

Memphis School of Preaching

LECTURES

*“A Survey of the First
Fifteen Years”*

VOLUME I



Published By



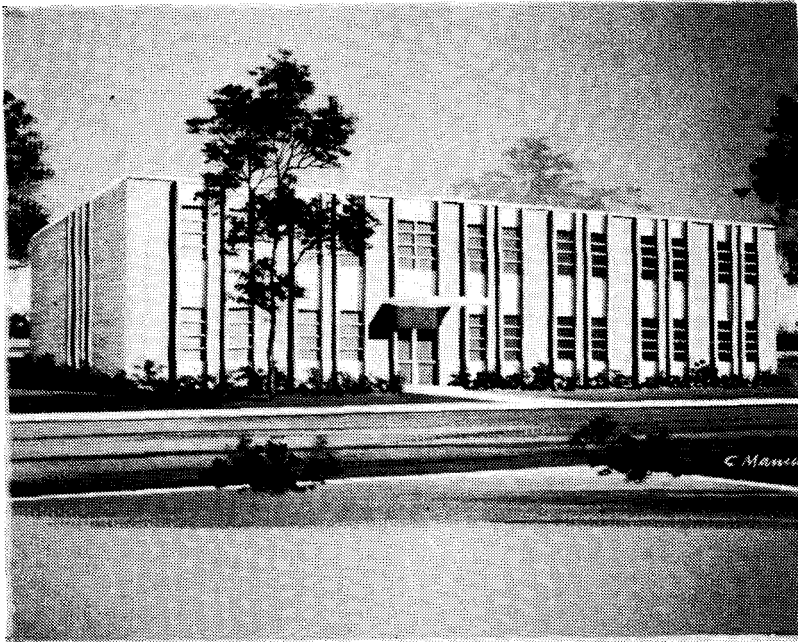
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The Kingdom Press, Inc. is a non-profit religious publishing company formed by some alumni of the Memphis School of Preaching: Louis Everette Rushmore, president; Robert Daniel Jones, vice-president; Bonnie S. Rushmore, treasurer; Rodney Cicchetto, Eddy Craft, Michael R. Hughes, Jack Openshaw, Gerald Reynolds, and Ben F. Vick, Jr., associate directors. We are happy to present **Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, "A Survey of the First Fifteen Years," Volume One** for your edification, and we look forward to serving you in the future.

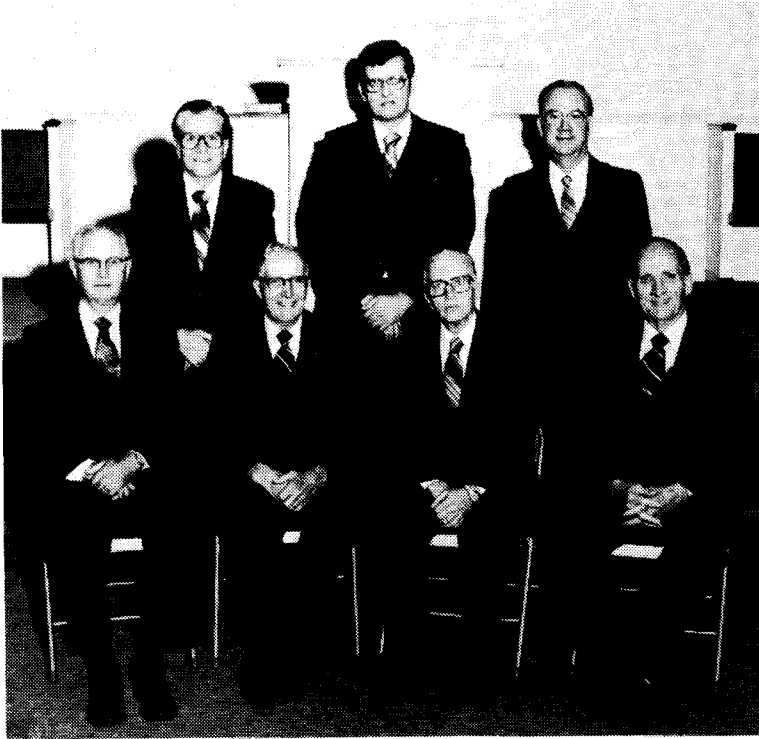
The Kingdom Press



MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING

The Memphis School of Preaching opened its doors in September, 1966 as the first full-time school of preaching east of the Mississippi River. Brother Roy J. Hearn has been its director since its inception, and the elders of the Knight Arnold church of Christ oversee the work. These elders are: James A. Bobbitt, Bert Embry, Floyd M. Hayes, James W. Hutson, Dorrence H. Kirby, and Harold Mangrum.

The Memphis School of Preaching exalts the Bible as the perfect, complete, verbally inspired Word of God and our final authority in matters of faith and practice. It seeks to instill in its students an undying loyalty to the Word of God and to send forth men who have a good working knowledge of the Book that they may be able to teach it clearly, effectively, and without any hint of liberalism or hobbyism. Also stressed are personal qualities such as humility, courage, faithfulness, and sacrifice.



L. to r.: standing, E.L. Whitaker, W.D. Holland and Richard L. Curry: seated, Roy J. Hearn, J.A. McNutt, Frank D. Young and John H. Renshaw.

Richard L. Curry, full-time instructor, received his training at Freed-Hardeman College and the University of Mississippi. He began preaching in 1942 and served in local work for twenty-eight years before joining the full-time faculty.

Roy J. Hearn, director and instructor, graduated from Freed-Hardeman College and obtained further training at David Lipscomb College and George Peabody College for Teachers. He also served seven years on Christian college faculty and administrative staffs. Brother Hearn began preaching in 1936.

W.D. Holland, full-time in Public Relations, instruction, and other phases of work, graduated from Oklahoma Christian College. Additional training was received from Lamar University, Fort Worth Christian College, the United States Air Force, and Harding Graduate School of Religion.

J.A. McNutt, part-time instructor, received training at Freed-Hardeman College. He completed additional work at Union University, Jackson, Tennessee and began preaching in 1929.

John H. Renshaw, full-time instructor, graduated from Freed-Hardeman College. Further studies were made at Crazer Theological Seminary, Chester, Pa. and Middle Tennessee State University. He began preaching in 1942.

E.L. Whitaker, part-time instructor, was educated at David Lipscomb College and the University of Tennessee. He began preaching in 1956 and has been with the Knight Arnold congregation since its beginning in 1959.

The Memphis School of Preaching strongly adheres to the principles of the Restoration Movement, to get back to the Bible and do and be all that it demands of the church in origin, name, doctrine, and practice.

The school has been well served through the years by a number of instructors. Past instructors include: Richard F. Baggett, Ralph Carnahan, Gary G. Colley, Ray Hawk, Charles A. Pledge, L.O. Sanderson, Frank D. Young, and Keith A. Mosher.

Biographical Sketch



JEAN TAYLOR, SECRETARY **(A Word Portrait)**

This book would be incomplete if mention were not made of Jean Taylor. Sister Taylor has served as secretary of the Memphis School of Preaching for several years and the word **OUTSTANDING** best describes her work in that capacity. She is always ready to help in any way she can and seems never to tire of doing her job. Those of us who know her and who are acquainted with her work cannot praise her too highly for her devotion and dedication to the Lord and to the work and purpose of the Memphis School of Preaching.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, "A Survey of the First Fifteen Years," Volume One was conceived and prepared based on the conviction that such a volume would be useful to the kingdom of Christ. Moreover, the preaching characteristic of this book is desperately **needed** today throughout the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These lectures further represent the sound preaching for which these speakers, the Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP), and the Knight Arnold church of Christ have long been known and appreciated by faithful brethren everywhere. This lectureship book, therefore, belongs in the forefront of the libraries of all Christians, especially elders, deacons, teachers, and preachers.

It should be remembered that the lectures comprising this volume were prepared from tape recordings of the lectures actually presented at MSOP rather than from manuscripts submitted prior to the lectureships. Hence, though the lectures herein have been edited for print, they largely retain the appeal of oral presentations. Additionally, we regret that all of the fine lectures delivered at MSOP over the past fifteen years could not be included.

The transcribing, repeated editing, and overall publishing of this volume have proved to be a major undertaking. It is my sincere hope that Memphis School of Preaching Lectures will prove to be invaluable to you and the kingdom, and that any inefficiency of mine which may be exhibited herein will thereby be tolerable.

Finally, a great debt of gratitude is owed to the many souls who have participated in the preparation of these lectures in printed form. Members of the Churches of Christ and several others have equally and tirelessly assisted in this production. To all of them and to each of you who have graciously received this work we extend a blanket, simple, and sincere **thank-you!**

Louis Everette Rushmore
December 1, 1981

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not without great appreciation that the following acknowledgements are made, but rather we fear (and apologize in advance) lest anyone's name should be inadvertently omitted. Happily, volunteers and others poorly paid, brethren and friends alike have contributed much to the success of this lectureship book. To all we extend a hearty thanks.

Thanks is due: **Robert Daniel Jones** who labored extensively toward the completion of the volume and arranged all of the biographical sketches; **Michael R. Hughes** who solicited several orders, preliminary edited some manuscripts, and transcribed some lectures; **Robert R. Taylor, Jr.** who wrote the foreword and whose lecture appears in the book; **Pat McGee** who penned the dedication and whose lecture appears in the book; **Gus Nichols, Frank D. Young, Max R. Miller, Billy R. Davidson, W.N. Jackson, Guy N. Woods, Garland Elkins, Ernest S. Underwood, Glann M. Lee, W.T. Hamilton, Basil Overton, Winfred Clark, J. Noel Meredith, Dan Jenkins,** and **Pervie Nichols** whose lectures comprise the volume; **Nina Mae Rushmore, Ben F. Vick, Jr., Jean Taylor, R.F. Knox, Jr., Rodney Cicchetto,** and **Jeanita Strang** who transcribed the lectures from tapes; **Julie Rash** who transcribed tapes, preliminary edited some manuscripts, and set all of the type for the book; **Noel Hurford** who translated the sundry components of the volume into intelligible matter, photoready for printing; and the many others who also contributed, perhaps indirectly, to the final product which is now before you: **Dianna Reed, J.R. Small, S.F. (Buster) Frazier, Jr., E.K. Downey, Roy J. Hearn,** and **David Holland.**

Special thanks is due my wife, **Bonnie Sue Rushmore,** for she has indeed been my helpmeet, not only in our home but also in my work and especially in the preparation, distresses, and joys of this lectureship book.

Lastly, thanks is due the elders of the Knight Arnold church of Christ and the Memphis School of Preaching for having enough confidence in us to allow us to bring forth **Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, "A Survey of the First Fifteen Years."**

FOREWORD

It is my seasoned conviction that one of the best works begun during the 1960's was the establishment of the Memphis School of Preaching. For fifteen years now it has been engaged in the tremendous work of training men to preach Christ. In this excellent endeavor it has been eminently successful. Nobody, absolutely nobody, in our brotherhood today has a better grasp of how this work should be done than does brother Roy J. Hearn. He is a product of the late and lamented brother N.B. Hardeman who was master of this work for some fifty years at Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee. Brother Hearn has put into this great school what Hardeman and Freed placed into theirs earlier this century.

