Cor. 15:1-4].

The good news of the gospel of Christ is expressed clearly in this passage in the five words, "Christ died for our sins." He took our place; He died in our stead; He became our sin offering. As God's prophet expressed it,

⁵But 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. ⁶All 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 [Isa. 53:5-6].

Paul said also, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" [Rom. 5:8].

The gospel comes to us through the word of God. Peter said, "*But the word of the lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*" (1 Peter 1:25). Therefore, James said, "*...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*" [James 1:21]. Thus we can see that the Gospel and the Word are equivalent. But the Word and the truth are also equivalent. Jesus said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). Again the Lord said, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). Therefore, it follows that the Gospel, the Word and the Truth are all equivalent.

Today in religious circles we hear often the expressions "joining the church," "getting religion" and other unscriptural phrases. But Peter said, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). That is, we should speak in scriptural terms, in the language of the scriptures, and "call Bible things by Bible names." The expressions "obeyed the gospel" [Rom. 10:16], and "obeying the truth" [1 Peter 1:22] are Bible terms. Therefore, when we speak of a sinner's

obedience to the Lord in the act of conversion, let us use these Bible expressions.

3. The Gospel Is God's Only Power To Save

In Romans 1:16, Paul declares that "*the gospel of Christ*" is "*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*" He does not say that the gospel is "a power," or "one power," or "some power," but he very definitely affirms that it is "the power" of God unto salvation; hence, the only power which God exerts in the salvation of the lost. Therefore without the gospel of Christ there is no salvation. You might improve the civic and moral conditions of your city, state or nation. You might feed the hungry, clothe the naked and extend sympathy to the broken-hearted. But if you fail to carry to these people the gospel of Christ, and if they never hear it from any other source, they will die, and like the rich man in torment, lift up their eyes in eternal misery. And why? Because "the gospel of Christ" is "the power of God unto salvation." So without the gospel of redeeming grace you are without hope and without God. It matters not about your political or social standing, nor your financial prominence, nor your professional prestige. You may live in a palace, you may exercise authority over your fellow men; but unless you hear, believe and obey the gospel of Christ, you will never be permitted to pass through the pearly gates and walk the streets of gold in the sweet by and by. God does not have class distinction. Every man, woman, boy or girl if saved at last, will be saved by their obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ; or if lost at last, it will be by their disobedience to the gospel.

But when does the gospel save? To the brethren at Rome Paul said, "*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" (Rom. 6:17-18). But when were they "made free from sin?" When they "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered" them. Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit..." (1 Peter 1:22). Thus we can see that there is no power in the gospel of Christ apart from obedience. There is power in a locomotive, but not until it is in gear. So we must get "in gear" with the gospel. There is no "good news" in the death of Christ for those who will not obey His gospel, and thus appropriate to themselves the efficacy of the shed blood of the Saviour. Paul declares that Christ "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

The gospel of Christ will not only save us from past sins, but it will preserve us unto eternal salvation if we continue to obey the Lord and walk in the light of his Word. Peter said, "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:4-5). But what is "the power of God?" In Romans 1:16, Paul tells us that "the gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation." So it is not enough to obey the gospel for the remission of the sins that are past, but we must continue to obey it in order to receive the crown of eternal life. Thus John said, "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" (1 John 1:7). This word "cleanseth" is a verb of the present tense which denotes continued action. Thus the meaning in this passage just read is that if we continue to live in obedience to the light which the gospel shines in our pathway, we have an unbroken fellowship with

one another, and the blood of Christ continues to cleanse us from every sin.

4. The Origin Of The Gospel Of Christ

The gospel never came from the mind of man. Paul said, *“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of men is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”* [Gal. 1:11-12]. Though Paul was not one of the original Twelve, yet the gospel was revealed unto him by Jesus. The Master trained his apostles in this gospel for about three and one half years. After commissioning them to *“Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,”* He then charged them to go into the city of Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit, for said Jesus, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth”* [John 16:13]. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the first Pentecost immediately following the resurrection of Christ. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit these chosen apostles have brought to us the gospel of Christ as penned upon the pages of the new Testament. Paul said,

¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual [1 Cor. 2:12-13].

To Timothy, Paul’s son in the gospel, he said, *“And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who*

shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). The gospel of Christ as preached by Paul came from Christ to Paul, from Paul to Timothy, and from Timothy to faithful men who have taught others. Thus the gospel has reached us through the ministry of faithful men, guided by the protecting power of God, and today we can study and preach that same gospel as preached by Paul, Peter, James and John. How long will it last? Peter tells us in these words: "*But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*" (1 Peter 1:25).

The curse of heaven rests upon those who would preach another gospel. Paul said, "*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*" (Gal. 1:8). This is strong language, and it makes us tremble at the tremendous responsibility that rests upon a gospel preacher. For if he preaches any other than that which Paul preached, or even if he perverts that gospel, the wrath of heaven abides upon him. Every man, therefore, that rises in the pulpit ought to feel that great responsibility. From some pulpits of today we can hear book reviews, social ethics, politics and such like. But I am glad that such does not characterize the messages that you will hear in the pulpits among the churches of Christ. With Paul we propose also that we are "*determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2).

5. The Threefold Nature Of The Gospel

Three great facts comprise the message of the gospel. They are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Paul said to the Corinthians, "*For I delivered unto you first of 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" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). These facts are to be believed.

There are three commands to be obeyed in order that one might receive salvation from sin by the gospel of Christ. The sinner must believe the facts of the gospel — the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Jesus said, *"For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"* (John 8:24). Paul said, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him"* (Heb. 11:6). The believer is commended to repent of his sins, for Jesus said, *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). God *"now commandeth all men every where to repent"* (Acts 17:30). Then the penitent believer is commanded to be baptized *"in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* On the Pentecost that marked the beginning of the church of our Lord, Peter preached the facts of the gospel — the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Read Acts 2:22-24).

Upon believing these facts the people said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* *"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 2:37-38).

Then there are three major promises of the gospel to be enjoyed by those who obey the gospel of Christ. Two of these promises, *"remission of sins"* and *"the gift of the Holy Spirit"* come to those who obey the primary commands of the gospel. The third promise *"eternal life"*, comes to those who obey the Lord during the remainder of their lives, who live obediently the Christian life. Peter said, *"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"* (1 Peter 1:9). John said, *"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life"* (1 John 2:25).

6. Continue In The Faith, Gospel

If one is a genuine Christian he will continue doing these things commanded by the gospel of Christ.

Christians are to be prayerful. Much time is to be devoted to prayers. God talks to us by the Bible. We talk to God in prayers. There are some very short verses in the Bible. 1 Thess. 5:17 is one of them. "*Pray without ceasing.*" Jesus said "*we ought to pray*" (Luke 18:1). We should be doing what Jesus said "*we ought to do.*"

Christians are to be careful and diligent students of the Bible. Paul wrote to Timothy, "*study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15). To rightly divide the word of truth, we must study the Bible. We are commanded to "*search it*" (John 5:39).

To continue in the faith, Christians must be soul winners. We have been saved to save others as well as ourselves (1 Tim. 4:16). Soul winning is not a part time job.

Real Christians attend worship. They delight in going to the house of the Lord. The "*breaking of bread*" draws Christians together today (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7).

To continue in the faith is to have strong convictions. These convictions are founded upon the teaching of God's Word. Opinions must not be confused with the faith, the Word of God (John 8:32). Obedience requires exactness.

When laws have been enacted by proper authority, loyalty requires exact obedience. In civil governments the rejection of this principle produces the criminal class. This is too evident to need anything more than the simple statement. It is just as true of divine law. Jesus, having "*all authority,*" has the right to give commands, and to disobey his commands is to reject

divine authority. This can be no trivial matter when considered in view of the eternal consequences involved.

Every command is obeyed by doing neither more nor less than just what it says. Many other things can be done, some indifferent and some in obedience to other laws, but nothing is obedience to any particular law unless it is exactly the thing or things that law requires. In other words, a command cannot mean more nor less than just what it says. It means precisely what the words mean that are used to express that command. All words in a command are to be taken in their ordinary literal sense. Otherwise there would be no way to know just what the law required. The Bible abounds in figurative language, but commands are given, and must be given, in plain meaning of the words used. This is necessary to avoid confusion or misunderstanding of duty.

A single example will illustrate the lesson on exact obedience. Naaman "*dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God*" (2 Kings 5:14). Seven dips were required, and they were to be in the river Jordan. Anything less or more than seven, any number at any other place, would have been disobedience to that particular command. Dipping five times would have fallen two short of the required number; dipping eight times would have added an extra for which he had no authority. He might have failed to do it at all under different circumstances, or have dipped forty times for any other purpose, but that would have been disobedient to the command given. It required just seven dips — no more, no less. Other dips may have been innocent enough under other circumstances, but they could not be offered as obedience to this command. When the prophet said "in the Jordan," dipping at some other place would not do. Things morally right, or legally right, under other conditions, do not conflict with obedience to any appropriate law,

but each and every law is obeyed by doing exactly what it requires.

Christians are concerned about helping the poor and unfortunate. If we fail to respond to the cries of them who need our help, heaven will not be our home (Matt. 25:31-46).

Genuine Christians do not attempt to shun individual responsibility. There are duties to perform and burdens to bear. Yet these duties and burdens will be light and easy to bear because "*We are labourers together with God*" (1 Cor. 3:9).

7. Conclusion

If you are not a Christian, then believe the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; obey the commands of the gospel, **believe** in Jesus Christ, **repent** of your sins, **confess** faith in Jesus, and be **baptized** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; then you will enjoy the promises of the gospel of Christ providing you continue in the faith!

Chapter 20

The Hindrance Of Discouragement And How To Overcome It

Dean Buchanan

Not long after becoming a Christian, I decided that I might be disappointed at times, but that I would never permit myself to become discouraged. This simple distinction between two words that are similar in definition has made a definite impact on my ability to deal with very difficult situations that have arisen as I have “run the race set before me.”

Discouragement is the negative form of the word “courage” which is defined as, “1) the attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult or painful, instead of withdrawing from it, 2) quality of being fearless or brave...courage of one’s convictions.” (The New World Dictionary by Webster).

Discouragement, then, is the noun form of the word discourage which means to deprive of courage, hope or confidence; to dishearten, to advise or persuade a person to refrain; to prevent or try to prevent by disapproving or raising objections or obstacles.

Discouragement is one of the hindrances to Christians as we run the race set before us, one of the weights that we must lay aside in order that we may run that race. So let us look at some ways in which we can remove that hindrance and lay aside that weight.

When a person is baptized and begins trying to live life as a Christian, there is a very high level of cheerfulness, good feelings and peace within the heart of that

individual. After all, their sins have been forgiven and they stand justified in the sight of God and his Son Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is a powerful and wonderful thing, especially when it is God doing the forgiving. The burden of guilt resulting from those sins has been lifted and one is free from the bondage of that sin. They feel good about themselves and the world in which they live. And, that is the way people who have been saved should feel. This is evident from the example of the treasurer from Ethiopia who, after being baptized, "*went on his way rejoicing*" (Acts 8:39). Now the Bible does not tell us what happened to the man after he arrived back home with his new found faith in Jesus Christ. Since he was a human being, it is safe to assume that if he lived very long, he faced disappointment and discouragement.

To avoid discouragement we must strengthen our faith daily. Notice this is a daily task, the reason being that we are faced with things that could discourage us on a daily basis. Faith is the foundation of Christianity. "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:15,16). "*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). Many other passages in the New Testament set forth faith as being necessary to our salvation.