Each year the Memphis School of Preaching has had a tremendous spring lectureship. It has been my privilege to speak each year for a dozen years and to hear nearly all of the speeches that have been delivered. Sound and meaty themes have been wisely selected without fail each year. My fellow speakers across the years have been among the best preachers in the brotherhood. These lectures have been true to the book. They have been free of doctrinal error. They have been Gospel centered—not gimmick oriented. They have touched truth—not things. They have been full of Bible—not human philosophies and traditions of men. They have been preaching lectureships—not reading exercises of papers previously prepared and boringly read to audiences half asleep. The Memphis School of Preaching Lectures have added an eloquent enhancement of preaching efficiency during the last fifteen years. These lectures are a real highlight to me personally each spring. They have greatly enriched my life.

Sermons of these lectureships have continued to live in the minds of those who heard them, assisted by means of notes taken (from which hundreds of other lessons have been proclaimed) and by the wide distribution of tapes. However, there have not been any permanent books containing these priceless and precious lessons stressing Biblical fundamentals. Therefore, it is appropriate and fitting that a carefully selected sampling of the hundreds presented over a fifteen year span be preserved in book form. "A Survey Of The First Fifteen Years," Volume I, is a concrete answer to that long felt need. Brethren Robert Daniel Jones and Louis Everette Rushmore have lovingly and sacrificially undertaken this Herculean task. After publishing costs are met, most of the profit from this volume will accrue to the Memphis School of Preaching. By purchasing this book you have aided a great school and

added a monumental book to your library.

It was my privilege to hear nearly all, if not all, of the sermons in this book when given initially. They form an excellent sample of the type of preaching done and lessons presented in an eventful fifteen year period of this century.

It is a pleasure to commend this work without any reservation. In printed form these lessons will do good long after all who presented them have vacated earthly scenes.

November 6, 1981

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.
Ripley, Tennessee 38063

DEDICATION TO ROY J. HEARN

When a second year Bible student at Freed-Hardeman College in 1960 I met for the first time brother Roy Hearn. From listening spellbound to him deliver special lectures on Catholicism to coming under his weighty influence in the classroom as a master teacher of God's word, my respect and love for him blossomed instantly. This affection has grown and increased across the years, and I am greatly joyed that this present volume is dedicated to this godly and valiant soldier of the cross.

Since 1966 brother Hearn has been the Director of the Memphis School of Preaching where scores of men have been trained to preach and defend the Gospel of Christ. Like the aged apostle, brother Hearn's "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience" and yes even "persecutions and afflictions" have set a standard of dedication and excellence which shall live in the lives of students, friends, and fellow Gospel preachers into future generations. I thank God, and ever shall, that my life has been under the influence of such a one whose preaching, character, devotion to truth, and love for the church of our Lord has never been questioned. Brother and sister Hearn are loved by countless brethren all across the country and held in highest esteem by the faculty of the Memphis School of Preaching and elders and brethren at the Knight—Arnold Road church. It is certainly fitting that a volume dedicated to sound doctrine and its defense should be dedicated to a man whose life and work have been devoted to the same.

In a time that has known the Foy Wallace, Jr's, N.B. Hardaman's, E.R. Harper's and other giants in the faith, there is no doubt that brother Roy J. Hearn stands in the circle of these worthies. As the Scripture states, "He is worthy."

PAT MCGEE
CHURCH OF CHRIST
N. 5th and GRAPE
ABILENE, TX 79601
February 15, 1982

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Biographical Sketch

Gus Nichols
1892—1975

Brother Gus Nichols was born in Walker County, Alabama, January 12, 1892 and spent most of his life in that area. He was baptized by brother C.A. Wheeler in August, 1909. On November 30, 1913 he was married to Matilda Frances Brown. To this union were born eight children, four boys and four girls. Three of the boys are full-time preachers, and three of the girls married preachers.

Brother Nichols attended the original Alabama Christian College, then in Berry, Alabama, and

began preaching in 1917. He preached regularly for the church in Cordova, then in Millport, Alabama. On January 1, 1933 he moved to Jasper, Alabama where he preached until his death in 1975.

For several years, brother Nichols was editor of **Truth in Love Magazine** and later started and was editor of **Words of Truth** until his death. He wrote occasionally for the **Gospel Advocate** and was a participant in a number of public debates, some of which were published.

Brother Nichols was prominent in establishing Childhaven Orphans Home in Cullman, Alabama and was a trustee of that institution until his death. For approximately twenty-five years, brother Nichols was the regular speaker for a radio program sponsored by the Jasper church. The thirty minute program was conducted live, without exception, seven days a week. For a number of years he also spoke on another live, daily program that was aired over a different station in Jasper.

On Sunday, November 16, 1975, brother Gus Nichols departed this life. The radio station on which he had preached for so long gave much time in giving information concerning his life and death as did the local newspaper. His funeral service was broadcast on the radio as a service to the community and thirty minutes following the service were dedicated to air beautiful sacred songs. His body was laid to rest in Memory Gardens, Jasper, Alabama.



Chapter One

How to Establish Bible Authority

by Gus Nichols—1970

I appreciate every opportunity to study the Bible, to learn new things about it and also to remember and to better understand things previously read and learned. Hence, the Bible is a wonderful book. It is somewhat like the ocean. We cannot fathom it, but like the fish, we can get all that we need. From it we learn how to live our time on earth. We can learn in a few minutes what to do to be saved or how to worship. It would not take long to learn how to treat a neighbor either. When one begins to ponder the grace of God, the depth of his love, how great God is, and all of the divine attributes, he begins to understand that the Bible is as big as an ocean. We will never master it all, but we can understand his will. Don't ever be guilty, brethren, of saying that the Bible and the will of God are the same; they are not. The will of God is not nearly as big as the Bible. There is more in the Bible than God's will to man. A great deal of the Bible has nothing to do with what we are to do. Rather, it often tells us what God did and presents other background material relative to our salvation.

Can the will of God be learned and obeyed; implicitly so! However, if we had to learn all of the Bible before we could become Christians, none of us could possibly become Christians. As we begin the lesson, **How To Establish Bible Authority**, let us first address general principles underlying Bible authority, the difference between specific law and generic law. The command to "go," for instance, is a generic word. Traveling by airplane is a way of obeying the command to "go," though the airplane is not mentioned. So, some things are authorized without being specifically mentioned. Be careful not to be guilty of saying that the Bible specifically mentions everything we are to do and every way in which we are to do it. There is authority for the things which are specified in the Bible for us to do, and there is also authority for many things not so specified, but included under generic law. There is, then, specific and generic law, both of which derive their authority from the Bible.

Consider for a moment the word "**teach**." Titus 2:3-5 instructs older women to teach younger women to love their husbands and so forth; older women are to **teach**. They are to teach **women**. He did not say that they are to get into the pulpit and preach the Gospel. He said they are to teach. Elsewhere Paul wrote, "I suffer not a woman to teach." It seems that

there is a contradiction. Paul wrote that older women are to teach, but also wrote that he would not suffer a woman to teach. See what a contradiction there is in the Bible! Oh, it is like all of the rest of the apparent contradictions in the Bible; it is not a contradiction.

There are apparent contradictions in nature as well as in the Bible. For instance, if one were to hold a birdshot over a barrel of water and reach down as deep as he could with his other arm and hold a cork the size of my fist on the bottom of the barrel, then simultaneously let the birdshot and the cork loose, an apparent contradiction would occur. The little birdshot would sink and the big cork would rise. There is no contradiction, just an **apparent** contradiction. To those who know the specific laws of gravity, there is no contradiction. And so it is with the Bible. There are apparent contradictions in the Bible, but no real contradictions. To some of the seeming contradictions which I have found over a period of ten or fifteen years, I had found no solution. Again and again I am finding solutions for problems, and after I see how simple the solutions are, I wonder why I did not think of them the very first time I studied the problems.

So, women are **to teach** and they are **not to teach**. The meaning is simple and the harmony of it is already there. Do not talk about harmonizing the Scripture. One young brother says, "I'm going to harmonize this Scripture with that Scripture." Such a statement is a tacit admission that they were out of harmony with each other, and he was going to have to do something to get them back into the harmony with one another. Do not be guilty of doing that. Just say that we will find the harmony which already exists between these passages, because there are no contradictions; the harmony is there.

Consider also this example. Paul wrote in Romans 13:9 a quotation from the Old Testament, "...Thou shalt not covet..." However, in I Corinthians 12:31 he penned, "But covet earnestly the best gifts..." When one takes into consideration the context of the two passages, there is no contradiction. When God said, "Thou shalt not covet," he addressed and warned man not to covet his neighbor's wife, ox, or possessions. God was talking about things which belonged to other people. The second passage, instead, recommends the acquisition of godly characteristics whereby Christians can satisfactorily serve God.

Older women are to teach younger women to love their husbands, to be keepers at home, to be good home builders, and to faithfully live the Christian life that the Word of God be not blasphemed. Concerning the work which God has ascribed to women, someone said, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." In my opinion, a woman cannot do any greater work than the work of rocking the cradle. Behind

every good and great man in the world, as a rule, there is one good woman and sometimes two—the mother and a good wife. They function in important roles; the world could not go on without them. I believe there is as much joy, gladness, value, and opportunity in being a woman as there is in being a man. I do not concur with the idea which a lot of people have of being cheated because a girl baby is born to a family; that idea is just absolute foolishness. We have four boys and four girls, and I believe the girls are just as happy as the boys, and the girls are just as useful as the boys. One can serve in one capacity and another in some other capacity. If we did not have women we could not operate the world.

The apostle Paul also addressed women's subjection to men in I Corinthians 14: 34, 35. Yes, they are to teach, but not over men. In I Timothy 2:11, 12 he wrote, "But I suffer not a woman to teach..." If one stops right there, he is made to contradict himself in writing both to Timothy and the Corinthians. That is what happens if one puts the period in the wrong place. A woman is here forbidden to teach over the man and is also forbidden to exercise any authority over the man. If she exercises any authority over him, she has to usurp it; she has to snatch it unlawfully. That is what usurp means. God did not give the woman any authority over the man; therefore, if she exercises it, she has snatched it. She must usurp it just as one might usurp a nation's throne from a king.

A woman can teach a man. There is a difference between teaching a man and exercising authority over him. If a carload of people were riding together to some point, and there were a Christian lady in the car with others who knew nothing about Christianity, she could teach each of them without teaching over them and without usurping any authority whatsoever. She could just kindly and gently lead them into a discussion of matters of religion. She would not have to tell them to keep quiet and let her do all the talking and so exercise any authority. We read in the eighteenth chapter of Acts about a preacher, Apollos, and a man and his good wife who had been persecuted and left Rome, Aquila and Priscilla. According to the context, Apollos knew only the baptism of John. Doubtlessly, he had baptized the twelve disciples in Chapter Nineteen with John's baptism after Christian baptism went into force. John's baptism was superceded at Pentecost; thus, they needed to be baptized again. Priscilla had a part in teaching this preacher, but she did not exercise authority over him.