This faith we must have in God and in his Son Jesus Christ is a living faith which means it goes beyond simple mental agreement to the fact of the existence of God and the sonship of Christ. It moves us to action in every facet of our lives. James addressed this concept when he said,

¹³*Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue*

there a year, and buy and sell and get gain: ¹⁴Whereas 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. ¹⁵For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (James 4:13-15).

Our faith determines how we approach our jobs, how we do our work, how we treat our neighbor, how we treat our family and how we look at ourselves and the things we do.

We must remember that Christ is the object of our faith and not make the mistake that many have made in placing their faith in the church where they worship or other Christians. To have our faith in Christ means that regardless of where we live, or work, or what kind of people may be around us, or what kind of situation or circumstances we find ourselves in, we will be faithful to Him and not become discouraged. People, even other Christians, will fail us and circumstance will change, but, *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever”* (Heb. 13:8).

To strengthen our faith daily we must pray, giving thanks to God and asking Him for the strength we need to face discouragement and overcome temptation to sin. The business world knows the value of good communication as being the life blood of a successful venture in their highly competitive world. Prayer is communication with God and when we do it correctly, confessing our weaknesses and our faults, and telling our Father of our hopes and aspirations and what we are trying to do for Him as we ask his daily guidance, we have that inner peace of knowing that He knows us and we know that He knows us.

Prayer is an admission that we need God; that we need his strength, his love, his help, his guidance and most of all, his forgiveness. This last one is the thing

that gives us that peace for which we all strive in a world of confusion. Only by keeping a proper perspective on our relationship with God will we be able to strengthen our faith daily as we should (cf. Psalm 8).

To strengthen our faith daily we must study our Bible diligently. *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word or truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15). The Bible is God’s communication to man. He has revealed to us everything we need to know to be saved and live life as he would have us live. *“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, throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Beyond all the daily prayer and daily Bible study, we must put our faith to work for us at home, in the work place and every where we go, for only by actually living our faith will we ever make it stronger. We are all familiar with the fact that as we use our physical bodies, our muscles become stronger. It is not enough to read about exercise and the different ways we can get that exercise. We must actually exercise our bodies in order to get the benefits of our knowledge. Our spiritual well being is no different. We must put our faith into use every day if we hope to make it stronger and avoid discouragement.

To avoid discouragement we must maintain right priorities in our lives. That means putting God first in all that we do. Christ will have no place but first in our lives.

²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come

after me, cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26, 27).

Without God first in our lives, nothing will be as it should be. He is the one that gives order and sense to this world and keeps it right side up.

To put God first in our lives means that everything we think, say and do, is referenced to Him and His eternal will and purpose. We can so develop our spiritual lives that we will be doing most things as God would have us do them without thinking much about it. This way of life will be 'second nature' to us. But to live this way means that we must be in continual communication with him through prayer and study of His Word.

We should never forget that this world was created by God as a dwelling place for man. Everything God created was good (Gen. 1:31). Therefore we expect there to be much beauty in the world and as we look about us we are certainly not disappointed. In nature itself, the mountains, the oceans, the prairies, the heavens and all that God has given us, from the tiniest flower to the largest tree, it is all beautiful as He created it. And, God intended for man to enjoy all of His creation. But heaven is more beautiful. Read the book of Revelation and the description John offers of his visions of heaven concerning their beauty and glory. So while we enjoy this world, remember, the best is yet to come.

We must remember that people are more important than things. Jesus came into the world to "*seek and save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). He gave us his word to accomplish that salvation. "*He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him, the word than I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (John 12:48). "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also*

to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). It was for the benefit of man that the law was given.

Jesus addresses this fact. *“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath”* (Mark 2:27,28). The word was given to get us to heaven, not to keep us out of that eternal abode. Had man not needed saving, the Word would never have been given. Now if man is more important than the law, certainly there is no other thing that would be more important than people, especially material things.

To avoid discouragement we must always keep the ‘big picture’ before us. The big picture is life, death and eternity. These things form the backdrop against which everything must be set. These are facts of absolute truth. We must live and we must die. Eternity awaits everyone. Failing to keep these matters before us is inviting discouragement of the strongest sort. The length of life is not the most important thing, the kind of life we live is most important.

As long as there is sin in the world there will be suffering because sin is the cause of all human suffering. Death is part of the suffering that was brought into the world by sin (Gen. 3:16-24). Christ won the victory over death for us.

⁵⁴So 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. ⁵⁵O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

So let us consider life as the preparation time for death and death as that which opens the gate to eternity with God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Rather than avoiding thinking about death, we should consider it a normal part of our existence. The apostle Paul said, *“For I am in a strait betwixt the two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you”* (Phil. 1:23,24). Regardless of how beautiful and desirable this world is, it can never compare with that which awaits us in eternity.

To avoid discouragement we must remember the reality and power of sin. Sin is the transgression of God’s law. *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4). The same apostle further wrote, *“All unrighteousness is sin”* (1 John 5:17). Therefore, our goal must be to obey God in all that we do. It is easy to think of sin as being such things as murder, fornication, stealing and other such overt acts of disobedience. The Bible offers several extensive lists of sin in all of its different faces.

¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, ²¹Envyings, 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 (Gal. 5:19-21).

The majority of us do not commit murder. The so called ‘little sins’ are the ones that will entrap us and bring about discouragement if we aren’t careful.

Things such as jealousy, envy, pride, gossiping, spreading rumors, backbiting, nit picking, pessimism, all of which are so easy to slip into. And, the tragic thing about these sins, they often lead to more serious sins. Cain was jealous of his brother Abel because God had respect for the offering of Abel and not for the offering of Cain, so Cain, "...rose up against his brother, and slew him" (Gen. 4:8). When God asked Cain about the matter he lied about knowing where Abel was. There is no end to sin of any kind once it is begun. One sin leads to another. As the old saying goes when you tell a lie, you have to tell two more to cover up the first one.

We must remember that sin separates us from God.

¹Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ²But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1,2).

God will not tolerate sin in His presence for it is the epitome of disobedience. Thus, the only way the situation can be corrected is to have our sins forgiven by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ and that can only be done by confession of those sins.

Sin is powerful because it is attractive whether it be the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh or the pride of life, as the apostle John categorized all sin (1 John 2:15-17). We should never deceive ourselves into thinking that overcoming temptation is easy. Sin destroyed King Saul of Israel because of his pride and desire for power. Sin led King David of Israel into murder and adultery because of his lust of the flesh. Sin destroyed Ananias and Sapphira because of their desire for money. We must never forget the reality and power of sin that we may not be discouraged in running the race set before us.

To avoid discouragement we must examine ourselves daily. *“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”* (2 Cor. 4:5)? Christ did not die on the cross that we might be able to examine the lives of other people. Our own spiritual well being depends entirely on whether or not we are ‘in the faith’ in the sense that we are right with God.

The apostle John describes this as walking in the light.

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; ⁷But 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 (1 John 1:6,7).

The only way we can walk in the light where the continuing, cleansing power of the blood of Christ is found, is to be willing to examine ourselves daily concerning our lives as Christians. This is a very difficult thing to do, for most of us believe we are right. When we do something, we have a justification for it and therefore are not willing to look at any possibility that we might be wrong.

Looking into the lives of others is much easier for us, for if we can find sin in the lives of others then we tend to feel better about ourselves and we then can forget about examining our own lives. Consider the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:10-14). He thought highly of himself for not being guilty of the major sins of extortion, injustice, adultery and not being like the publican. He bragged of the good he did such as fasting and giving tithes. His problem was that he thought he could please God simply by being better than the publican. He was so

involved in looking at the bad in others he could not see the sin in his own life.

The publican, on the other hand, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but simply smote his breast and asked God to forgive him. This man realized he was a sinner and needed God's help to be saved. He could examine himself in regard to his sins. In describing the situation Christ said, *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Luke 18:14). Continually looking for sin in the lives of others leads to gossip, backbiting, and other sins of the tongue which can be some of the most vicious sins in the world.

To avoid discouragement we must keep our eyes on the goal. The goal is Christ. Our theme text points this out when it says, *"...looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"* (Heb. 12:2). Christ represents everything the Christian strives for; a faithful life in this world and eternal life in the world to come. When they were on their way to Jerusalem the last time before Christ would be crucified, Peter asked Christ concerning what was waiting for his disciples.

²⁸Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. ²⁹And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, ³⁰But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life (Mark 10:28-30).

We must not become so involved with the bad things in this world that we take our eyes off the goal. Remember that life after death is such that it cannot even be compared to any aspect of this life. The apostle Paul said it this way. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ²Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col. 3:1,2). This will help us to always keep our proper sense of perspectives as we discussed earlier in our study. Let us not be discouraged then when we cannot have the car, the house or the job we want, or when we lose some of those things we already have. As the song says, ‘Heaven will surely be worth it all.’

To avoid discouragement we must remember we cannot save the world. In fact, we cannot save anyone. Christ does the saving (John 14:6). Back several years ago the cry of many brethren who were caught up in the fad of the day, which was organized personal work programs, was to ‘take the world for Christ’ which is an impossible thing to do. The world will never be taken for Christ. The majority of the people in the world will be lost. Christ himself told us that.

¹³Enter 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; ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13,14).

Remember that the marching orders for Christians, as we run the race set before us, is to take the gospel to the world. Those that are willing to accept it should be baptized. But that is a decision that each individual will have to make for himself. We cannot force people

to obey the gospel. When we first become Christians it is difficult for us to understand why everyone who hears about Christ are not baptized immediately and perhaps one of the areas we are most susceptible to discouragement is in this very area. We have to remember that everyone did not listen to the apostles. Paul did not tarry long in the city of Athens because not many were willing to accept Christ in that great city. Even Christ had the multitudes turn away from him as he preached of repentance. So, who are we to expect that everyone that hears will obey?

To avoid discouragement we must remember that to fail does not mean we are failures. Running the race set before us, that is, living life as Christ would have us live it, is not an easy matter. There are trials and tribulations, suffering and sadness, mistakes and misery to be encountered, sometimes on a daily basis. There are times when it seems that no good will ever come our way again and that those who are not believers get along well. The prophet Jeremiah addressed this same situation centuries ago when he said, *“Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously”* [Jer. 12:1]?

When we suffer, it is difficult for us to be objective about the condition of others. It only seems that all may be bad for us and good for the evil for Christ assured us 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”* [Matt. 5:45]. So, when our efforts fail and many roadblocks are thrown in our way, remember it is the common lot of mankind that such happens. Being a failure is a lifestyle. Failing is just something that happens to the best of us once in a while.

To avoid discouragement we must remember that Christ is the judge. *“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of men made perfect”* [Heb. 12:23]. We are not God, and to presume to become the judge of men is to attempt to usurp the authority of Christ. Jesus said, *“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”* [Matt. 7:1]. We cannot judge the hearts of men for it is impossible since we cannot know the hearts of men. Only God knows the hearts of men and only He can judge men. We may know what their actions are but not their hearts.

The same is no less true when it comes to others judging us. There will always be people who think they know what we are thinking and what is in our hearts. People do that because they cannot examine themselves. When people begin to judge us they begin to talk about us and gossip. It is impossible to stop people like that. That is the kind of people that crucified Christ. They are under the influence of Satan.

To avoid discouragement we must remember that we will be criticized. Those who are not Christians will criticize us for trying to live a holy and consecrated life in the service of Him. Some of our own family who are not Christians will criticize us because of our faith. Some of those who are brothers and sisters in Christ will criticize us. Remember, Christ was and is, the most criticized person who ever lived. He was criticized by his own family, his own nation and by the world. He was sent to the cross by false witnesses hired by his own countrymen. He has been persecuted by those whom he was trying to save.