It would, though, be wrong for a woman to teach a Bible class in which men were present. Such a Bible class directed by a woman would be out of

order. I would oppose it on the ground that she could not properly do that job without usurping authority, **because God did not give her any such authority!** Someone might say, "Well, if the elders tell her to do it, she can do it." No, elders have no right to give women authority which God did not grant. Suppose they told her to get into the pulpit and preach? Would that make it right? Why, of course not! Teaching a Bible class is different from sitting in a car or in one's house where everyone has the same right to ask and answer questions. A Bible class teacher is responsible for the system, order, and progression of class study.

Authority is necessary for the operation of a school or a city. Women may teach men, provided they do not teach over them or do not exercise any authority over them. You may wonder why I swapped the word **usurp** for **exercise**. Well, I did it because of the order in which they occur. One cannot **usurp** authority unless it is exercised. One starts by exercising authority he doesn't have; then he **usurps** or **snatches** it unlawfully. And so, a woman is not to teach over the man, but she may teach a man. Also, she may teach a Bible class of children or she may teach a Bible class of girls or a Bible class of boys or a class of boys and girls.

I do not know where the notion came from, brethren, but there is not any Scripture for the idea that if a woman is teaching a Bible class and a little boy in the class, say eleven or twelve years old, decides to be baptized, she cannot have him in that class any longer. Now, where did that notion arise? It comes from the second chapter of Jude. That chapter is not in anyone's Bible. Being baptized does not make a man out of a boy. No one would think about getting a marriage license for that lad the next day to allow him to get married. Paul stated he would not suffer a woman to **usurp** authority over a "**man**"; he did not address "**boy**." See I Timothy 2:11, 12.

Did Paul, through I Corinthians 14:35, 36, require women to keep silent in the church house; no, a thousand times no. When Christ said, "I will build my Church," he did not mean he was going into the carpentry business. When Jesus built his church, he built, founded, or established a spiritual institution. Peter called it a spiritual house, built with lively stones, not built of old, cold, lifeless stones or brick. When Paul persecuted the church, he was not tearing down meeting houses. Rather, he persecuted the saints, imprisoned them, and consented to their executions.

How is it that a woman may teach, and she may not teach? There are restrictions, and God made it that way. God designed that women should be silent in the churches. Are they not allowed to say "Good Morning" when they come into the auditorium? Can they not speak to their

neighbors? Are they not allowed to say a word in the meeting house? Neither deity nor Paul addressed talking in the meeting house. The apostle Paul wrote about the assembly of the saints. He warned the women at Corinth not to speak in the worship assembly and so disturb the service. Apparently, the women were showing off themselves because of pride. They would ask their prophet husbands questions, which they could have waited and asked at home had they been modest as our women today. Paul stopped this haughty exhibition.

Paul noted that when they came together, each one had a psalm, a tongue, and an interpretation until their assembly sounded like frogs in a millpond. It reminds me of some of our Holiness friends, all of them leading a prayer at the same time. One of them said to me in debate one time, "Well, the Bible says they lifted up their voices and said." Then I said, "Yes, but they all said the same thing; but the frogs in the millpond don't say the same thing." When Christians lift up their voices, they all pray the same prayer, which necessitates that someone lead the prayer. (Acts 4). I would like to see the "fellar" who could record what these Holiness crowds say. They speak "forty-eleven" different things at the same time. That is confusion. God through Paul legislated peace or no disturbances in assemblies. If something was revealed to one while another was speaking, then he had to wait until the other one sat down. Speaking was to be one by one. Women are to keep silence in the churches, in the assemblies of the saints where men are.

Consider a different situation. Some of our women's colleges have a church made up of women, like Montevallo in Alabama. There was a ladies' congregation there in which they worshipped with no men present. What would you say about a lady praying in that assembly? Well, it would be perfectly all right since the very thing that Paul was trying to prevent is not present in that kind of an assembly. Paul was not merely trying to regulate an assembly, but to keep women from exercising authority over men. If a woman were to preach a sermon from the pulpit, she would be exercising authority over the men in the audience. They must sit and listen or go out; if they go out they miss the God appointed worship in which they are commanded to participate. It would not be fair to the men.

After the assembly is over, a woman can talk in the meeting house the same as the rest of us. Too, she can teach a children's class somewhere in the meeting house; that is not the church. Remember, Paul said, "If therefore, the whole church be come together into one place." He did not address the 10:00 Bible class, which is private study.

I was debating with an anti-Sunday School preacher from Birmingham who said there is no such thing as privacy about it; it is not private! He

said, whenever a lady teacher teaches a class, regardless if she teaches children, it is public teaching because we invite the public. In response, I said, "All right, you have been engaging in some of the most shameful things that I have ever heard mentioned. If your position is correct, you are guilty of having people baptized, before and after which they dress and undress publicly. Because they dressed and undressed in a room in the meeting house it was public; you put them on public display. Shame on you!"

Then, in order to get him to see that we can have simultaneous classes, I called attention to this fact: If while half a dozen boys or men were changing clothes in the men's room, one of the elders taught them the importance of attending all the services of the church, reading their Bibles everyday, praying every day, and living their religion; if at the same time one of the ladies taught ladies the same thing, would that be simultaneous teaching? Or, are they all together because they are all in the same meeting house? Well, if they are together, then they would be dressing and undressing together. That would be a shameful spectacle! If they would not be together, your doctrine is wrong.

Simultaneous classes are not regulated by God in these passages. He commanded them to teach, but he did not tell them whether it had to be in classes or out of classes, in large classes or small classes, in men's classes, or women's classes, or children's classes. The command is to teach all nations. Use classes if they are expedient. Have a women's class taught by a lady if you wish; add to it children's classes. All that matters is hearkening to Paul who said, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man..." Women must obey his injunction, "Let your women keep silence in the churches..." Women are not in the church when they are in a class teaching children. These children usually are not members of the church. Even if they were, there is not anything wrong with women teaching members of the church, provided they are not teaching over men.

Then, Paul continued with further instruction for women, "And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home..." If they would learn anything more than what was presented in the assembly by the speaker or speakers, they were to ask their own husbands, but not there. At home does not necessarily mean questions could only be asked at **home**. For instance, suppose you were in California and you go to worship and, being a woman, wanted to ask your husband about something. Would you have to wait until you returned to Memphis, Tennessee in order to ask him? Could a woman ask her husband half-way between here

and California? Could she ask him at a motel? Would she have to wait until they got all the way back? Could she not ask him here in the city? Would she have to wait until they got to their home? Could she not even ask him out on the porch? Would she have to wait until they got inside? Are not the extremes ridiculous to which people will go when they are riding a hobby.

Do not put **church house** in I Corinthians 14: 34,35, for it does not mean that. It is private teaching that women may do. However, public teaching in the public assembly of the church, where men are, is out of order for a woman. "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for a woman to speak in a Bible class of children" is not what the Bible says. Ladies' Bible classes are not addressed either (I Cor. 14). Neither is speaking to boys and girls regulated here by Paul.

It is a shame for a woman to speak in the church. When brethren come together in one place, the church comes together. The church is not a house that is already together. So, let us remember that we are to take no liberties with things that God has said. When a woman starts to preach from the pulpit, she is out of order. If we are not careful now, we will drift because some of our young people do not know the Bible. They know what much of it says, but they do not know the rules of interpretation. Therefore, with zeal and enthusiasm, they will digress if we are not careful.

Under weak elders women could assume the pulpits, though they probably would not call it preaching. The men would be in the audience. Another step and we would have regular women preachers like the Christian Church. One of the differences between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church is that they have woman preachers and we do not. They do not know the Bible on it. Some say Paul was an old bachelor and that he was prejudiced against women. I do not believe a word of that. Paul was a gentleman; he never did reflect unfavorably against women any more than he did against men.

All classes, women's classes and children's classes, properly fall in the category of liberty. We may have classes or not. We do not divide on this point, though they who do not want classes claim we are trying to force them to have classes. They would have you believe that, but that is not the issue; that is not true. We are not canvassing to impell them to have simultaneous Bible classes. They are driving the words that stretch the law, and they are doing it this way: they are making a law in a realm of liberty. God simply told us to teach and didn't tell us how, leaving the **how** up to our judgment. We are contending for that liberty, that right to judgment, and the option to do whatever we see fit without others making

a law to force us to do otherwise. They are trying to press that law, and they are driving that wedge. Any church would still be a church of Christ though it decided not to have simultaneous classes. If they left it in the realm of liberty, and said, "We believe it better to teach the Bible in one group, just like the preacher's sermons," there would be no clash. Then, if they believed it was better to teach that way, we would say, "Go ahead, brother; God bless you." Instead, they tell us we cannot have classes. They withhold their fellowship from us if we don't do it their way. They create a strife and make themselves a faction or **splinter group**.

We would be sinners if we made a religious law. If we proclaimed that all of the churches in the brotherhood must have Sunday morning Bible classes, we would be sinning by originating man-made law just like theirs. Their law is: "No church in the brotherhood is allowed to have simultaneous Bible classes." It is their law; it is not God's law; God did not make it. God just left to human judgment the **how** of teaching, just like he left the choice of tools to Noah's judgment. Further, to Noah was left the construction of the rooms in the Ark and the sizes they should be. You see then, how simple is the distinction between general and specific instructions.

Consider **preaching** as preaching the Gospel to all the world and every creature. The technical difference between preaching and teaching is nearly always narrowed to religion, whereas teaching may include mathematics, science, or art. The church has options regarding places and methods by which teaching or preaching may be done. Teaching may be accomplished by television, radio, newspapers, or by example. The church may build a house in which to do the teaching and the preaching, or it may buy a tent. There is liberty here. So it is with other matters. **Prayer** is an area in which there is some liberty. About fifteen days ago, I spoke three nights in a place where the church has been terribly disturbed by one brother in their congregation who did say that one cannot pray standing up. He believed if one does not kneel, God will not hear prayer. He was about to tear up the congregation with that hobby.

The Lord said "Pray," but he did not establish any certain posture of the body required in order to pray. He commanded us to pray. Examples of praying are bound, but the examples of the posture of it are not bound. We have examples in the Bible of people lying down, sitting, and standing in prayer. You may believe Mark 11:25, "And when ye stand praying..." is standing **on your knees**. Well, let us see if it is. **Stand** comes from the same Greek word which is applied to the relatives of Jesus in Matthew 12:46, 47. The Lord's brethren were standing outside, desiring to speak to him. Do you think they were there on their knees waiting to speak to him?

I would say that is a far-fetched idea. We read that a publican stood and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The posture he exhibited did not justify one way over another. The posture is not the important matter; it is the posture of the soul that matters; it is a humble heart that counts.