The apostles were criticized as they went about the world preaching the gospel under instructions from

Jesus himself. They were chased out of towns, arrested, beaten, and executed because they were Christians. New Testament Christians were accused of being cannibals because of their taking of the Lord's Supper and the words of Jesus spoken when he instituted that Supper. They were accused of having sex orgies because of their "love feasts" which were nothing more than what we call pot luck dinners.

When criticism comes, and it will come, remember that as long as we are right with God, what men say cannot hurt us. We must be sure we please Him, desire to please others with the realization we cannot do that all of the time. No one can make us angry unless we give them permission. Criticism is almost always a disguised compliment.

To avoid discouragement we must not participate in sins of the tongue. Gossip is one of the finest tools of the devil. It may be defined as idle talk and rumors about the private affairs of others. Jesus said, *"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"* (Matt. 12:36,37). The observation has been made that great minds talk about ideas; mediocre minds talk about things and little minds talk about people. To become a gossip means that we become unrighteous judges of other people for we cannot know their heart.

To participate in gossip includes those who are disposed to listen to gossip as well as those who are doing the gossiping. If the gossips had no audience they would have to quit gossiping.

To avoid discouragement we must keep our hope alive. Paul wrote, *"And now abideth faith, hope and love these three, and the greatest of these is love"* (1 Cor. 13:13). Paul told the Ephesians that before

Christ came they were without hope in the world. *“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”* (Eph. 2:12). Having hope is equated with being positive and optimistic which some people laugh at for the majority of the world is negative, cynical and pessimistic. Christians have no reason to be negative and pessimistic.

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... ³⁷Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35,37-39).

Finally, to avoid discouragement let us remember the words of the Bible. *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Phil. 4:13). *“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”* (Rom. 8:28). *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18). *“Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths”* (Prov. 3:5,6).

Whether or not we become discouraged is a choice we make. And while there may be things we let influence us, the responsibility is ultimately ours. Just remember, no one can discourage us unless we give them permission. No situation or circumstance can discourage us unless we let it. Stay in the race, keep our eyes on Jesus Christ and we will not be discouraged.

Chapter 21

The Challenge Of Maintaining Our Personal Bible Study And Prayer

John 5:39-40; 2 Tim. 2:15

Gary Colley

We commend the great theme and subjects chosen for this lectureship program 1996! Each year the elders of Garfield Heights church of Christ, and the fine director of the lectureship, Charles Blair, seem to choose extremely helpful themes for the needs of all. The lectureship books produced by this congregation for many years, along with the tapes and videos, will edify brethren for as many years as are to come. We commend the pure teaching from the Bible as the only source of Truth (John 17:17) to every soul who looks for fullness of life here and for that eternal city of Heaven after while!

Our Greatest Need Today

Surely it is an undisputed fact in the minds of thinking people, that the Bible is the greatest need of our day, and more needed now than ever before! Although we know that wickedness has existed from the time of Eden in the world, yet people now as never before have a crying need to return to the precepts of the Bible and to obey its oracles (1 Peter 4:11)! It does seem that there are more allurements and more ways to sin now than ever before! The departures from the principles of the Bible by the world has not made us

stronger and better, but has rather brought a disgusting decay in morals, disarray to families, and consequently a departure from the peace and tranquility once enjoyed in our nation. We agree with the Psalmist in saying, "*Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah*" (Psalm 33:12).

Cause Of The Problem

Let us think together for a moment. What is the world leaving off today that caused our nation at one time to be great and even to be called a Christian nation? The answer is simple though not simplistic! Our people have given their interest to worldly pursuits and mundane pleasures, and have ceased to study the Bible and pray (Luke 8:11-15). Without God speaking to us through His Holy Word, and without us speaking to Him through the avenue of prayer, we should not be surprised our personal welfare and that our nation is in deep trouble (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:17)! But for those who will to do so, we can return to the study of His book and praying without ceasing, and thereby restore our favor with God and for the good of our families (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Peter 3:9; Rev.2:5).

The Challenge

The challenge must be seen to be an individual, personal one before we will be helped! It is not really a matter of what we think others should or should not be doing in public and private times of worship, in the study of God's Word, and prayer with their families, but what are we as individuals are doing? Galatians 6:5 says concerning responsibility, "*For every man shall bear his own burden.*" Hence, though we are very busy, and often caught up in the bustle of this world, when are we going to make the time to study God's book and commune with Him in prayer? It can be

done, but it becomes a matter of priority and a challenge to our better thinking! Remember the words of our Lord Jesus as they still ring out to us, and apply to each generation, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33).

Importance Of Building Faith

If our God is Jehovah, and He is; if He has given us His revelation and made it within our easy reach to know it, and He has; would He be just to give us His richest blessings while we are ignoring His Word and failing to go to Him in prayer (1 John 3:22)? We must study and follow the Bible, which is His Word and the only revelation of His Will given us today (1 Cor. 2:9-11). We must not be fickle in trying to hold to the world and God at the same time if we expect Him to be mindful of us (1 Kings 18:21; 1 Peter 3:12). The Bible gives the answers for all of our problems connected with sin and how to overcome it (Psalm 119:105; 1 Cor. 10:12-13)! It is the only way to reestablish the fullness of salvation’s joy to the hearts of both alien sinners and those unfaithful children of God who need to renew their vow to the Lord.

God Knows His Creature

God made man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). Man has within him that eminence from God, which is the inner man, the seat of compassion, and a heart with which to show affection. This is what is restored to man in purity when he obeys the Gospel through faith, repentance, confession and baptism into Christ (Col. 3:1,10). God knows man to be a thinking, intelligent and loving being. He has given a book of directives, promises, love, grace, mercy, law, and discipline, perfectly adapted to man and for all of his

needs. But without study and prayer, man cannot benefit from the knowledge necessary to honor and please his Creator, and thereby save his soul.

God Knows Man's Needs

Not only does Jehovah know all about man, He also knows all concerning his needs! The Bible is a great library of sixty-six books, thirty-nine divisions in the Old Testament, and 27 departments in the New. It proclaims that sin is the basis of man's problems, and defines sin as transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Though man was made full grown in the beginning, and in perfection physically, mentally, and spiritually, he was still a free moral agent and subject therefore to leaving the way of his Creator. It was Satan, who entered the Garden to tempt the woman and she the man, that interrupted the peace and tranquility of God's paradise made for man on earth! By the same three avenues used then to introduce sin into the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, so Christ was tempted (Matt. 4:1-11), and John by inspiration informed us that today Satan uses the same means of causing men to transgress God's Law (1 John 2:15-17).

Sin Is The Separating Agent

Since Satan tempted and seduced Eve, and she Adam, sin has been the disturber and separator of mankind from God (Isa. 59:1-2)! All heartaches, sickness, sorrow, disappointments, family problems, and the numberless number of cemeteries filled with death over our world, can be traced to the beginning of the entrance of sin into the world! It seems it would be to mankind an imperative that we study the Will of God, the Bible, which not only declares the origin, degradation and ruin by sin, but also the way of escape, the

blue print of our purpose, duty, and destiny, the revealed plan of salvation given by God through Jesus Christ, by which sin can be removed and harmony can again reign in our lives! The “word of reconciliation” by which God allows us to make friends again with Himself, is the only means provided which brings lost man back into the favor of God [Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:17-21]. Man’s will in submission to Satan that brought sin and death, must be changed to man’s submission to the Will of God in order to return.

One Book Will Judge The World

The wise man Solomon said, “*And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end: and much study is a weariness of the flesh*” [Ecc. 12:12]. The Library of Congress is said to contain over 327 miles of bookshelves, and it continues to grow daily! Many are the directions to which these books would lead the mind and body of human beings if they are followed. Some are excellent and very helpful, while others are evil, disgraceful, and degrading to mankind! But no book has ever elevated man and woman in the same way as the Bible. Though there are many helpful books in the world, for every ray of truth they contain, we should be aware that they are indebted to the One book the Bible! The Bible continues to be the best seller among all books for all time, indicating that the people in every age of the world have recognized its importance in the world. No other book even comes close to its claims! It, and it alone, will judge all inhabitants of the earth in the last day. But the Bible makes and will keep that claim [John 12:48; Rev. 20:12]! Since God from the beginning of creation has shown His sovereign right to judge His creatures, and since He has given us the Book by which we shall be judged, how important it is for us to study God’s unequalled, holy, and Heaven-breathed message [2 Tim.

3:16-17)! No one who reads, studies, and obeys this book of books, has any reason to fear a merciful and just judgment before God. What a challenge these thoughts should suggest to the sober, thinking person to maintain our personal Bible study and prayer!

The Bible Is Easily Obtained Today!

It is nothing short of wonderful that people in most lands have ready access to the Bible, in beautiful bindings, and very affordable! It is indeed a precious book divine! Take the Bible which you own and look at it! It probably has a binding of Pin Seal Morocco, printed on India Paper, and sewed with nylon thread. But this is not what makes it great! Rather, it is the fact that the Almighty God eternal has given His Will, by which we may enjoy the most abundant life here and eternally! Paul thanked God for the brethren at Thessalonica without ceasing, that, when they received from the apostles the Word of the message, even the word of God, they accepted it *“not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe”* [1 Thess. 2:13]. What a great blessing to have within our hands Heaven’s revealed Will to man! What a challenge to maintain our personal Bible study and prayer!

Earlier Centuries Not So Blessed

Easy access to the Bible was not widely available in earlier centuries of the not too distant past. Before the discovery of the printing press, the Scriptures were very laboriously copied by hand. Ten months were needed to reproduce a single copy! Obviously these volumes were far beyond the financial reach of most. They were roughly made and no doubt treasured by their possessors. History also shows that there were times when Christians were pressed by persecution. There

have been times it was considered criminal to possess a copy of the Bible! Tyrannical rulers have at different times through the ages attempted to eradicate the Bible from the earth. Many copies of the Bible have been destroyed by fire. One of the many interesting notes in the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, relates how during his boyhood days, the family Bible was fastened to the underside of a chair. His father stationed the children at the windows to watch for intruders, while the chair was turned over in his lap in order to read to the family the Holy Scriptures. How sad that some today, who have easy access to the Book of books, fail to appreciate and read the Bible! It is a great evil! And remember, *“Those who do not read have little advantage over those who cannot read.”*

Is The Bible Important?

Among the many reasons the Bible is important is found in the command from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, that it is to be preached to every creature under Heaven (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:21). For those blessed men today who have the ability to teach and preach publicly, and the honored women who have the ability to teach privately, comes the responsibility “in season and out of season” to teach and preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-4; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Tim. 2:12). This cannot be done without maintaining our personal Bible study and prayer (James 1:3). Further, however, the command to preach carries the implied command for those who hear to learn what is preached in order to their salvation (1 Tim. 4:16). Hence, there is a challenge to the lost to read, study and obey (Heb. 5:8-9).

Foundation Important For A Successful Life

It should not be forgotten that we are living in an age of skepticism! All religion is taught (John 6:44-45). The only way for us to know right from wrong, and to be sure of our present and future interest as well as our welfare beyond the grave, is to have a working knowledge of God's Word (James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1-2). Hearing the Word of God is the ground of our faith, without which none can please God and be saved. It is the only way to obtain faith, the faith which under girds our hope (Heb. 11:1,6; Rom. 10:17). Most would acknowledge that it is important and an advantage in life to know any subject of importance. But we also know that man is limited in time, which will of necessity limit what he learns on earth. Man's time is certainly too short to master every subject of importance. The real wise man then, is one who makes time to learn the only book that tells him of his origin, mission, and destiny (cf. Matt. 7:21-28)!