We have the command to give on the first day of the week. We are to lay by in store as we prosper according to our ability (I Cor. 16: 1,2). The proper explanation of the passage is the first day of **every** week. It has within it the same Greek word, **kata**, which elsewhere is translated **every**. Titus was to ordain elders in **every** city (Titus 1:5). McKnight's translation, Goodspeed's, and many other translations read: "**first day of every week.**" Some of them put it somewhat ungrammatically, as though we had more than one first day. They did it that way in order to get it in. The idea is in the original language and both translations record it correctly. Why didn't the **King James** translation put it in there; the translators did not think it was necessary. What Sabbath were the Jews to keep holy; they were to keep every one of them. It is the same idea and principle as contributing on the first day of the week. The translators believed it to be unnecessary to confuse the grammatical structure of the passage by placing "every" therein. Concerning the collection itself, it matters not whether you give cash or a check or how it is collected. You may sing a song as we used to while the congregation marched around and put the contribution on a table as they passed by it. That was confusion. The aisles were narrow, about a third of the size of this one. Sometimes a woman with a baby in each arm would come to **Scripturally** put it on the table.

Once, I had a funeral to preach, so I suggested that they pass the hat that day to take up the collection. One old sister came to me about ready to cry, and said, "You're going to do it like the Methodists, taking up a collection." Well, I said, "Paul took up a collection." And she said, "Oh no, Paul didn't do that; the Methodists started that." I said I Corinthians 16:1 refers to a collection for the Saints; therefore, they took up a collection. We should not object to the method since the Lord did not tell us **how**. We are to do it together. We are not commanded to lay something aside at home. One old fellow said he always laid something in store by itself; he put it in the clock at home. He put it in the clock every Sunday morning. Well, I doubt that he had the right idea.

What is the difference between generic and specific authority? Specific authority is a command which is narrow enough to address a specific point. A generic command is a general command that allows the exercise of liberty or choice in its performance. We hope not to have any confusion

in that realm, but we do not know what confusion there may be until it manifests itself and requires corrective action.

Bless you.

Biographical Sketch



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Frank D. Young was born near Nashville, Tennessee in November, 1909. He is married to the former Gracie Nichols, daughter of Gus Nichols. They have two children. He entered Freed-Hardeman College in 1934 and did further work at Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee. He has preached locally in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. His last full-time preaching work prior to becoming an instructor at the Memphis School of Preaching was with the East Hill church in Pulaski, Tennessee. In 1970, the Youngs moved to Memphis, Tennessee where brother Young became a full-time instructor in the Memphis School of Preaching, in which capacity he ably served until April, 1981. During his last six years in Memphis, he preached for the church in Stanton, Tennessee. Upon retiring from the Memphis School of Preaching, he and his wife moved to Jasper, Alabama where he continues to give much time to teaching Bible classes and preaching.

Chapter Two

The Faith Must Live

by Frank D. Young

There are many reasons why I cannot do, in the time allotted, what ought to be done today. The subject, **The Faith That Lives**, involves every word the Bible says. There is not a word in the 66 books of the Bible that is not involved in some way in our faith. There was never a time in history when there were not people who, according to the divine record, did not believe in God Almighty. The faith that lives is, of course, the revelation that God Almighty has given to mankind. In the tenth chapter of the book of Romans, beginning with verse five, the apostle Paul contrasted the righteousness of the law with the righteousness of faith. He emphasized that the righteousness of the law was demonstrated by Moses. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." But, in contrast to that, Paul wrote that the righteousness which is of faith says, "...who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" The righteousness which is of faith says, "That if thou shalt...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:5-7, 9, 10). In the eighth verse, in the very heart of that reading, the apostle Paul emphasized that the righteousness of faith which we preach is the word of faith. To make a long story short, the faith must live if you and I live.

The golden text of Paul's writings is, "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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16,17). A kindred passage is Hebrews 10:38, 39, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe to the saving of the soul." The faith must live if you and I live.

The word **faith**, as I think you would know, is used in a number of ways in the Bible. It is used as a condition of our pardon. Our Saviour said, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not

shall be damned.” Believe in the Gospel. Or, as the eunuch said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” merely expressed one condition of man’s pardon.

However, the word **faith** is also used in the sense of one’s loyalty, devotion, and dedication to the service of God. In Romans 1:8, the apostle Paul penned, “...Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” People saw the devotion and the fidelity of the people in Rome. In fact, in Romans 16:19, the apostle referred to it again when he wrote, “For your obedience is come abroad unto all men...” There the word **faith** is used in the sense of loyal devotion in the service of God.

Yet, the word **faith** is used in a comprehensive sense. It is thus used in John 3:16. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Incidentally, I have not stopped to tell you that the word **faith** and the word **believe** mean the same thing. They simply are different parts of speech. John 3:16 makes use of the word believe and refers to **faith** in the comprehensive sense.

That **faith** is used in different senses is well demonstrated by contrasting Acts 26:27 with John 3:16. In John 3:16 it is said that one who believes on Jesus shall not perish. But, in Acts 26:27, it is said that one did believe on Him, and yet, this man perished.

Paul said, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know thou believest.” Here was a man, friends, who believed the testimony that God had given of the past. Here was a man who in his own mind, had come to think this is right. The prophets told of the Christ, yet this man did not obey what God said.

The word **faith** is also used in the sense of a system or a great body of truth. In Acts 6:7, as the Scripture emphasizes the multiplication of the disciples and the spread of the Word of God, it is written that “a great company of priests were obedient to the faith.” They were people expressing their faith in God and in Christ as they came to obey the will of God Almighty. They were obedient to the faith. In that same sense we find faith used in Acts Thirteen. Remember Paul went to the island of Cyprus, and while there, a man “desired to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:7). The next verse says the sorcerer sought to turn him from “the faith.” “The faith” is simply a reference to the great system that God gave man to save him. For that reason, it is said in Galatians 1:23 that the apostle Paul preached the faith which he once destroyed.

I am now ready to refer to Jude 3, wherein Jude emphasized for us that we ought to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.” My brethren and friends, faith is based upon

testimony. Faith is based upon the truth that there is a fact, which fact has been revealed to mankind. There is no faith where there is no testimony. No one believes anything about which he has not heard. No one ever believed in the existence of any man about whom he has not heard. No one believes one thing about the will of Christ where there is no testimony. For this reason, therefore, in Galatians 3:23, the apostle Paul declared, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed." He clearly stated that the faith was revealed, and that before the faith was revealed we were under another system; we were under the law.

There was a time when faith had not come; though, there was never a time when there were not people who believed in God. This passage, therefore, emphasizes that there is a system known as the system of faith. There is a great body of truth, simply, the will of God. Even more specifically, the New Testament of our Lord equals the system of faith. We were kept under the law before the New Testament was given. Thus, the Scriptures emphasize that there was a time when faith had not come. In Romans 3:27, there is contrast between the law of Moses, the law of works, and the Gospel of Christ as the system of faith. So, "earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." It is through this system of faith that men can become sons of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I call your attention even to the punctuation of Galatians 3:26 in the **Revised Version**. "For ye are all sons of God," comma, "through faith," comma, "in Jesus Christ." Who are we? The one aim of all people who think right is to be sons of God Almighty. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God..." (I John 3:1). There is no son of God out of Jesus Christ; we are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul was simply saying that we become sons of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. The hope of mankind is this great system of truth known as "the faith."

Since we become sons of God by faith, we have the obligation to preach it. The Great Commission requires that we go to all the world and preach the Gospel, the faith of the Gospel, the Will of God. Though we must do this in order that we may become the sons of God, there are warnings in the Bible that men will seek to turn mankind from the faith, just as was done on the island of Cyprus when the sorcerer sought to turn the deputy from the faith. Scripture further illustrates this point in the Parable of the Sower. The devil came and took away the Word of God from their hearts lest they should believe and be saved. When he seeks to rob us of faith in God, he is simply seeking to remove the Word of God from our hearts.

Because of that principle, after Paul and Barnabas had been on the first missionary tour, they returned to confirm the souls of the disciples and exhort them that through many tribulations they must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). They exhorted them, what? The words I left out were "to continue in the faith." It is, therefore, needful for all of us to continue in the faith if we as sons of God are to enjoy the everlasting presence of God Almighty. And so, he exhorted them to continue in the faith that through many tribulations they could enter into the kingdom of God.

This system of faith is the hope of the world for unity. When one reads Ephesians 4:3, he finds the great requirement of God for all of us is to give diligence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Holy Spirit has never one time authorized division among any people who would do the Will of God, except, of course, in the sense that there are always divisions between truth and error, between right and wrong. God's people have always had a plan whereby they could be one in Jesus Christ our Lord. When Paul wrote to give diligence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," he further penned, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:3-6). There is only one faith. Of what faith are you? If you are of Christ, if you are a child of God through the Gospel of Christ, you and I are of the same faith. Paul, therefore, emphasized that in being diligent "to keep the unity of the Spirit," we must do it based upon the one faith. There is not one thing in the faith of the Gospel of Christ that promotes division among the people of God. Based upon this one faith, all can be one; all can be united.

Men seldom have been divided over things in the Bible. We are usually divided over things out of the Bible. On what day shall we observe the Lord's supper? There will never be any argument if people believe the faith of the Gospel of Christ. Jesus said, "...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." However, he did not say, "He that believeth and is baptized **in running water** shall be saved." We are divided over things not in the faith (over things that are not in the Bible), rather than over things revealed in the Word of God. James wrote, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jam. 1:27). He did not say, "Except you adopt a child into your home, you cannot care for the childless and the

homeless.” James did not say to do it this way or that way, he simply said it is pure and undefiled religion to do it. People are divided today, not because of what the faith says, but because of our substituting our faith, our beliefs, and our opinions for the Word of God.

Remember Galatians 1:23 where brethren marveled how Paul preached “the faith” which he once destroyed. Friends, Paul preached “the faith.” What is involved in preaching “the faith”? Well, there are many expressions in the Bible that equal the same thing. This apostle said, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...” (I Cor. 15:1). When Paul preached “the faith,” he preached the Gospel. When he preached the Gospel, he preached “the faith.” Paul stated, “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and, wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you.” Incidentally, the **Revised Version** says, “...if ye hold fast to the word which I preached unto you...” Here the apostle, in preaching the faith of Christ, preached the Gospel of Christ.

In Acts 9:20, after his conversion, Paul preached the reverse of what he formerly declared. The Bible records that he immediately preached that Christ is the Son of God. When this man preached “the faith,” he preached the Gospel. When he preached the Gospel, he preached the fact that Christ is the Son of God. There was no difference in the message of Paul and the message of other disciples. Therefore, in Acts 8:4, it is said of the early disciples, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” They preached the **Word**, the **Faith**, the **Gospel**, and **Christ the Son of God**.