Basics Are Important

It is interesting to note, that the Bible is indeed the only book that gives the accurate account of man's origin in its first three chapters (Gen. 1-3), and his eternal destiny in the last three chapters (Rev. 20-22)! It may be seen further that the Old Testament, which has been removed as a law (Col. 2:14), is now intended for our "*learning and admonition*" (Rom. 15:4). The New Testament gives the saved their mission and duty on earth. All the Bible's teaching must be accepted and inducted into life, so that we may live in harmony with the Law of the Spirit of life which will allow unworthy man at last to enter into the presence of God in Heaven (Rom. 8:1-2). With these worthy goals before us, who could doubt the imperative challenge to maintain our personal study of the Book with fervent prayer! It is of

importance without parallel. But let us sound a warning: the Bible unstudied and not searched, is like the discovery of a rich gold mine, which could benefit man richly but is never worked! If a man is too indifferent and lazy to maintain personal Bible study with prayer, the greatest blessing which could ever be known to man, the Bible, is too often unstudied, undeveloped in our minds, and unworked by man's obedience! It is therefore of no use or profit when ignored or left alone! Surely study and prayer are of utmost importance so that we may profit from God's precious book, the Bible.

The Inward And Outward Nature Of Man

The Bible should be studied with a prayerful attitude since it is the only book that declares man's superiority above the animals, and points out with clarity the dual nature of our being, consisting of the inward and outward. Paul makes this point clear when he writes by inspiration (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Because of the rich love and mercy of God which Paul enjoyed through the knowledge of God's Will, he was not disheartened by the trials, persecutions, and even beatings he was called upon to endure for Christ! One could bind and fetter his outward man, but not the inward man (Acts 16:19-25). He considered himself "*crucified with Christ*" (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21). He wanted to spend his life in knowing Him, imitating Him, suffering with Him when needed, and preaching Him! This was the importance of knowing God's Will in the life of Paul. He considered his inward man "renewed," as he also held the knowledge that his outward man was "decaying." He could see in his faith that his afflictions were "light" when compared to the "weight of glory." And, he saw these afflictions as but for "a moment" when laid beside that which was "eternal!" He would willingly give up all, that the temporal, earthly, outward man might consider treasures, for the Heavenly blessings

which were not seen as yet, but were eternal. Perhaps he had the words of Christ in his eye, "*Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*" (Matt. 10:29). Christ certainly recognized the inward man, called here the soul, as of far greater importance than this outward body that is soon to go back to dust. We are exhorted by these words to also let our greatest fear be of God and not the displeasures of man. These thoughts should challenge each of us to maintain our personal Bible study and prayer daily!

We Are Commanded To Study

Man should not have to be commanded to study and understand such a wonderful book! Still, because of man's great need being supplied by God, the command is given (2 Tim. 2:15). The Bible has given the instruction of where we should read and study (John 5:39-40). Isaiah in graphic words says, "*Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah and read. No one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate...*" (Isa. 34:16). Luke describes the receptiveness of the Word at Berea in saying, "***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" (Acts 17:11). Paul instructed Timothy, "***Till*** I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13). Since this Book, the Bible, provides that only source of light and true saving faith, it is so important that all men continue to prayerfully study!

We Are Commanded To Understand

Understanding is gained when we continue to study. All can understand it alike (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10). The Psalmist writes, "***How*** sweet are thy

words unto my taste! Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:103-104). Further he said, "*The opening of thy words giveth light: It giveth understanding unto the simple*" (Psalm 119:130). To the Ephesians Paul commands, "*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17). For knowledge with understanding that is necessary to an abundant life, we must obey the command to

¹⁶Let 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. ¹⁷And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:16-17).

The Psalmist assures us that this is the person who will be happy in this world (Psalm 1:1-3)! He shows the blessed state of the righteous, because this one does not embrace the principles of the wicked, adopt the maxims of sinners, nor encourage the practices of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of Jehovah upon which he meditates day and night!

Ignorance Causes The Darkness Of Ignorance And Sin

The Bible has much to say about ignorance and the curses that it brings to man (2 Cor. 4:3-6)! How sad to see those who have the favor of God offered to them, reject His Grace and walk in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and sin, all because they will not apply themselves to learn and obey His teaching (Titus 2:11-12). Paul described those who were unenlightened by the Gospel as

¹⁸Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness [Eph. 4:18-19].

Living in sin is such a waste of time and life! The tender conscience given to us by God, may be trampled on by ignorance to the extent that it becomes calloused. Then these who reject knowledge, will give themselves voluntarily to a lifestyle that is hopeless, senseless, and shameless! Of these Paul wrote,

²¹Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [Rom. 1:21-22].

No man can know right from wrong without the Bible. Let no man deceive himself into thinking that he can live as he should without a knowledge of the Bible! Let us all be challenged to maintain our personal Bible Study and prayer!

Chapter 22

False Concepts Of Church Growth And Modern Missionary Societies

John M. Grubb

I appreciate the opportunity to have a part in this lectureship and discuss this subject. I believe it is a very important subject. There is a great desire among members of the Lord's church for the church to grow. However, there are a host of false concepts in the minds of members of the Lord's church as to methods we can use to cause the church to grow.

About 150 years ago, members of the church promoted the idea of a missionary society to try to do the work of the church in preaching the gospel to the whole world. It was opposed by a number of brethren because it did not stand upon Biblical principles. The idea of a missionary society came from denominationalism. There are some today who are trying to use the same denominational methods in promoting their doctrine. We will examine some of these efforts in this lesson.

Church Growth In The New Testament

Our Lord commanded his disciples to carry the gospel to the whole world.

*¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

hing them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:19,20).

“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” (Mark 16:15,16).

In order to have the proper concept of church growth, we need to examine the pattern for church growth — the New Testament. If we want the church to grow as the Lord teaches, the gospel must be preached! Note some Bible examples:

1. The Day of Pentecost.

³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸Then 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. ³⁹For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. ⁴⁰And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. ⁴¹Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ⁴²And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine

and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:36-42).

2. Preaching in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. *“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).*

¹And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. ... ⁴Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word (Acts 8:1,4).

3. Philip preaching in Samaria and to the Eunuch. *“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).*

³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. ³⁶And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷And 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. ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away

Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:35-39).

4. Paul's preaching in the city of Philippi.

"And a certain woman named Lydia...heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14).

³¹And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ³²And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

³³And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. ³⁴And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house (Acts 16:31-34).

5. The effect of gospel preaching in the first century. *"And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).*

6. The preaching of the gospel in Corinth.

"And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9,10).

7. Reasons why the church grew in Ephesus.

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of

three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).

8. Church growth in Asia Minor. “And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

9. Paul’s attitude toward church growth. “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). “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” (Rom. 1:16). “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

10. Because all this preaching and teaching was done, Paul could make this statement: “And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

In the above passages we learn the reason the church grew as it did was because the gospel was preached! Note again Acts 6:7: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Because the word of God increased, the number of disciples increased. If we want the church to grow, we have to be busy sowing the seed of the kingdom. Remember, “the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11).

FALSE CONCEPTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The Over-Emphasis On Numbers

One of the false concepts of church growth is that numbers are all-important. The Bible does mention numbers on occasion: *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”* [Acts 2:41]. *“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand”* [Acts 4:4]. *“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”* [Acts 5:14].

During the 1970's, there was a tremendous emphasis on “bus ministries.” Much of this effort was designed to have large numbers attending our services. This motivation alone will not accomplish the goals of growth in the kingdom. We have been too interested in counting heads rather than changing hearts. If our only goal is to fill the pews, we can accomplish this task easily. We can go to the local clothing stores and purchase a large number of “mannequins” and place them in the pews.

Denominationalism As A Pattern For Church Growth

Our brethren have looked to denominationalism for years to try to find some better way to encourage church growth. In many cases, denominationalism had already tried something and discarded it, when we then decide we should try it.

In this section of our lesson, we will notice some prominent denominational movements that have been embraced by our brethren.

COMMUNITY CHURCHES

The Willow Creek Community Church

The Willow Creek Community Church is located in the greater Chicago area. It is the largest Community Church in the United States. Some 27,000 people attend six services on Sunday. A number of our brethren have visited this place to try to learn how to grow a big church. Men such as **Lynn Anderson**, **Wayne Kilpatrick**, and **Gary Bradley, Sr.** have praised the work of this Community Church. They have urged brethren to follow the pattern of this church.

Community Churches are very popular in our country. They are churches that offer something for everybody. They offer a full range of activities for all ages. Their worship services offer entertainment that would rival any variety show on television. Their message is the message of "feeling good." Some of our liberal brethren have started Community Churches in various areas when they were unable to lead the local church of Christ into the various forms of denominationalism. This would include **Randy Mayeux** of Dallas, Texas, and **Doug Varnado**, preacher for the Hendersonville Tennessee Community Church. He is also on the faculty at **David Lipscomb University**. Yes, these churches may be growing in number, but at what price? The price is the sacrifice of the purity of truth.

DENOMINATIONAL SEMINARS

Promise-Keepers

Promise-Keepers is a denominational organization designed to promote the idea of men living up to their

responsibilities as husbands and fathers. This movement teaches error and has false teachers appearing on its programs. Many of our brethren have taken part in this movement, and the Christian Chronicle has run articles in defense of it (August and September 1995 issues).

A number of faithful brethren have written articles exposing the error of this movement. Brother O. B. Porterfield has run a number of these articles in his weekly bulletin to help warn brethren of the problems connected with Promise-Keepers.

One of the seven promises men are asked to make is: "To reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity." How can a member of the Lord's church keep such a promise? The kind of unity Promise-Keepers talks about is not biblical unity, but unity-in-diversity.

Point Man Leadership Ministries (Ridin' For the Brand)

Here is another organization headed up by a denominational preacher. Steve Farrar, of Dallas Texas, is president of an organization called "Men's Leadership Ministries." He has a program of work that he and some denominational preachers, in joint effort with some preachers, and other men of the churches of Christ, are calling "Ridin' for the Brand." Brethren have sponsored this effort, of which I am aware, in St. Louis, Missouri and Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

One of the positions of this effort is: "We believe that for the salvation of lost sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.... We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.... We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Steve Farrar was one of the speakers at the Tulsa Workshop in 1994. We will talk about Tulsa and other workshops later in this lesson.

20/20 Vision Seminars

This is another denominational effort which specializes in teaching people how to grow through small groups. The founder of this effort is Dale Galloway, founding Pastor of New Hope Church, Portland, Oregon. He is Dean of Beesen Leadership Center at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. The New Hope Church is a Community Church that has more than 500 Small Group Leaders. It has more than 475 small groups meeting throughout the greater Portland area. This seminar has a number of endorsements from denominational preachers all over the country.

Mr. Galloway is not just conducting these seminars among denominational churches. In September 1995, this seminar was conducted at the South-eastern church of Christ in Indianapolis, Indiana. Here is another example of brethren looking to denominationalism instead of the Bible to find a way to help the church to grow.

Additional Examples

In 1993, the Concord Street church of Christ, Orlando, Florida, sponsored "The Search For Significance" Seminar. In the advertizement that was used to promote this effort was this quotation: "The Search For Significance should be read by every Christian" — **Billy Graham**. Would Billy Graham give his endorsement to a book or seminar that promoted New Testament Christianity. I don't think so!

What is the standard used to determine if this seminar is of any benefit? Possibly the statement made in the ad: "Over 500,000 people have benefited (sic)

from the life-changing principles found in *The Search for Significance* book. Now at the Search for Significance Seminar you will learn how to put these principles into practice.” Of course, the reason this program is so good is because a large number of people have benefitted. The reasoning is, it has done a lot of good, therefore it must be right!

Scores of churches of Christ across the country have utilized a film series by James Dobson to teach their members how to have better families. Mr. Dobson is a non-Christian of Nazarene-Pentecostal persuasion. It used to be churches would not allow these denominational preachers to come into their buildings in person, but would allow them to come in by use of film. Many faithful brethren pointed out to those who did this, that there was basically no difference between having a false teacher in the building on film or in person. Apparently, these brethren agree. They are now allowing the false teacher to come and teach their members in person.

Obviously these seminars are having an effect. The February 1993 issue of the *Christian Chronicle* has an article which tells of the Abilene Mission Church. Their services begin with five song leaders inviting everyone to sing. Of these five song leaders, three are men and two are women. During the service, there is applause at the news of the birth of a baby whose mother had complications over the past few weeks. A Nigerian family told about how the mother was cured of cancer following prayer and fasting. Surprise, surprise, their Sunday night worship consisted of small group services.

I have the minutes of a small group minister committee meeting of a church in Arkansas dated December 12, 1993. A large committee of both men and women were to select a small group minister. In discussing the guidelines for hiring such a person, the following statement was made: “The group agreed that

the search for this small group minister was not to be confined to Churches of Christ” (emphasis mine, JMG).

As we said before, those who take part in these types of programs need to be reminded of passages of scripture that prohibit Christians from having fellowship with those outside of the fold of safety (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11; Rom. 16:17,18). They need to re-study the true meaning of Bible unity (John 17:20-22; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:3-6).

FALSE TEACHER EVANGELISM WORKSHOPS

In this section it will be impossible to discuss all of the workshops that are dominated by false teachers. We will mention a few of the more prominent ones.

The Nashville Jubilee

Since 1989, this workshop has led the way in giving false teachers a forum for their doctrines. This workshop has been a joint effort of three congregations in the Nashville area. Those three congregations were: Madison, Antioch, and Woodmont Hills. A corporate charter was even taken out in the name of Christian Jubilee, Inc. It appears that the Jubilee took on the characteristics of a missionary society. It has been said that both Madison and Antioch have dropped their sponsorship but not their support of Jubilee, leaving Woodmont Hills in charge of the 1996 program.

Speakers for the 1994 Jubilee included: Max Lucado, Lynn Anderson, Marvin Philips, Harold Hazelip, Walt Leaver, Steve Flatt, Jim Woodroof, Mike Cope, Paul Rogers, World Christian Broadcasting, Jeff Walling, G. P. Holt, and others. In 1993, there were a number of preachers who urged people to attend Jubilee: David Gaylor, Randy Becton, Harold Hazelip,

Jim Bill McInteer, Prentice Meador, Jr., Dale Randolph, Landon Saunders, Robert E. Scott, and others. (My apologies to any who feel slighted because I did not list their names.)

Tulsa Workshop

The Tulsa Workshop has been around for a long time. For years it has been one of the main voices where false teachers can go to promote their false ideas. Many of those who speak on Jubilee are also on the program at Tulsa.

Those who have spoken on this workshop include: Larry West, Marvin Philips, Jerry Jones, Jeff Walling, Rubel Shelly, Calvin Warpula, Tex Williams, Jule Miller and others. They have had a number of denominational preachers on their program such as the late Don DeWalt and the aforementioned Steve Farrar.

The Greater Northwest Evangelism Workshop (GNEW)

The GNEW is a workshop conducted in Tacoma, Washington each summer. This workshop is not well-known to most brethren. This workshop came to my attention a few years ago when I read of some faithful brethren attending this workshop to recruit workers to do mission work in Russia. Since I had not heard of this workshop, I called Ron Keever who lives in that area. Ron told me that the GNEW is the "Tulsa Workshop" of the northwest. Many of the speakers at this workshop also appear at Tulsa and Jubilee.

The 1994 GNEW speakers included: Jerry Jones, Jeff Walling, Richard Rogers, Marvin Phillips, Jule Miller, Rick Atchley, and others. Some of these same speakers are scheduled to appear in 1996. We informed these recruiting brethren about the situation in the

Tacoma area thinking they would not want to do any future recruiting there. Unfortunately they reported in a recent newsletter they were back out in that same area recruiting and training “foot soldiers” for work in Russia. Why would faithful brethren want to recruit among those who have a part in evangelism workshops that feature the leading false teachers in our brotherhood?

Heartland

Formerly known as the “Mid-America Evangelism Workshop,” this workshop is the Indianapolis version of Jubilee and Tulsa workshops.

This workshop is overseen on a rotating basis by the Westlake, Southeastern, and North Central congregations. Speakers for 1996 included Mike Cope, Rubel Shelly, Marvin Phillips, and Jim Woodroof.

Many congregations in the state of Indiana advertize and support this effort. It is most likely that a number of them are not aware of the doctrinal position of many of these speakers.

WHICH PROMOTE ERROR UNDER THE OVERSIGHT OF ELDERSHIPS

The World Bible Translation Center (WBTC)

Goebel Music recently wrote a 1,207 page book exposing the errors of this evangelistic effort. If you do not have this book, you can purchase it from brother Music for \$9.00 including postage. The book is entitled: “*Easy To Read Version, Easy to Read or Easy To Mislead.*” His address is: 5114 Montclair, Colleyville, TX 76034.

The WBTC is under the oversight of the Richland Hills church in Ft. Worth, Texas. The main work of WBTC is to print and distribute the Easy-to-Read Version (ERV).

The Easy-to-Read Version of the Bible should be one of the best versions available because it is published by a church of Christ. Unfortunately, this version is one of the least reliable versions on the market today. We cannot recommend it to anyone.

Efforts to produce this version began in 1973. Since that time the World Bible Translation Center, Inc. has been producing this version in English and a number of foreign languages. One of the reasons this version has not held true to the original languages is because those who were involved in the translation do not believe you have to translate the Bible word for word. A number of those involved in this effort hold doctrinal positions contrary to the word of God. In the translation of foreign language Bibles, non-Christians have been used to do the work.

A Sample Of Problem Verses

2 Corinthians 3:6

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

“God made us able to be servants of a new agreement from God to his people. This new agreement is not a written law. It is of the Spirit. The written law brings death, but the Spirit gives life” [*Easy-to Read Version*].

In its Preface and Introduction, the ERV uses the word “testament,” but in the text the word “agree-

ment” is used. However, a testament or covenant does not always imply agreement by both parties. Why is it all right for the translators to use this word in the preface and introduction, but it is not a proper word in the text?

The ERV says “this new agreement is not a written law.” But the New Testament is a written law! “*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*” (James 1:25). “*Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*” (Gal. 6:2). The Bible is the product of the Holy Spirit. “*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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*” (2 Peter 1:20,21). Yet this version separates the written law from the Holy Spirit saying, “*The written law brings death, but the Spirit gives life.*” This implies life will have to come through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. This is false doctrine.

Romans 16:16

Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

“When you see each other, say hello with a holy kiss. All of Christ’s churches (groups of believers) say hello to you” (*Easy-to Read Version*).

Here is the passage which mentions “churches of Christ” in the New Testament. The ERV has “Christ’s churches (group of believers).” In the Russian and Hindi foreign language versions, this verse is rendered “Christian churches.” The word “Christian” refers to

the individual member (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). It is not a scriptural name for the church Jesus built!

It is impossible to deal with all the problem passages of the Easy-to-Read Version in this lesson. This version is actually worse than the New International Version. This version has problems in other verses as well. Romans 1:17 in the ERV teaches faith only. Genesis 6:14 teaches Noah used "cypress wood" in building the ark.

This is not a work that is worthy of the support of faithful brethren. Hundreds of churches and thousands of Christians continue to support this effort. In the December 1995 issue of World Radio News, it is reported that the ERV was distributed in stateside prisons in Louisiana and at an International Trade Fair in Uganda, East Africa.

Eastern European Missions (EEM)

In its first quarter 1996 report, EEM claims to be a work under the oversight of the Bammel Road church of Christ in Houston, Texas. However, on page three of the report, it mentions it also has a board of directors. The Chairman of the board of directors is an elder of another congregation in Dallas, Texas.

Where does the money comes from to support this work? On page two, the report says: "Funds to support this work are raised primarily from over 600 Churches of Christ, over 4,000 individuals and several foundations." The key word here is "primarily." We know not all the support comes from churches and individuals. It also comes from fund-raising dinners where people like Gene Stallings, University of Alabama football coach, speak. At least four of these dinners will be held in 1996. Another way you can support this work is to buy a cookbook prepared by WEEM which might mean "Women for Eastern European Missions." You can buy this cookbook at a "special price" for \$10.

Recently, Bob Hare a long-time missionary passed away. On the Honorarium and Memorial Gifts page of the first quarter report, there are twenty-nine denominational churches listed as donor to EEM in memory of Bob Hare. Why would denominational churches contribute to this work? Either brother Hare went to these churches to ask for support, or this report regularly goes to these churches to encourage their support, or both. As for the "foundations" mentioned, we do not know what kind of organizations they are.

In his recent book, brother Music had this quote:

"EEM is a partnership ministry with the World Bible School, Herald of Truth, World Christian Broadcasting, World Bible Translation Center, World English Institute, Russian Radio, and numerous congregations." [As quoted in *"Easy To Read Version, Easy to Read or Easy To Mislead"* (p. 325).

All of these mentioned in this paragraph are in fellowship. They are working together. Faithful brethren cannot work with them [2 John 9-11].

World Bible School

Faithful brethren have been using World Bible School material many years and much good has been accomplished through their efforts. However, there are a number of problems with World Bible School.

Jimmy Lovell was the founder of this work. Brother Lovell was a huge supporter of false teachers when he was still alive. After he passed away, Reuel Lemmons carried on his work through the "Action" magazine. Brother Lemmons was another who lent his support to false teachers. The editor of "Action" is now Tex Williams. Brother Williams appears on "false teacher workshops" all over the country. He is also an

elder at Westover Hills in Austin, Texas. This is a congregation that has three different worship services on Sunday. One worship service is the "traditional" service. The second service is "kind of in the middle." The third service has a "singing group" or chorus.

In the February 1994 issue of "Action," brother Williams announced World Bible School (WBS) would begin using the NIV in their courses. They did state their intention to continue to print the KJV "at least for a while."

There are a number of Christian Church members who grade the WBS courses. I was told of one person who had left the church to go to the Christian Church, but continued to grade her WBS courses. How do you suppose this individual would answer a question on instrumental music in worship?

When you work with any one of the above-mentioned efforts, you are in fellowship with the others. Then, when you look at the names in our brotherhood who are connected with these works, we see why we should not have anything to do with them (Rom. 16:17,18).

EMPHASIS ON THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Another false concept of church growth is the emphasis on the "social gospel." A number of denominations have been active in this area for a number of years. As with other types of methods, our brethren have tried to "copy" the methods of men.

The social gospel places emphasis on the physical and social needs of people as opposed to their spiritual needs. There is the desire to impact the society through social and political activities. This theory says if we can help a person to be better socially and politically then we have fulfilled our mission in life.

This is why over the past several years, we have had churches to build gymnasiums and get the church

involved in ball teams, scout troops, and all kinds of entertainment activities. The use of gimmicks and gadgets have taken the place of preaching the saving gospel.

MODERN MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

Background

In the last century, the matter of missionary societies was the beginning of the division that arose among the disciples, which was later aggravated by the introduction of instrumental music and additional departures from the truth.

Faithful brethren opposed the society on the basis there was no Biblical authority for it, and that it usurped the work of the church.

John T. Lewis gives the rationale for the beginning of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849.

“There never would have been any excuse for organizing a missionary society if the church had always done its duty in having the gospel preached to the world; but because the church failed to do its duty in carrying out God’s “eternal purpose” was no reason to conclude that God’s plan was a failure and that a missionary society was necessary” (*The Voice Of The Pioneers on Instrumental Music and Societies* by John T. Lewis, p. 98).