Again in Acts Eight, after the emphasis that the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word, verse five, records that Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ unto them. The disciples went everywhere preaching the Word. This one man was singled out as he preached the Word; note that he proclaimed Christ unto them. In his proclamation of the Christ, it is said, in verse twelve, that when they believed the things that Philip spoke concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women. No one preaches the Christ who does not preach the kingdom of Christ. No man preaches the Christ who does not preach the name, the authority, of the Christ. No man preaches the Christ who does not tell men how to get into the body of Christ, how to obey Christ that their sins may be forgiven. Therefore, 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.

believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

Because both Jews and Gentiles were lost, God in the one body, by the cross, reconciled both unto the Christ, says Ephesians 2:16. The church is God's wisdom. It is God's plan for man. When Paul said that this is the wisdom of God, he said it is according to the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. The church was not an accident. The church is a planned institution. The church was a prearranged thing. Even many Old Testament suggestions ought to cause us to know that God purposed and willed even the definite time when the church of the Son of God should come into existence.

In Galatians 4:4, the Bible says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son..." The church could not have begun in the days of Abel, nor in Old Testament days. Christ came when, according to God's wisdom, the time and everything else was right. By virtue of his coming, the church of the living God was given to mankind. Therein man now is reconciled to God. Yes, the church is the wisdom of God. It is God's plan for man. The church is the redeemed. In Acts 20:28, Paul said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." All people purchased by the blood of Christ are in that for which his blood was shed. Every member of God's family is in the body of Christ.

Reverting for a moment to the expression, "the faith," and expressions like that, recall Galatians 6:10, where Paul exhorted Christians to "...do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The church is God's family. It is the household of faith. We are in it because of this system of faith. We are in it because we are sons of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the household of faith.

As one studies the church as God's wisdom, God's plan, God's means for redemption, he will note Paul emphasized that the church is the body of Christ. In the passage where he said that it is according to God's eternal purpose, he also said of it, "...which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." One might as well try to sever his head from his body as to separate Jesus Christ from the church of Jesus Christ. One might as well sever his blood from his body as to separate the Son of God from his own church. One might as well expect to isolate a king in a foreign land and still allow him to rule over his kingdom, as to think he can separate Jesus Christ as the King from the church which is his kingdom. And so, there is no relationship that you and I can enjoy toward Christ that is not to be enjoyed in the church, the body of Christ.

In Ephesians 1:22, 23, the Bible emphasizes that God "...put all things

under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body," note, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." "The **fulness** of him that filleth all in all." There is not a blessing, spiritually speaking, that we can have from Christ that is not in his body, the church. Hebrews 3:6 says that Christ is the Son over his house, over God's house. The church is God's family. If we are the family of God, if we are a brother of Christ our Lord, we are in the house of God, the church of God. Paul said the church is the fulness of him that filleth all in all. In Ephesians 3:19, the apostle exhorted, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with the fulness of God." All spiritual blessings that you and I might enjoy as the gift of God come through the knowledge of Jesus Christ whereby we are filled with the fulness of God. But the fulness of God is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, when I emphasize that to be true, I must not only preach the fulness of God in Christ, but the fulness of Christ is in his church, the body of Christ. And so, every spiritual blessing is in the church, in the body of Christ.

I say to you, therefore, today, there is not a more dangerous threat to the church than for any man to put it on a par or a plane with denominationalism. Brethren, denominationalism is the curse of the earth; it is the basic curse of the whole earth. I can go today into almost any schoolroom and talk about the flag, and I will be allowed to speak. But, I cannot go into the schools of our land and tell people what Christ said to do to be saved. Why? It is because of the curse of denominationalism. If the church today is a denomination, then you and I are wrong. We must, therefore, if we are a denomination, get back to the Bible.

Everywhere the Word of God went, the church went. When the Word of God was proclaimed, it produced nothing but the body of Christ. The Luke 8:11 account of the sower says the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom. The Mark 4:14 account reads, "The sower soweth the word." The Word of God produces the church.

Following the missionary tours of Paul, regardless of which conversion one would want to examine, he will find that truth was riveted in prospects' hearts every time. Read about Paul as he went to Philippi. Read about how he carried the Gospel for the first time into Europe. Review the conversion of Lydia and her household. Recall the conversion of the jailer. In later years, Paul wrote, "...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with its bishops and deacons." That's the church. Remember the apostle went to Corinth. The Bible records in Acts 18:8, "...Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Later, he wrote to them, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." The

church, friends, is the result of the Gospel of Christ. Where the Gospel goes, the church goes.

The faith of Christ must live if the church is to be known in this world. The faith of Christ must live if you and I are to become obedient to Christ and his will. The most glorious blessing we enjoy is the fact that we are sons of God, related to our Lord Jesus Christ, in the church, which is the household of faith. All of this has come to be because God Almighty has given to you and me the great system of faith. Therefore, we should contend earnestly "...for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." This system of faith is full, final, and complete. It needs no addition. It can have no subtraction. It needs no change. It meets every demand of every man. And if the Gospel of Christ today is not relevant, if it does not meet the needs of our age, then there is no law from God, and man but becomes a law unto himself. Thank you.

Biographical Sketch



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Max R. Miller is a native Tennessean, born and reared at Bruceston, Tennessee. For a number of years he has served as a teacher, deacon, and as an evangelist for the churches of Christ. He has done local work in Raleigh, North Carolina; Covington, Jackson, Murfreesboro, and Woodbury, Tennessee. Since 1976, brother Miller has preached for the church in Trenton, Tennessee. He is a frequent speaker on various lectureships and conducts a number of evangelistic meetings annually. Other experience includes work with daily radio, television, and prison ministries and director of the West Tennessee Children's Home. Brother Miller has edited a number of religious journals and presently edits **Spirit of Truth**, a publication of the Trenton church of Christ.

Chapter Three

Jesus Christ Is the Messiah

by Max R. Miller

Jesus went into the countryside teaching many, often multitudes, though sometimes he would take his disciples aside and teach them privately. One occasion is recorded in John Four. As Jesus and his disciples were going through the countryside, at about noon, as we all customarily do, they began to hunger. Jesus sent his disciples into the little city of Sychar nearby to provide for their daily lunch.

John records that our Lord was tired. The Lord came to an old well which was dug long ago by Jacob. As he sat there, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus began to converse with her. After a while, our Lord had so intrigued this woman that she even admitted that he must be a prophet. She was impressed by his sincerity and by his truthful revelations. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." The Lord's response appears in verse twenty-six. "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." In the conversation with the woman, a very sinful creature, our Lord kindled a desire in her to know something about the Messiah. She said that she believed the Messiah would come, and Jesus informed her that the Messiah had come; he was the Messiah.

Let us turn to the Old Testament for a moment and search for the word **Messiah**. Although the word is very familiar to all Bible students, it will not be found recorded upon many pages of the Old Testament; the word **Messiah** appears only twice in all of the Old Testament. Concerning the Hebrew, the word **mashiach** appears thirty-nine times, thirty-seven of which it is translated **anoint** or **anointed**. Twice it is translated Messiah (Dan. 9:25,26).

The word **Messiah**, I understand, means first, to rub as with the hand, but it carries more meaning than that. It carries the idea of rubbing with the hand as though applying unguent or ointment (just as we do sometimes with our home remedies, a salve or an ointment). We may sometimes apply ointments to aching parts of our bodies for their soothing and healing effect. The meaning of the word **anoint** also has an expanded significance when we recall that in the Old Testament anointing was for dedication or sanctification of men or instruments unto holy and divine service. Samuel anointed Saul as king of Israel, David after him. Some of the prophets of the Old Testament were also anointed, symbolizing dedication or sanctification to holy service. The instruments in the

tabernacle were anointed too, to show that they were dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to the service of God. Therefore, the Hebrew word **mashlach** means to anoint and to set aside for holy service to God.

Additionally, in the Septuagint, written three centuries before the coming of Christ, in all thirty-nine references this word **mashlach** is rendered **Christos**, or Christ. These things point to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, conceived of the Holy Spirit of God, came as the one that was anointed of God, consecrated, sanctified unto holy service to bring the kingdom unto all men, and to bring redemption and salvation to all souls who seek salvation.

The prophets spoke in ancient times of the anointed of God or the Lord's anointed. The first one to identify Jesus Christ as the anointed was Andrew, a very humble disciple of John the Baptist. John 1:41 records that Andrew went to his brother, Peter, and said, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." All of the Old Testament prophets looked forward to the coming of the anointed of God. Daniel specifically spoke of the Messiah. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote concerning the birth of Jesus and the Lord's great and notable deeds. But it is John who took the pen of inspiration and made known that the Word was with God, the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1-3, 14). It was John who recorded that the Word began to circulate in and around Judea, during which time Andrew came under his influence. It was the lowly and humble Andrew who proclaimed Jesus first as the Messiah, which being interpreted is Christ.

Jesus made this claim for himself as we have already noted in John Chapter Four as he spoke to the Samaritan woman. Yet, there were others also who acknowledged the fact that he was the Messiah, the Christ of God. We are familiar with the time Jesus came unto the coasts of Caesarea Philippi and asked his disciples, "Whom do ye say that I am?" Peter responded by saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:15,16). In Luke 9:20, the words of Peter are recorded a little differently, "The Christ of God." Peter was saying, "Thou art the anointed of God, thou art the Messiah." Recall that in Matthew's account of Peter's statement about Jesus, the Lord pronounced a blessing upon Simon Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." It was a heavenly revealed proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

MODERN DENIALS OF THE MESSIAH

As I was a boy growing up, I do not remember ever having to be taught that Jesus was the Christ or that God existed. I am thankful for that heritage. Yet, I realize that in the world today there is a distinction being made between **Jesus** and **Jesus the Christ**. In the modern, liberal world of theology and religion, there are a great number of so-called Christian men, who as great and influential, religious leaders make a very subtle and devious acknowledgement of Jesus. In their hypocrisy and deceit they do not acknowledge him to be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus, yes, but the Christ, no! They deny his deity, his eternal nature, his heavenly power, and his return to the throne of glory where he reigns now and forever.

Many years ago a man by the name of Schleiermacher, reportedly the father of modern theology, sowed the seed bed of modernism and liberalism which is bearing such tremendous fruit today, even among the children of God. Schleiermacher did not recognize Jesus as the Christ. He said that "Christ's saving activity is reduced to example and teaching, at most, to the spiritual influence of a great and unique historical person." To picture Jesus Christ, according to Schleiermacher, he may be compared to John Knox, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Thomas Aquinas, or any other great religious man of history. Along side of those men, on a level and equality with them, Schleiermacher believed Jesus should be recognized.

Karl Barth, years later, said that "Behind the New Testament picture of Christ, we should see only the **Rabbi of Nazareth**, rather unexceptional along side many other religious figures." Karl Barth, the great theologian often quoted by our brethren, said that Jesus of Nazareth was only another of the rabbis, one of the great teachers of Israel. He gave him no higher prominence than Schleiermacher.