Beginning in the 1940’s, those who opposed the church supporting orphan homes or mission work from the church treasury did not oppose these efforts if the works were supported by individuals. They would even allow for a box to be placed in the back of the auditorium so that individual members could make a contribution to help a work. They did not believe that was

wrong because they did not believe those works were parallel to the missionary society. It would be wrong for a church or an individual to make a contribution to a missionary society. It is wrong because missionary societies have no scriptural authority to exist as they are supplanting the work of the church.

In the latter part of the twentieth century there are a number of "modern mini-missionary societies" that are striving to do the work of the church in preaching the gospel to the world.

In addition, when we examine the names of those who are involved in these works and discern that the majority of them are those who are helping to lead the church away from the "old paths," it gives us another reason why faithful brethren should want no part in these efforts. It is sad when we learn of faithful brethren who are cooperating with these false efforts and promoting these organizations through their newsletters.

World Christian Broadcasting Corporation [WCBC]

This particular effort began in 1976 when a number of brethren began to look into building radio transmitters in three selected areas in the world to broadcast the gospel to the lost. It was claimed by those in charge that funds were never solicited from churches, only individuals. However, churches could purchase air time to broadcast programs on the radio station. Currently, they have one of these stations up and running. It is KNLS — The New Life Station, in Anchor Point, Alaska.

This particular effort has never been under an eldership. In an October 15, 1981 editorial in the Gospel Advocate, which discussed this project, Ira North tells us why it was not designed to be under an eldership. He said: "This approach to programming

was thought to be inappropriate for an eldership to oversee." If it is the work of the church, which it is, how can it be inappropriate for elders to oversee it, since they are to oversee the work of the church?

Please note some of the names associated with this work: Jimmy Allen, Reuel Lemmons, Jimmy Lovell, Jim Bill McInteer, Prentice Meador, Jr., Bill Banowsky, and Juan Monroy.

I have a sheet dated November 16, 1987 which gives some of the programming on the station at that time. Chinese Language Programs included: World of American Music, World of Classical Music, and some Bible programs. Japanese Language Programs were: Oldies but Goodies and Jazz Music. Russian Language Programs included: World of American Music, World of Classical Music, World of Popular Jazz, and some Bible programs.

Now I can understand why they would not want this kind of programming under an eldership. Broadcasting these kinds of programs is not the work of the church. Why would brethren want to spend their money on this kind of programming?

Herald Of Truth

At one time, Herald of Truth was an excellent radio and television work. During the time that E. R. Harper was the speaker for the program, there was never a question as to the soundness of this work. However, beginning in the late 1960's there began to be some signs this effort was no longer dependable. In 1973, the Memphis Meeting was conducted with representatives of the Herald Of Truth. It became clear from the outcome of this meeting, the program could no longer receive the support of faithful brethren. It was during this period that Lynn Anderson made the comment that he believed the church was a "big, sick, denomination." In a recent Wineskins article he stated he still believed

this to be true. Back in 1973, he tried to say brethren just misunderstood him.

In speaking about the Herald of Truth in an April 1992 Vigil editorial, Bobby Duncan said:

“Here is something that has grown from a work of the church into a human organization receiving funds from churches, sponsoring other programs such as seminars on family, and even sending out its own missionaries into foreign countries. If what is being done in this case is scriptural, then those who opposed the American Christian Missionary Society a century and a half ago were in error, and we should all cease our opposition to it.”

Not only should these efforts not be supported by churches, they should not be supported by individuals either. They are not doing the work of the Lord according to the New Testament pattern. Again, pay special attention to the people who are involved in and recommend these works.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. AMAGONA DOMAWILL

by Jim Waldron

The following is an unbelievable story of an interview between a religious editor and a certain doctor named above. Sadly the truth is worse than this fiction.

Editor: Please, Doctor Domawill, tell us about the work of the organization which you and others began just a short time ago.

Doctor: Oooh, yes sir! Our organization is in the forefront of getting the gospel to the lost and dying world. Do you realize there are 5.5 billion people in this

world, and we must preach to them. Yes sir, we are in the forefront.

Editor: Yes I see, but could you tell us more about your organization itself?

Doctor: We are getting the gospel to the former Iron Curtain countries by radio, television, the printed page, and we also train and send out teachers and missionaries. We are in the forefront.

Editor: But doctor how is your group set up? How is it organized?

Doctor: Set up? Well, we are known as "The Great Society Evangelistic Fellowship" and we have a board of directors who are duly organized and incorporated, with one of our officers over each major department. We have a radio department, a television department, a printing and translation department, and a department for training and sending out teachers and missionaries.

Editor: Could you give us some specific examples?

Doctor: Be happy to! We sponsor a radio program in Lower Seevir, and a television program in Upper Yook. We also train and send teachers and missionaries to outer Vaastok and we are getting thousands of contacts from our newspaper ads in Inner Zahpat.

We have even begun a Bible University at the Astanofka Aftoboosa, but our most prized project is the printing of my very own translation of the Bible called, AMAGONA WATADWNYAFATH in the Republic of the Stayankatakci.

Editor: But doctor, is this the work of a local church?

Doctor: A church? No! No, indeed! We are what you might call a semi-church or maybe an ultra-church organization. It's true, some on our board are elders in

various congregations, but elders are not over this work. Yet, I'm proud to tell you that I am not only the president of "The Great Society Evangelistic Fellowship," but I am a church bishop myself. No, we are not the church.

Editor: Then you operate independently of the local churches?

Doctor: Independently? Uh, uh....

Editor: I mean simply, you are not a church nor the work of a local congregation. Are you not an independent organization?

Doctor: Independent? What? Are you trying to cut off our most lucrative source of income? The answer to your question is no. In fact we are very dependent on the local churches for our funds. We send out hundreds, thousands of letters urging the churches to send us their missionary dollars. Huh, when the Iron Curtain fell, we were among the first to see how we could use that news to raise thousands, maybe even millions, to support our organization and to preach the gospel. We, in fact, have several hundred local churches that contribute to our organization regularly. We put on programs, train and send the teachers and missionaries on behalf of the churches. The churches don't have to go to the trouble of setting up training classes in their own facilities. It leaves their buildings free for gym, recreational, and sports activities. They don't have to worry about finding the man they will sponsor. That is all done for them. They just simply send us a check each month and we do the rest.

Editor: But doctor, aren't you in fact a missionary society?

Doctor: No! No! Let's not use those loaded words. We don't put controls on the churches and they don't

send us delegates. So don't say we are parallel to a missionary society. That's negative.

Editor: I didn't mean to imply you are parallel to a missionary society. What I wanted to establish by the question was, are you not in truth a missionary society per se.

Doctor: Stop that! Stop using those loaded words! That is negative, negative, negative.

Editor: But doctor, would it not be according to the pattern for the local churches to cooperate among themselves to send out teachers and missionaries? Why do they need ultra-church organizations to send out missionaries for them? Is God not to be glorified in his organization, the church? Isn't the church God's missionary society? Should not elders oversee and sponsor...?

Doctor: The churches? Elders? They don't have the wisdom or expertise to do these great things. They need us. What are you trying to do? Put us out of business? We are an awesome organization doing an awesome work for an awesome cause. You will see our way is best. This way elders just send us a check.

Since I work with TRUTH FOR THE WORLD, questions have been asked concerning its structure and organization. TRUTH FOR THE WORLD is not a missionary society, para-church organization, or some other unscriptural method of doing the work God designed His church to do. It is a mission work of the Olive Branch church of Christ in Olive Branch, Mississippi conducted with the cooperation of sound congregations and loyal brethren in many places.

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S DIVINE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

There is no other organization than the church needed to preach the gospel to the whole world. The missionary society attempts to take the place of the church in preaching the gospel to the world. It attempts to activate the universal church to do the work God designed for the local church.

Congregations are able to cooperate or work together to help spread the gospel to the world. The church is the body of Christ, and the members can cooperate in the functioning of the body. The church is the army of the Lord and must cooperate to function properly. The church is made up of laborers who work together. The church is the family of God.

⁶I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. ⁷So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. ⁸Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. ⁹For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building (1 Cor. 3:6-9).

The Need For Strong Elderships

One of the reasons brethren set up organizations separate and apart from the local church is because elders in local congregations are not fulfilling their

obligations in leading the church in evangelizing the world. It is so important that we have strong elderships to oversee the work.

There is a dire need for qualified elders and elderships in the church today. Unfortunately, most elders are not qualified according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11. Elders need faith and vision to lead the church in being the “*pillar and ground of the truth.*”

¹The 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: ²Feed 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. ³Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away [1 Peter 5:1-4].

¹⁷Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. ¹⁹Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. ²⁰Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear [1 Tim. 5:17-20].

Conclusion

In this lesson we have discussed the scriptural way of reaching this lost world with the gospel of Christ. If

we are going to succeed in obeying the will of God, we must follow his instructions in the scriptural way to evangelize. Any method that is not authorized cannot be used. We must accomplish this work in the framework God has given to us. Over the ages men have tried to "improve" upon the methods of God. They do not need improving. If we will simply follow the instructions God has given us in the area of evangelism, we will be successful. Please remember, it is not responses to the gospel message that determines success. When we preach the gospel, we have succeeded!

May God help us to continue to be diligent in service to His cause. *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58).

Chapter 23

Christ, Our Perfect Example In Running The Race

Joe Gilmore, Jr.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

There are many reasons why Jesus came to earth. He came to reveal His Father’s will, to shed His blood, to abolish the law of Moses, conquer death and to be our example. We rejoice in that we have a perfect example in Christ!

The word “example” means “copy” or “pattern.” Teachers write copies and pupils seek to imitate the writing. Examples show students the possibility of copying the pattern. Jesus is our “copy,” the “pattern” for our life. He has opened up the way, and He asks us to follow in His steps. He is a perfect “model” for all to follow.

Man will follow some example, whether good or bad. The power of example is very great for good or evil. Jesus is our example. However, we cannot do as Jesus did in all respects for Jesus lived without sin (1 Peter 2:22), but this we cannot do. Jesus has asked that we follow in His steps.

1. Jesus is an Example to Young People

The Holy Spirit has told us something about the youth of Christ. Luke 2:51 says that He was “subject unto” his mother and father. That a boy and girl must

learn obedience to parents is one of the first laws of life, and is a most neglected subject. Juvenile delinquency would not exist if all boys and girls were taught to follow the example of Jesus as a youth.

As a youth, Jesus was religious. He said that He "*must be about my Father's business.*" Satan has taught that girls must retain their purity, but that boys must have their youthful escapades. Such a double standard is condemned in Holy Writ. That boys must "sow their wild oats" is basely false. Boys and girls can learn from the example of Jesus to be clean and devout while they are young.

The meagerness of detail characteristic of the early years of our Lord's earthly sojourn evidences the fact that it was not the design of the Holy Spirit to satisfy the curiosity of the world regarding this period of his earthly life. A summary of the events which were chronicled touching these years is limited to the following items: [1] birth in Bethlehem; [2] flight to Egypt and sojourn there; [3] life in Nazareth; and, [4] visit to Jerusalem and the temple. The portrait of a perfect boy is drawn in the narratives which record these events for the world.

- A. From them we learn that His development was normal, natural and full: "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*" [Luke 2:52]. The fourfold development which must be characteristic of any normal person is thus affirmed of Him. His attainments in "wisdom and stature" were mental and physical; "in favor with God and man" is spiritual and moral. His growth was, therefore, mental, spiritual, physical and moral, accomplishments essential in every instance to the well-rounded individual.
- B. The means by which this "increase" was effected are highly significant and should not be lost upon us today!

1. He was ever obedient to His earthly parents, and exhibited on all occasions, respect for them. *“And he went down with them and came to Nazareth; and was subject unto them”* [Luke 2:51]. Literally, kept on being subject to them! It was an habitual, continuous, uninterrupted submission to their will, an example for all children of Christian parents today.
2. He evidenced great familiarity with the law and revealed that his thoughts were often upon it. ⁴⁶*“And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers”* [Luke 2:46,47]. Fortunate indeed is that child whose parents are aware of the limitless possibilities for good which inhere in the inculcation of scriptural principles before the mind matures and the heart hardens with the ways of the world. Life’s richest heritage is the reception of such principles from Christian parents.
3. He experienced the tremendous impact of good which issues from faithful and regular attendance at worship. At the age of twelve He was in Jerusalem on the occasion of the great feast of Passover when the ripest fruits of the Jewish synagogue commingled and communed in the Holy City. Their experiences became His; His outlook broadened to theirs. It is impossible to over estimate the good which derives from such association with kindred spirits in an atmosphere surcharged with the spirituality and awe, when the soul communes with God and the cares of the world recede. Moreover, His regard for, and

recognition of the value of worship is indicated in the fact that His participation was not sporadic, irregular or haphazard: *“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read”* (Luke 4:16). *“...As His custom was.”* These words are fraught with great significance; wherever He chanced to be, the day of worship found Him in the synagogue where the sacred scroll would be unrolled, and the words of the law read and commented upon. Nor should we overlook the fact that He *“stood up for to read.”* He rejoiced to be able to read from the book of the law and to comment on its implications. While these events occurred following the opening of His public ministry, the *“custom”* to which the sacred writer alludes antedates this and reveals habits which had their origin in childhood.

4. He refrained from participation in anything which was harmful, questionable or suggestive. No risqué jokes ever issued from His mouth, no words of doubtful propriety ever crossed His lips. He had no harmful habits and He avoided any place of dubious reputation.
5. His life in Nazareth reflects the characteristics of an obedient child. It is reasonable to suppose that in being *“subject unto”* Joseph and Mary, He shared in the responsibilities of the home and did His part in providing the necessities of life. An ancient rabbi had said that *“he who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to steal,”* and it was therefore, the custom of all Jews, whatever their financial status, to assist their sons in becoming profi-

cient in some manual trade. Jesus must have labored with Joseph in the carpenter shop where, we may be sure, He never did a shoddy piece of work! The ability, the disposition and the opportunity to work with one's hands are surely one of life's greatest blessings.

- C. The influence of godly parents in the early life of Jesus is therefore to be seen in his submission to their wills; in His obedience to their wishes; and in His devotion to their religion. It is a pattern of parental adherence which the youth of every age and land should follow.

2. Jesus is Our Example in Learning to Work

It is not written accidentally in the Scriptures that Jesus became a carpenter (Mark 6:3). Our Lord never did intend to make a career of carpentry, but it is recorded that He learned that trade. To follow Jesus one will learn the dignity of work and the importance of learning a trade. He toiled and labored from day to day. The fields are white unto the harvest. Laborers are needed. Let us work "*while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work*" (John 9:4). If we do not work we are not worthy to wear the name "Christian."

3. Jesus Is Our Example in Baptism

"And Jesus answering said unto him (John) suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:16). Jesus journeyed from Galilee to the place where John was baptized, a distance of seventy miles in order to be baptized. Some today refuse to be baptized. They would not walk around the block. Even though Jesus did not have any

sins to wash away. He insisted on baptism. Jesus wanted to fulfill all God's commandments. We must be willing to follow Christ through this act of obedience. It is God's will for a sinner who believes and repents to be baptized. Jesus has set all mankind an example in submitting to this divine institution.

4. Jesus is Our Example in Meeting Temptation

Jesus is our example in overcoming temptation since He was "*tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). We may learn from him how to overcome temptation. Jesus warned His disciples "*Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*" (Matt. 26:41). He successfully met and resisted Satan's attacks by saying, "It is written." Herein lies our defense, we have the "*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Eph. 6:17). A knowledge of the Bible is the most powerful and unfailing weapon in the conflict with Satan. The devil cannot stand its cutting power. We must learn, and be able to quote the Scriptures.

5. Jesus is Our Example in Evangelism

Zeal for sinful souls is another great characteristic of Jesus, our model. In the face of losing popularity with the religious leaders of His day, Jesus spent time with sinful and outcast humanity. On one occasion when thirsty, tired and hungry, He became so infatuated in talking to a sinful woman that he lost all interest in physical food [John 4]. Our interest in personal work must not lag!

6. Jesus is Our Example in Unselfish, Self-Sacrificing Devotion to Others

There is no act of His life where His own interest was the dominant nature. When His disciples desired places of honor and power, Jesus would point to His own example,

²⁶...Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; ²⁸Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:26-28).

Paul commends this wonderful principle of our Lord's life to us in these words, "*and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). This was a new and strange doctrine in a world of greed and selfishness. Again, Paul reminds us of the greatness of this giving, "*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich*" (2 Cor. 8:9). This magnitude of unselfishness overwhelms us!

7. Jesus is Our Example in Forgiveness

Jesus' attitude toward those who mistreated Him constitutes one of the greatest chapters in His life. While all of us will do good to those who do good to us, Jesus had a loving and sympathetic heart toward those who ill-treated Him, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

²¹...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; ²²Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, ²³Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23).

It is sinful not to try to follow Jesus, our model in these matters!

We have heard people say that they could not love their enemies. God does not ask us to have the same warm feeling for our enemies that we have for our close and dear friends. David would not hurt Saul, but sought to do him good, and in the Bible sense loved him; but he did not have the same feeling toward Saul that he had for Jonathan. If we do not wish our enemies harm, seek to help them and do them good, then we love them in the Bible sense!

8. Jesus is our Example in Obedience

Jesus as a lad learned to obey His parents (Luke 2:51). He obeyed the ordinance of baptism when He could have objected that He did not need it. These two things helped Him when He came to the garden of Gethsemane. He did not want to die. Jesus *“offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death”* (Heb. 5:7). In this dark moment *“though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and he being made perfect; he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus did not claim exemption from suffering because He was God’s Son. Do we follow His example? We should walk as He walked (John 2:6).

9. Jesus is Our Example in Respecting the Will of His Father

Jesus always did the will of His Father. He said, *“my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work”* (John 4:34). *“For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”* (John 6:38). In these passages we have the mind of Jesus clearly stated in response to His Father’s will. To walk as Jesus walked, we must do the will of our Father. *“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). Again, *“For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”* (Mark 3:35). There was no discussion between Christ and His Father because there was only one to be pleased. Jesus did not please Himself, but He always pleased His Father. If all religious people would do as Jesus did in this respect, there would be no discussions, all would look to God and please Him, then divisions would cease.

10. Jesus is Our Example in Humility

Humility was regarded among the Romans in the day of Jesus as a weakness or a vice. Yet Jesus chose it as something that all man should admire and covet. Jesus considered it as the magnetic power to draw man to Him. *“Come unto me, all ye that labor 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”* (Matt. 11:28-29). Followers of Jesus are urged to possess humility (Phil. 2:5-9; Matt. 18:1-3; John 13). Peter urges us to be *“clothed with humility”* (1 Peter 5:5-6). It is one of the adorning graces of the Christian (Rom. 12:3).

11. Jesus is Our Example in Firmness

Much is said about the meekness, gentleness, an compassion of Jesus; but the other side of his character has been so neglected that may think of him as a “weakling” and a “sissy.” Jesus has lion-like qualities. He is described “*the Lion of the tribe of Juda*” (Rev. 3:5). Jesus was strong and fearless. He denounced the traditions and customs of His day. He was governed by principles, and never by policy and had nothing to compromise. He is, indeed, the “Rock of Ages.”

12. Jesus is Our Example in Opposition to Satan and Sin

Jesus came to save man from the domination, guilt, and consequences of sin. “*To this end was the son of man manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8). Again, it is written: “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin*” (1 John 3:5). An angel said to the bewildered Joseph, ²⁰“*...fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife...²¹for she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:20-21). Others before Christ had opposed sin. Moses had written, “*Thou shalt not kill,*” and “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:13-14); and Elijah had thundered his fearless denunciations of the atrocious and heinous sins of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21:17-26). There were condemnations of the overt act, Christ went forward, He condemned sin not only in act and word, but also in thought. Hear Him “*Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*” (Matt. 5:27-28). Thus he

pursued sin into the secret chambers of the heart and severely condemned it there. Again, "*whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murders hath eternal life abiding in him*" (1 John 3:15). Thus according to our copy or pattern, one may so blacken his soul with adulterous thoughts and murderous hate as to forever bar himself from the gates of pearl!

13. Jesus is our Example in Self-Denial

In the long catalogue of God's great men there were many who made sacrifices. Abraham denied himself the possession of friends, relatives, and a home in the land of his nativity, and "*became a sojourner in the land of promise, and in a land not his own;*" and Moses "*refused to be called the son of pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Heb. 11:24-25). But Christ left heaven and the "*bosom of the Father*" (John 1:18), "*emptied Himself*" [of some divine glory] (John 17:5), "*taking the form of a servant*" (Phil. 2:6-7), and came to a sin-cursed world, to be rejected and crucified for it and buy it. In leaving heaven, He gave up much; but when He reached earth He sacrificed and suffered still more. He was driven from the home of His birth, Bethlehem; expelled from the home of His residence, Nazareth; rejected in the home of His adoption, Capernaum; and murdered in the city of His father, David, Jerusalem. "He came unto his own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). During the years of his personal strenuous ministry He said concerning Himself, "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay His head*" (Matt. 8:20). No human knows the intensity of the trial in Gethsemane and the awfulness of the pains on Calvary. He died for the aggregated sins of the dead, the living, and the

unborn, "*Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. 53:6). Jesus went to the utmost limit in the matter of self-denial!

Conclusion

Jesus came all the way from heaven to earth to be our example. He is eminently worthy to be followed. We are always wise and safe when we follow Him in every relation of life, Christ is the divine copy, the great example, the perfect model.

The closer we come to the Lord, the more unselfish and useful we will be.

No one can follow his steps without going "forward." We cannot stand still and attain unto "*a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13). Please remember there is no danger or possibility of going beyond our Lord's example in good works!

Chapter 24

Obtaining the Crown

Eph. 6:10-17

Gary Colley

Have you ever worn a crown? When it is deserved and honorably worn, there is always a feeling of accomplishment, reward, excitement, and great joy! All realize that crowns are generally bestowed in the completion of competition or accomplishment, not at the beginning. The recipients of earthly crowns will probably be written up in the newspapers and have their pictures and names blazoned on the Television News programs. The world applauds their accomplishments as they are honored.

Olympic Contest

The Bible often refers to the crowns won and recognized world wide which were given in the early Olympic games. These crowns were not made of costly, rare, or unusual materials, but consisted of garlands of olive branches and leaves, or perhaps flowers, weaved in a circle to fit the head, which though they were tediously worked for and admiringly bestowed lasted no more than a few hours. No doubt, what ever be the contest, it would be to the one receiving such a crown as an occasion of power, of valor, of victory, of dignity, of honor, of happiness, joy, and the setting apart of one from all others. The accolades of the world were admiringly given, and proudly received, and rightfully so.

Royal Crowns

The Bible also refers us to a crown which has come to an individual as a result of talent, position, adornment, dominion, prowess, reward or stamina. We all know about the enthroning crowns of royalty, heavily bedecked with precious jewels, and made of pure metals, worn by a monarch as an emblem of sovereignty. Perhaps we, who are under Presidents in our nation, will not appreciate crowned kings as fully as those kings who lived in Bible times, or in countries like England who today have a reigning king. This type of crown may be gained by power, wealth, war, or in some other way by powerful demand! It marks sovereign power and rule, as well as suggesting the subjects who obey the kings wishes.