There is another modernist whose influence is tremendous in the world today and who is perhaps one of the most frequently quoted men in our time, a man by the name of Paul Tillich. Tillich wrote much, has had a tremendous influence, and claimed for himself "no more faith than the village atheist." I suppose he is one of the so-called **Christian atheists**. In his writings he rarely referred to either Jesus or the Christ, but usually he addressed the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ. In other words, a man by the name of Jesus, a rather common and ordinary man of his time among his people, became so engrossed in the Old Testament

Scriptures and the prophecies concerning the anointed of God, the king who would come to redeem Israel, that he transfigured all of the prophecies upon himself and began to believe that he was the Christ. Tillich joined the great number of others who believe the New Testament pictures Jesus as the Christ, one who was imitating the Messiah, the Christ of God.

Another theologian quoted by liberals is James A. Pike, late Episcopal bishop from California. Although he traveled among his most liberal brethren, he even was tried for heresy by them. The man was so confused with modern theology, he cut all safe moorings from the Faith, the infallible Word, and his life became as he was in his religion: unfastened, without mooring, and without any direction. He died in the Sinai Peninsula, lost and searching for the way back to his vehicle. He was lost in life physically and also had lost all concepts of deity and all perspective of Jesus as the Christ. He said that Jesus' world view was that of his time, that the concepts of the kingdom of God which Jesus stressed were introduced into Judaism in the fifth century B.C. under Zoroastrian influence. He was influenced by the Essenes, he had a limited mind, as is true of every man. In other words, Pike was simply saying that Jesus imbibed of the spirit of his day concerning the kingdom and that he was influenced by the sect of the Essenes, those who withdrew themselves from the reality of life. Further, Pike described Jesus' mind as comparable to yours or mine. He acknowledged our Lord to be Jesus, a historical figure, but he denied the fact that Jesus is the anointed, the Christ, the Messiah. My friends, we need to understand these things when we begin to read liberal writings. When we appeal to writings which speak of Jesus as a historical figure, we allow ourselves to be influenced by liberal theology. Our souls, the souls of our brothers and sisters, and the kingdom are at stake.

PREHISTORIC GLORY OF THE MESSIAH

This evening, the first point with which I wish to deal in detail is the prehistoric glory of the Messiah, the Christ of God. By prehistoric, I mean simply that period which precedes the existence of man. In this period, this Being existed because he is eternal in nature. He has a divine nature which predated the beginnings of all things. John 17:5 records a prayer of Jesus which declared his eternal existence. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Micah's prophecy of the Christ reads with similar significance. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little

among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2).

Here Micah was speaking of the Messiah. He was to come from the tribe of Judah and become ruler in all of spiritual Israel. Further, he said that the Messiah has no beginning. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In a discourse with the Jews, Jesus made a declaration pertaining to his eternal existence. "Before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8:58). If we might be permitted to coin another tense in the Greek, we could say that Jesus, claimed to be the "I AM," referring to himself as the Messiah in the **eternal present tense**. There never was a time when he was not; there never was a time when he did not exist; there is neither place in time nor eternity when our Christ came to be. John tells us that, in essence, Jesus Christ is God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1,2).

Romans 1:3, 4, speaks of the nature of the man, Jesus, the anointed of God. "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Therein, Paul addressed the fleshly nature of Jesus Christ as the seed of David and his divine nature according to the spirit of holiness. Though he was flesh and blood, Jesus is, in essence, God.

Whatever the father is, so also is the son. That is the way it is in our home. I am flesh and blood, I am mortal with a mind and an eternal soul. I have a wonderful son who also preaches the Gospel on occasion; I rejoice in him and am thankful for him. He is, in essence, what I am. He, too, is flesh and blood; he, too, is mortal; he, too, possesses an everlasting soul. So, in essence, we are the same. It is likewise with the Christ the Son and God the Father.

Jesus not only was before creation, he is the instrument through which creation occurred. I have already quoted John 1:1, which, in part, says, "In the beginning was the Word.....The same was in the beginning with God." Notice also verse three: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Similarly, Colossians 1:16,17 reads, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Here the inspired apostle Paul affirmed that nothing was created which was not created by this divine Being.

In the religious world, there are people who want to teach us and cause us to believe (surrendering our faith) that Christ at one time did not exist. I speak principally of those who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. They, among others, deny the eternal nature of Christ. They may direct us to Revelation 3:14. On one occasion I was so directed. That caused me to study the Scriptures in a more wholesome way. This is a passage of Scripture by which someone might make one think Jesus was created by God to be the creator of all things. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works..." Notice, in reference to this person, he is referred to as the beginning of the creation of God. From this, some would have us to believe that Christ was created, that there was a time when he did not exist, that God created him and turned over to him all other creation. The Jehovah Witness's **New World Translation of Christian Greek Scriptures** thusly reads beginning in Colossians 1:15.

Therefore, I began to study the word **beginning** in "the beginning of the creation of God." I found in the Greek text that the word for beginning is **arche**. It is recorded in other places in the Scriptures as well. It means the one who is the first cause, the one who is the leader. It is found in Hebrews 2:10 concerning Christ, "...to make the **captain** of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Thereby is Jesus referred to as the cause of their salvation, the one who caused it. The word also appears in Hebrews 5:9, "...he became the **author** of eternal salvation unto all those that obey him." The word **author** is **arche**.

Jesus is the cause of salvation for all those who obey him. Consequently when I turn back to Revelation 3:14, I find there that it is not saying that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was created by God, but that Jesus Christ is the cause of all creation, just like John said of him in John 1:1-3. John did not contradict himself; the Holy Spirit did not contradict himself. Our Messiah is not a created being, but is from everlasting unto everlasting. He is a glorious figure in time and eternity. Jesus said of himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty....the first and the last....I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:8, 11, 18). This is the first view we have of the Messiah in the Holy Writ, the eternal, preexistent state of the Messiah.

THE MESSIAH COMES INTO THE WORLD OF MAN

Additionally, the Messiah came into the world dedicated to a purpose.

In keeping with his anointing, he came into the world to redeem man from his sins. Man had lost a lot in father Adam; man had lost a lot through the flesh. But, that which was lost in Adam, Jesus Christ our saviour came to restore. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:21, 22).

A question, though, arises in the minds of many thoughtful students of the Bible. When Adam sinned, he was in need of a saviour to redeem him from the damnation of sin. In the New Testament the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, is recorded. However, between Genesis Chapter Three and Matthew Chapter One has been a vast elapse of time. Why did Jesus delay so long in coming unto lost mankind? Why did he not come immediately when Adam was in need of redemption and forgiveness? Several thousand years passed in which sin became more prominent in the world. Sin became so prominent that God on one occasion determined to destroy all living souls except Noah who found grace in his sight.

Why did he wait so long? I do not know. There may be some things which are worthy of our thought and consideration. God has set forth the wonderful scheme of redemption. We do not always understand the mind of God in all of its fulness because he has not revealed all of his mind to man. He has given unto us great and precious promises, in which are a number of prophecies pointing to the coming of the Messiah. It required time for them to be fulfilled.

Then too, another reason for the Messiah's delay may have been that man needed to realize that all of his schemes to save himself could not succeed. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, though a young man at the time, 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). Solomon said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). The Roman epistle begins with the declaration that the Gentiles were unable to save themselves, and the Jews were unable to save themselves in spite of the blessings with which they had been blessed. Perhaps, man needed to come to the realization that he needed someone else to save him!

The great delay about which we have been talking fit God's plan for preparing man for the Messiah. The law was given so man could know what sin is and realize the tragedy of sin. In the Old Testament are types and shadows which did not bring man's redemption, but they pointed to the great antitype, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Galatians 3:24 teaches that that law prepared Israel until **the faith** which was in Christ Jesus our Lord

came. The law served as a tutor or a schoolmaster to shape, prepare, and educate people to receive the glory of God's Messiah. Yet, when he did come, he came in the flesh. He could have come with angel's wings or in some form which man had never seen before. It was God's wisdom that Jesus came in the likeness of flesh. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

The wisdom of God in sending Christ into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh can be seen when it is understood that thereby he was able to qualify as man's great high priest. The heart of the Hebrew epistle deals with the priesthood of Christ and the sacrifice which he made as the high priest for mankind. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:14,15). God sent Jesus into the world in the flesh so our Messiah would know the flesh and the flesh would know him. God sent him in the flesh to be our high priest.

One of God's greatest and most holy motives in sending Christ in the flesh was so men could know the nature of God. Hebrews 1:3, speaking of the Christ, reads, "Who being in the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person..." Jesus Christ is in the brightness of the glory of God, the express image of God, not in a physical sense, but in all the purity and holiness of deity. Man had never known God like that before. Man had known God through the Old Testament such as when Israel came to Sinai. Moses ascended to the top of Mount Horeb to commune with God and to receive the law. The people, however, were fearful; they could not approach the presence of God on that holy mountain. God said that no foot should touch it and even if a goat were to run across the base of the mountain it should be killed. That mountain was quaking and belching fire. The people were in terror of the wrath of God. From a study of the Psalms and the sweet prophecies of old, the God of the Old Testament is revealed to be a God of love, compassion, and tenderness, though many did not know God in that way. But, when Jesus came in the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, man began to see in God a quality of holiness, purity, kindness, forbearance, compassion, and wisdom, all of which they saw in the Messiah, the Christ of God, who came in the flesh. When Jesus came in the flesh, man was able to receive atonement for his sins. This was the mission of the Messiah.

**WITH THE MESSIAH'S COMING
WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE ATONEMENT**

In his coming, Jesus did many things; the world has been blessed simply because he was a great teacher. Jesus taught like no other. Jesus was wise like no other. He gave to the world a philosophy which exceeds all of the philosophies of the pagans throughout all ages; but Jesus did not come to give man a philosophy. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He came into this world that he might taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus came on a soul-saving mission from heaven to earth. The Hebrew epistle declares that it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Heb. 9:12). Romans 5:6 states that it was not possible for man to take away his sin. "For when we were yet without strength [ability, MRM], in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans Chapter Five exhibits some of the most beautiful Scriptures in the New Testament concerning redemption or atonement in Christ Jesus our Lord. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom. 5:9-11). Isaiah spoke of the coming of the Messiah and how he was to be bruised and beaten for our iniquities or sins. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:4-6). "Jesus 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" (Heb. 2:9). "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). In His blood we have redemption (Eph. 1:7). Christ was prepared the body (Heb. 10:5), that the body might be given as a sacrifice for the sins of man to atone before the Father who is in heaven.

JESUS CHRIST: THE EXCLUSIVE PROPHET OF GOD

In closing this evening, I want to emphasize two or three things about the Messiah. Jesus, the Messiah, is the great prophet of God. Jesus, the Messiah, is the great prophet of Israel. In the Old Testament there were

many prophets; there was a school of the prophets, and there were prophets who apparently did little else, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Moses, and David. All of those who spoke for God were prophets, and that is exactly what the word **prophet** means: one who speaks for another. The prophet of God is one who speaks of God. Jesus Christ is God's Prophet. There is not a message which comes to us today which does not come through God's exclusive Prophet, Jesus Christ.