Crowns Of Praise

Other crowns referred to in the Bible may be the praises of words and sentiments that are "crowns" of serving, to adorn or honor, not with a literal material crown on the head, but that of great honor and love like a crown. These respectfully bestowed "crowns" are not the result of those that make demands, but they are earned respect, perhaps gained by many years of exceptional service and benefit to mankind. Such "crowns" may belong to one who has served as a dutiful wife, a trusted husband, an obedient child, or a faithful employee. These might be the symbolic crowns of motherhood, fatherhood, bravery, love or in some other honor bestowed by family or friends. All the concepts of "crowns" are highly interesting and are representative of joy, happiness, and accomplishment.

Crowns Of Virtue

After describing all of the properties and praises of a good wife and her “crown” as a “virtuous woman,” it is said that her value was to be priced far above rubies! What a “crown” when ²⁸“...her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her... ³⁰Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” [Prov. 31:10-31]. An unknown author wrote in beautiful and endearing terms about “God’s Woman,”

The queens who have no sepulchre in their hand and yet they reign upon a finer throne than the earth has ever known.
 Their trust in God unshakable and sure.
 Their faith implanted in their children grows into a living, lifting shining thing that through life’s stress can know no conquering.

Though it is not likely that these will be published in the media, yet they are great and deserving for their many unselfish works, and are promised the greatest crown of all, the crown of incorruptible praise! Hence, for the Christians who pattern their lives in “*the law of the Spirit of life*” and not after the world, there remains a more beautiful crown yet to be bestowed by their loving Heavenly Father [Rom. 8:1-2].

Eternal Crowns

How our hearts thrill as the Bible speaks of the everlasting crowns that will be given to the faithful soldiers of the cross. These are more to be desired than any earthly, perishable, temporary crowns the earth has to offer, and will be obtained by the faithful after the

judgment. James beautifully refers to one of them as “*the crown of life,*” when He said, “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him*” (James 1:12).

Jesus concluded with a Promise, when He commanded the church in Smyrna to:

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 (Rev. 2:10).

Peter spoke to all faithful elders of the church with assuring words for their work, “*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away*” (1 Peter 5:4). And who can forget the unparalleled epithet of Paul in making the charge to Timothy to “*preach the word,*” saying,

⁶...the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Incorruptible Crowns

These crowns are unlike earthly crowns in that they are incorruptible (1 Cor. 9:25). These crowns are not temporal but eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18). In fact, these crowns constitute and are reserved for God’s people as,

in the words of the inspired apostle Peter, "*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Peter 1:4).

None of the aforementioned earthly crowns even come close in beauty and magnitude of the splendid crowns spoken of in the Bible! They may be similar in some respects of descriptive terms, but they are not identical in respect to the eternal joy, happiness, and honor which these represent! The crowns here referred to are glorious rewards for faithful labours given by the grace and mercy of God to His servants and soldiers of the cross. They are "crowns" made up of eternal life, glory and righteousness! None of these crowns are earned, can be purchased with money, nor are they even deserved by men, but are given as rewards by the Creator of Heaven and earth through His grace and mercy, to those who have accepted conditions of His gift of salvation and have honored His name during their brief time of life on earth (John 3:16; Rom. 3:23; 5:3; 6:23; Heb. 5:8-9).

Triumph In Christ

Concerning these crowns Paul expressed thanks to God! "*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place*" (2 Cor. 2:14). These crowns are awarded to those who have, through their love for the Lord and His service, overcome the trials, temptations and struggles of this world by the strength given through their close, loving, serving and honoring relationship to Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Luke 9:23,26,62). Given to the task of living the Christian life here, walking in the steps of their Saviour, and rejecting ungodliness, and worldly lust, these have rather lived "*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:11-12).

The Victorious Life

The life of a Christian is described in the Bible in many ways. Whether the Bible describes life as imaginary as a battle, a shadow, a boxing match, or a race, it all has to do with the importance of winning! Paul spoke to this need in Timothy by explaining, “*And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully*” (2 Tim. 2:5).

One must know what the rules are for entering, running, and winning the race, and be sure that he conforms to the rules of the game. Without these he cannot expect success. Paul’s comparison is that Timothy must, therefore, conform to the Law of Christ, and not give up the discipline which would come through training and action.

What Is Our Purpose In Life?

Even the word “beginning” implies that there is surely to be an “end!” No man is wise who can see no further than “the end of his nose,” concerning his origin, duty, and destination after this life is completed. The choice must be made by each individual concerning which road in life we will travel and what we desire for our destination [Matt. 7:13-14]. One is a narrow road that leads to eternal life which demands that we follow Christ; the other is a broad road that leads to destruction which is the easy road of the world. One is traveled by faith, the other is by man’s wishes and opinions. Christians are seen especially in the Bible to have an advantage over the world. That decided advantage is faith, which allows us to see God’s care, protection, and guidance for this life, and an eternal crown in the future [Heb. 11:1].

The apostle Peter clearly draws this important thought before our minds with the seven virtues that must be added to our faith in order to live a spiritual

life. He said to those who do not add continually to their faith: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, "*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*" (2 Peter 1:9). This makes it evident that one who fails to follow the Lord will bring upon himself impaired spiritual vision. In his worldly short sightedness he has no clear view of Christ and His church! The result is, this one will not obtain the crown. He further exhorts that we should give diligence in doing these things, that we may make our calling and election sure, and to assure the safety of our souls from falling! It is then that he gives the glorious end of doing the Lord's commands for the faithful, "*For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Paul's Christian Soldier Simile

In our text, along with many other references by the peerless apostle Paul, he draws a comparison of service to Christ in the life of a soldier. Soldiers have the obligation of enlisting and going on duty in harmony with the commander's orders. The soldier must leave many comforts, face hardships of service and the dangers of the battlefield when duty calls. He states to Timothy, and to all faithful soldiers now: "*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier*" (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

We know that every well regulated earthly government has an army to meet the enemies that challenge its borders, peace and property. But God has a far greater army, composed of brave fighting men, or soldiers who willingly deny themselves and fight to

protect and uphold the Way of the cross, by which men can receive the crown of eternal life. Some are opposed to fighting "*the good fight of faith*" (1 Tim. 6:12), and somehow think that we should love the sinner into the church without the removal of his sins, and also thereby love the devil out of existence! These are pretenders, not good soldiers, who will bring disgrace to the Lord's cause. They are ashamed of the Lord and His word and will not be crowned as good soldiers (Mark 8:38).

Necessities Of Obtaining The Crown

First of all, it is an accepted fact that no nation accepts service in its army without enlistment, and so it is with the Lord's great army. The United States government sets the standard for enlistment as being eighteen years of age, must speak the English language, and must be of sound body and mind. The Lord's soldiers are composed altogether of volunteers, who have heard His invitation and have accepted His orders (Matt. 11:28-30; John 5:39-40). That our commander's orders are matters of knowledge and not years is made clear from the orders for enlistment: one must *hear the Gospel* (John 6:44-45), must *believe it with all his heart* (John 8:21,24), must *repent of all past sins* (Luke 13:3, 5), must *confess Jesus' name* (Matt. 10:32-33), and must *be baptized in water for the remission of his past sins* (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

No matter how much courage and ability one might claim as a soldier, he must meet the requirements of the government to enlist. No man who refuses to meet these standards is added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41,47). It is a matter of either meeting the requirements of enlistment or being rejected! Fighting on the outside of the army, or the church, is not lawful, but in fact it is criminal (cf. Matt. 12:30)! The command of Ephesians 6:10 is to the obedient

Christian, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”* But also we must realize that when the victory is not won, but just beginning!

Second Requirement

Every good army must have proper food in order to be strong and give proper service. A good nutritious diet is most important to the health and strength of soldiers. Our Commander says in answer to the tempter, *“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt. 4:4). The Christian soldier also must be fed proper food for proper growth. Elders are charged with *“feeding the flock”* (Acts 20:28). Proper growth comes when babes in Christ *“desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2). All who are disciples or learners are to continually *“hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled”* (Matt. 5:6). By this means we will become strong ourselves and become teachers or soldiers who are able to teach and train others. But first we must become mature in understanding and have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

Third Requirement

Perhaps most soldiers would acknowledge that the drills of “boot camp” are not pleasant! However, they sooner or later realize the necessity of training in order to preserve their lives as well as those of whom they love and protect. The Christian soldier must learn to obey the Captain’s orders for the greatest efficiency. Even of our Leader Jesus Christ it is said, *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience* (by experience

and practice, GC) *by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:8-9; 2:9-10). Many soldiers have been lost to the battle because they were not prepared sufficiently and were inexperienced. Paul wrote to the Roman brethren,

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual service. ²And 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 (Rom. 12:1-2).

Fourth Requirement

This next important consideration for the soldiers of Christ, is the armour. All soldiers who go forth to battle must be well equipped with armour in order to be victorious! To the Corinthians Paul wrote,

⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh (since our might is of God, not man. GC), but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds, ⁵Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

The armour is necessary for two important reasons: First, for the soldier's own protection, since a wounded or dead soldier is no good to the army; And second, he needs the armour as a means to defeat the enemy! We are strongly persuaded of the need of armour by the fearless apostle Paul who wrote to Ephesian Christians:

¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ¹³Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ¹⁵And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching hereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints [Eph. 6:11-18].

The number seven often represents completeness in the Bible, and it seems so here. Every part is highly important and necessary to the soldier of the cross, for protection and victory. The Lord knew what would be ample in armour to defeat the enemy! Any one or more items of armour which may be missing in the life of a Christian will mean the wave of afflictions by the enemy will take us away!

No Cowards, Deserters, Traitors or Slackers

The only part of the body left unprotected is the back, impressing us with the fact that we must not be cowards and deserters as Demas [2 Tim. 4:10], traitors

such as Judas, or slackers as those in New Testament times [2 Thess. 3:6; Gal. 1:6-9], who turn and run from the enemy. Though some today are urging that the Christian soldier should be compromising and non combative, the Bible does not so teach! These want us to “follow the crows,” “blend in,” “don’t make waves,” ad-nausism. Some had rather hear preachers preach “smooth things” rather than the right things [Isa. 30:10]. They want us to cry towards error and sin, “*Peace, peace, when there is no peace*” [Jer. 6:14]. Let us all be aware that the Gospel is a message of conflict [Matt. 10:43-49; Jude 3]. If this were not true, the Lord would need no soldiers and we would need none of this armour! Let us take the Heavenly example of our Lord, rather than the word of the coward, Who taught His disciples not to worry that the Pharisees were offended [Matt. 15:3-14], Who asked the apostles if they too would go away from Him as many of His disciples had just done because they refused His teaching as being too “hard” [John 6:61-63]. May we ever remember that Jesus’ teaching does not change for anyone, not even the religious leaders of the day or disgruntled disciples who refuse to be faithful soldiers of the cross [Matt. 28:18-20]!

Obtaining The Crown

Good soldiers who have sought the crown are assured that the rewards will be paid in full. Paul asked, “*What soldier ever serveth at his own charges*” [1 Cor. 9:7]? By this statement he gave the hope of obtaining the crown of life that fadeth not away. Let us strive to be a good soldier of our Lord [2 Tim. 2:1-3], labor to endure [James 4:17], not be a deserter [2 Peter 2:20-22], go forth to the fight against spiritual wickedness [Eph. 6:10-13], use our spiritual weapons wisely [Eph. 6:14-17], as we seek to protect the church and the faith [1 Tim. 1:18-19], and know that we will obtain the

crown for which we have endured during the brief day of life! Let us ever keep before us the words of the veteran soldier Paul who said of his battles for the Captain of our salvation,

⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing [2 Tim. 4:7-8].

Let each of us determine to do the same in order that the same crown will be ours eternally!