The fact that Jesus Christ is God's **exclusive** Prophet today deserves emphasis. God's message for men today only comes through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1,2). In these last days, God has spoken unto us through (or by) his Son. That being true, excluded is the prophet, Joe Smith; excluded is the prophetess, Mary Baker Eddy; excluded is the prophetess Ellen G. White; excluded are the pompous prophets Russell and Rutherford and **Watchtower** and **Awake**. Excluded also are all of the organizations of men which prophesy and send forth an uncertain sound into the world; excluded are even those among us, the children of God, who claim to have latter day revelations. If they did not receive revelation through Christ and his word, they are false prophets. John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets" (false teachers) "are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

Jesus Christ is the Prophet of God about whom prophecies were uttered and written long ago. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee" (that is, like Moses,) "and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18,19). Notice the Prophet was to be chosen from among his brethren, that is, he was to be a Hebrew; he was to be like Moses. Also, note that God said he would put his words in the Prophet's mouth. Too, the Prophet was to speak unto men all which God commanded him. Recall as well that God said he would speak "in My name."

Appropriately, Jesus attributed his words to God. "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God..." (John 3:34). "My doctrine" (teaching) "is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him...as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:26-28). Of his apostles Jesus said, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me..." (John 17:8). Of course, when John wrote, he penned the Word of God.

Jesus was with his disciples for perhaps three and a half years, during which time he taught and prepared them for his departure. But, he promised not to leave them comfortless. I will not leave you orphan

children, but the Father will send another Comforter in My place. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Thereby, though Christ's earthly work was finished, and he was soon to ascend into the glory of heaven, his message, the Word of God, would continue to be with those who love the Truth and are hungering and thirsting after it. God provided that men would have his Word and Jesus Christ would continue to speak through the Spirit of God.

Notice that Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach his disciples all things. Additionally, the Spirit was to recall or bring all things to remembrance. Then in John 16:13 the apostle penned, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." I want to emphasize the "**All**." The Spirit was to guide them into "**All truth**." All of the truth of God which was ever to be revealed to mankind has been revealed to mankind through the Prophet, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God.

Some say that David Wilkerson's **Cross and the Switch Blade** is another book of Acts. That book has not been revealed by Christ. Those words are not inspired. My friends, the Bible, as we have it, is the inspired Word of God. The New Testament, spoken of as having been written in the blood of Jesus Christ, is the Word everlasting unto everlasting. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

THE PREEMINENT ONE IN TIME AND ETERNITY

In the concluding moments, I want to say this concerning Jesus, the Messiah: we must give unto Jesus preeminence in all things. In Colossians 1:18, where Jesus is said to be the head of the body, the church, Paul wrote that Jesus is to have preeminence in all things. That word simply means that Jesus comes before everything else. We see his preeminence in his authority, Matthew 28:18: "...All power" (authority, **ASV**)" is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Paul, in Colossians 3:17, wrote, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." When looking for authority, the everlasting Messiah, the Christ of God, is the authority of our lives, the guide of our destiny. He is to have the preeminence in the church. God has "...put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the

fulness of him that filleth all in all'' (Eph. 1:22,23). Neither God nor Jesus ever delegated this headship to any other man or woman. Therefore, the church must give Jesus the preeminent place in the kingdom of God.

My friends, and especially to you in the school of preaching, we must give Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the preeminent place in our preaching. It is sometimes interesting to hear man's thin philosophy; it is sometimes interesting to read and to search out the vain philosophies of men. My friends, let us never so belabor a congregation of people nor an audience of those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, let us never so abuse the blessed privilege of preaching the Gospel that we pile upon their burdened souls the philosophies of men and deny them the power that is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Let us never forsake the sacred duty that is ours in preaching God's Gospel and always to hold up Christ, speaking the things of his nature, his kingdom, and his salvation. Let us go into our Samarias as did Phillip and there preach Christ unto them. Let us find our eunuchs along the busy way as well as the deserted way, and let us preach unto them Jesus. Let us preach as Peter, as Phillip, as Paul, and as others preached. They always taught the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ, the coronation of God's Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Every faithful First Century preacher spoke of the greatness of Christ's salvation. They spoke of the power of his blood. They spoke of the fact that there is salvation in no other name than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the anointed of God, who came to this sin-stricken earth to bear on his own soul the sins of mankind. Because he did that, God has given him a name which is above every name, Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ of God, to whom every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10).

My friends, have you made Jesus the king of your heart? Have you come to the anointed One of God? Do you bend your knee unto the Eternal One that loved you so much that he came from the very glory and splendor of heaven to a sin-stricken world where he bore on Calvary's cross your sins? Do you love him? Do you glory in him? You cannot glory in him while out of him.

Biographical Sketch

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Billy R. Davidson was born August 17, 1934 in Bradford, Tennessee, the son of Mr. and Mrs. O.G. Davidson. Two brothers, David Davidson and Harrell Davidson, are also Gospel preachers. He is married to the former Helen Fugate, and they have two children. A graduate of Freed-Hardeman College, brother Davidson has done local work in several states and is presently with the Edgewood church of Christ in Columbus, Georgia.

Chapter Four

Keeping the Church Pure

by Billy R. Davidson

Today I have seen various displays emphasizing evangelism throughout the building. There is one at the very back for Western Samoa, one just outside the door for the state of Georgia, and I believe there are others scattered throughout the building. I am glad to see the emphasis that this school and other brotherhood schools place on taking the Gospel to the lost. But brethren, in giving emphasis to the Great Commission, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are to likewise give great emphasis to **keeping the church pure**.

If my Bible reads correctly (and I think it does), when Jesus gave the Great Commission, he told the disciples to "...teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." He also said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19,20). So, coupled with our efforts to establish the church in new places throughout the world, must be a constant effort also to maintain the purity of the church, in faith, in doctrine, and in practice. I do not believe that we can afford, in our missionary zeal, to neglect this great, all important area. We are not going to be pleasing to the Lord if we go somewhere and sow the seed, and then, do not teach and maintain a pure, unadulterated body of Christ in that particular place. Our efforts would be for nought.

I think this emphasis is further seen in the New Testament where we see that only one book was written telling people what to do to become Christians, but twenty-one others were written which emphasize how to live the Christian life, devoted to the Lord, as living sacrifices in spiritual service. So, this afternoon I want to emphasize **keeping the church pure**.

The account of Nehemiah in the Old Testament, rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem, is, I think, typical of the struggles that are involved in establishing and maintaining the church. Wherever we go (remote, isolated Western Samoa or populated, metropolitan Memphis, Tennessee), we are going to be faced with difficulties; we are going to face ridicule of our work similar to the ridicule which Nehemiah and his people faced. We are going to be faced, as they were, with those who might even conspire to make war against us; though not a flesh and blood war, some may launch a verbal war and do everything within their power to hinder or

completely stop the work in which we are involved. There will also be those who will seek to get us to compromise as some tried to persuade Nehemiah. Nehemiah, however, refused on all counts; he would not be overcome. When his enemies said, "If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall," they used the lowest form of ridicule, an insult.

If you were a carpenter building a house and someone said, "Well, I don't want to lean against it, because I'm afraid it would fall over," you might feel like throwing the hammer at him because he insulted your handiwork. Well, the devil will employ the instrument of ridicule and insulting remarks at every opportunity. He will try to cause one to absolutely give up the ghost, if you please, to stop a good work that needs to be done. But brethren, this ridicule, the warfare that will be waged against us, or even proposals for compromise on some point must not cause us to despair. We will not be defeated by these devices as long as we keep the church pure.

I am very grateful for the faithful eldership with which I work. Like every other eldership, they face some problems. (The preacher is not a problem there, I assure you.) There are some other problems, however, with which they must deal, and I am sure that they will deal with them in a sound, Biblical way. I am proud of this one fact.

I will never forget the second sermon which I preached there. I used Paul's statement in Galatians, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" I stated that the truth ought to be preached, not necessarily to make enemies, but if it made enemies, it was to be preached, nevertheless. It should be preached without fear or favor and in love. I concluded, "If I teach the truth and seek to show the way to heaven, then am I become an enemy?" When I finished that lesson, one of the elders followed me in the pulpit. And he said he wanted the congregation to know that "This eldership will stand behind that kind of preaching." Now brethren, if that won't make tears come to your eyes, nothing will. I hope you will have that experience someday. I had just moved from a place where every Monday morning I was taken to task for preaching the pure Gospel. Instead, to have elders stand behind me like that was a joy that was beyond my ability to express, almost even to comprehend.

If we will stand for the truth and seek to **keep the church pure**, we will not be defeated. I appreciate an eldership, whether it be one with which I work or one with which you labor, which will not cower before powers that be, the membership, or any other force of evil, to compromise, soft soap, or otherwise distort the written Word.

Notice, every Scripture quotation I will make today will be from the

King James Version of the Bible. I have no respect for the new modernistic **perversions**. I have a few of them, though I have not spent the first dollar for them. Each one was given to me by somebody else; I refuse to help the guys who write such perversions of the Scriptures make millions. I am just not going to do it, and I am not going to use them. **Perversions** are one of the most significant factors today undermining the purity of the church of our Lord.

I make no apologies for the **King James**. You young men who are going forth from here to preach, don't be ashamed of the **King James Version** and its "thee's" and "thou's," and the "thine's." Its language is majestic. I do not intend, however, to malign the **American Standard Version**. In fact, I brought one with me and I study and use it often. But, I do not quote scripture from it, because twenty-two years ago, when I started preaching, I began using the **King James Version** and I have not found any good reason to quit.

There are two points which I want to make before you this afternoon. If I do not say anything else, these are the two points which, I think, are essential to maintaining the purity of the church. First, pure doctrine must be preached. Secondly, pure lives must be lived.

Let's consider the first point. We know that the Word of God itself is pure. If I were to be the agency that contaminated it with something else, then I would stand condemned in the sight of God, even as the devil himself is. In Psalm 19:8, the writer said, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 119:140 reads, "Thy word is very (emphasis, Billy Davidson) pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." Proverbs 30:5 records, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." This portrays the pure message that we have. It comes from God, and I must proclaim that pure message as faithfully as I know how, and as pure as I find it in God's Word. When the Word is mixed with something else an impure word goes forth. It becomes contaminated by man. Since the Word is pure, my obligation as a teacher of the Word is obviously clear, to preach the pure Word.

We know that the Word is able to make one pure once he obeys it. In John 15:3, Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." In Eph. 5:26, he said concerning the church, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

But brethren, if we were to teach that salvation comes by baptism, without the Word, we would be guilty of teaching water salvation. Do you want to defend that position? I do not. Because salvation results from obedience to the Word, baptism is simply the instrument that God uses in

our obedience. There is no power in the water.

The power is in the Word. Is not that what Paul said in Romans 1:16? "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for **it is the power ...**" Have you ever thought of how restricting that word **the** is? The text does not say "**a power**"; if it were "**a power**," there might be another or other powers of God also. When Paul said, "...the gospel of Christ: for it is **the** power of God unto salvation..." he eliminated the possible reference to other powers. There is nothing which can rightly be classified as "the power of God unto salvation," other than the Gospel. It is a pure Word; it is able to make one pure or clean, upon obedience. In view of its purity and capacity to make one pure, every teacher has an obligation to teach and preach sound doctrine. That is a Bible statement for which no one needs to apologize nor be ashamed.

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus," Paul wrote (II Tim. 1:13). To Titus he penned, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). In other words, preaching must be examined to see if it has a Bible ring. Is it substantiated by book, chapter and verse? (I regret I missed the lecture this morning by brother Robert Taylor who addressed the Gospel in book, chapter, and verse.) Almost without exception, everywhere I preach, brethren appreciate preachers who quote Scripture freely instead of those who present flowery speeches, trying to exhibit their oratorical ability.

Some years ago, at a little place called Pleasant Grove, brother Robert Taylor presented a sermon entitled "Let the Bible Speak for Itself." In that lesson brother Taylor simply asked questions and quoted scripture to answer them. He made no comment of his own. I was so impressed I asked him for a copy of the outline. He graciously gave it to me, and then, I polished it and made a good sermon out of it (laughter). Whenever and wherever I have used that lesson, I have received several comments.

People are impressed when you quote Scripture. Brethren heed preaching in which Scripture is quoted. So, hold fast to sound words. Speak that which becomes sound doctrine, and do not be guilty of preaching anything else. Paul said in II Corinthians 2:17, "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God" (We don't want to be considered in that category, do we?): "but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

Brethren, let us realize that as we speak, we are speaking so that God hears; God knows. We should not try to build ourselves; we should try to build the cause of God. That is what Paul meant when he said, "...but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." Let us

not be numbered among the many which corrupt the Word of God. You and I know the penalty that is stated in Revelation 22:18, 19 for either adding to or subtracting from the Word of God.

This pure word must be guarded and maintained. By whom? First, by faithful elders, men who are neither afraid nor ashamed to stand for what the Bible says.

I hope you don't mind if I mention again the elders where I preach, because they are the ones with whom I am the closest associated currently. There were three families who were involved in operations that were sinful. They had a chain of convenience stores, similar to Seven-Eleven. They call it **The Pantry**. They started selling beer in these stores. I didn't know about it, but word got around. One day, the elders visited some of these stores and found it there. Then the elders told them in no uncertain terms, but yet in a spirit of love, that they had to quit selling beer or else they would be disfellowshipped. That is exactly what the elders had to do, and they did it. As it happened, all three families left us and went to another place. They were not disfellowshipped by us since they simply left. I don't know if the elders should have pursued it any further or not. They furnished all of the information the other congregation needs, and now I guess, since they are there, that congregation can take whatever action they deem necessary. However, it would have been totally wrong for our elders to allow these brethren to continue in their sinful way as long as they attended there and professed to be under the eldership.

Some elderships require preachers to answer questionnaires before they will engage them in Gospel meetings. I heard about a few preachers who refused to answer such questions. I wish some eldership would send me a questionnaire; it would comfort me to know there are elderships that diligent. It would not take me long to answer every question; if they said, "Do you believe this or that," I would answer everyone yes or no according to what I believe. If they did not want me in view of my answers, that is alright. I would, though, appreciate the fact that they thought enough to enquire.

Have any elders in the audience today ever enquired concerning what the preacher believes who is coming for your next meeting? Do you know for what he stands? Do you know whether or not he is going to compromise the Truth? Much of maintaining the purity of the church must be done by faithful elders who will hold to the Word of God and not be ashamed of it even in the face of the strongest opposition.

Paul told the Ephesian elders they were responsible for feeding the

church. I have two lovely, healthy children. My daughter is a junior at Freed-Hardeman College, and my son just graduated from high school last year; he is not presently in college. They are healthy and lively, for which I am grateful. Neither my wife nor I have ever mixed the least bit of poison with good food to give to our children. That would be foolish. We strove to ensure that they had good, wholesome, balanced meals, pure food that would in no way endanger their lives or contaminate their systems. Well, shouldn't we be just as careful what is taught in the classrooms and what is preached from the pulpit?

Brethren, in order to maintain the purity of the church, we must as carefully scrutinize the diet set before the children of God as we do the diet set before our children. If not, why not? We do not want our children to be poisoned, but yet, the children of God are sometimes taught almost anything in the classroom. How many elders even know what is taught in the classrooms? Do they regularly visit the classrooms in order to determine how and what the teachers are teaching? Do the elders examine every page and every word of class literature to ensure it is Biblically sound? We need that sort of diligence by elders in the church.

Too, if there were to come one into our midst who does not speak that which becomes sound doctrine we should admonish and warn him to "teach no other doctrine," as Paul said (I Tim. 1:3). Pure doctrine must be preached!

Pure lives must be lived in conjunction with the pure doctrine that is preached. Matt. 5:8 reads, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." We are to be pure in our speech, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (I Pet. 3:10). We are to be pure in deed, Paul wrote, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). We, as the church of our Lord, are compared to a chaste bride.

When I married, I wanted a girl that was clean, not just physically. I wanted a chaste bride. I did not want an orange over which everybody in town had slobbered. Why shouldn't the Lord have the same right to desire that his bride be the same way?

"Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Notice, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it" (the church) "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26). Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth in II Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Pure lives are to be led.

About twenty years ago it was not unusual to hear preachers cry loud and long against the things which are in the world, those sins which John addressed in I John 2:15-17. Preachers used to raise their voices against all kinds of worldliness. Four letter words were not spoken in public, but notice how far we have come today. When is the last time you preached a sermon against the short skirts, the long hair that men are wearing, the foul language often used today, or the promiscuous sex which we find portrayed on the television screen?

Brethren, have we begun seeking to please everybody? If we have, we are not encouraging brethren to live pure lives, modeling pure doctrine. Pure doctrine must be preached, and pure lives must be lived. However, pure lives will not be lived if we do not preach the kind of doctrine that will cause people to see the need for purity.

Though we need that kind of preaching, many have compromised with the world. We are instructed to, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). John also wrote in I John 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness" (And that's what many are doing), "we lie, and do not the truth." There are many who claim they are walking according to the dictates of God's Word, when, in reality, they are not! They are lying and do not the truth.

The following verse reads, "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." I John 3:1-3 records, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." If we are children of God, we are not living according to the world. That is why he says, "therefore the world knows us not." It did not know the Lord, because he was not a part of the world. He said, "My kingdom is not of the world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight ..." (John 18:36). I John 3 continues, "Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Notice this third verse, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." My friends, if we have that hope, the hope of being like him when he comes again, and being received by him into the grandeur of heaven; then, we must keep ourselves pure.

We must preach purity to the church to encourage brethren to live

pure, clean lives. There is no such thing as living according to the world and having the hope of going to heaven. It just does not exist. Sin and the Gospel do not live in the same soul, brethren. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed” (That is, made over, changed) “by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We are instructed to “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22). I Corinthians 15:33 warns, “...evil communications corrupt good manners.”

Many of you have heard brother Marshal Keeble. I have some great memories of him, but I will never forget the time I heard him speak on I Corinthians 15:33, “evil communications corrupt good manners.” In order to emphasize the point, he said, “It means simply this: ‘If you run and play with the billy goats, you will smell like them.’” That statement stayed with me. We need to have that kind of plain preaching today to encourage people to live pure lives. If brethren are going to play around with the world, if they are going to dabble in sin, they are going to be sinners.

Answer this question. Which is the greater sin, to preach error or to practice it? There is no such thing as a greater error, it’s just sin. It’s wrong—period! We have the responsibility to help maintain the purity of the church by proclaiming a pure Gospel and by pure living.

Let’s draw the two points together. What if you were someone who does not preach a pure Gospel? Suppose someone over here will not live a pure life? This person will not repent, that one will not repent. Well, as we noticed, they are each subject to the disdain of God’s Word. We must withdraw from them; it cannot be stated any plainer, “...withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (II Thess. 3:6). A number of other verses complement it; “... mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16: 17,18). If one preaches any Gospel other than what Paul preached in his day or what faithful Gospel preachers preach today, let him be accursed (Gal. 1: 8,9). “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (II John 10).

So brethren, the Gospel is plain. To preach the pure Gospel is our obligation, to maintain the purity of the church, both doctrinally and

morally. That is our obligation; is not that what Paul wrote to his young son in the Gospel? "I charge thee therefore God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Why? Because, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..." Brethren, I believe that we live in a time now when there are many people who will not endure sound doctrine. There are a lot of preachers who will not preach sound doctrine. Therefore, we need that admonition, to "preach the Word." Brethren, we need food to strengthen our soul. Jesus said, "...man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). He said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," the Word is the light I use to guide me through the darkness of this life. The Word is also able to sanctify and make me holy (John 17:17). It is able to break the shackles of sin (John 8:32).

It is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), with which I am to go forth conquering. Paul wrote, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)" (II Cor. 10:4). With this kind of weaponry, we can win any battle before us because this is the Lord's fight, this is the Lord's church, this is the Lord's Word. Let us preach it faithfully, and let us live it faithfully.

So preachers, elders, and all teachers of the Word, we must never relax or relent! We must condemn sin in its presence as well as in its absence, even if the sinners are our own flesh and blood. Remember Eli in I Samuel 3:13; God told Samuel, "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Our obligations even extend to our own flesh and blood, to "reprove, rebuke and exhort." Many times the sailing will be rough, but in spite of all the difficulties that we may encounter, still the admonition in II Timothy 4:5 is very applicable, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." If we do, then God will give us a home in heaven.

I read a story with which I would like to conclude. The story comes from the Crime War. For some strange reason, the soldier bearing the standard or flag arrived at the top of a hill before the troops. The troops were weary and tired; they were muddy; they were discouraged; morale was low. All could see the standard, the flag. Then came the order from a subordinate officer, that the flag bearer was to bring the standard down to

the troops. But, a superior officer barked back immediately the order, "No, bring the troops up to the flag."

Brethren, do you get the point? Let us never be guilty of taking the standard to the people; rather, let us bring the people to the standard. This is God's Word; let us preach it in its purity; let us live it in its purity, and God will be pleased. I thank you for your attention.

Biographical Sketch



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Robert R. Taylor, Jr. was born October 30, 1931 in Bradford, Tennessee. He was baptized in 1944 and began preaching in 1949. Brother Taylor and his wife, Irene, have two children. He holds many Gospel meetings each year and does extensive lectureship work throughout the nation, besides serving as a staff writer for various brotherhood publications and a script writer for Brother V.E. Howard and the **International Gospel Hour**. Some twenty tracts and several books, four of which are soon to be published, have also been written by him. Brother Taylor has appeared on all of the Memphis School of Preaching Lectureships since 1970. He is a long-time supporter of the school and feels it is one of the greatest works being done anywhere.

Chapter Five

Matthew Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five

by Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

This afternoon I am to engage in a study with you in regard to Matthew Twenty-four and Twenty-five. These two chapters are composed of ninety-seven verses, and quite naturally, we shall only be able to note the highlights. However, before we discuss some of the interesting points regarding these two chapters, I want to begin by noting a few things by way of general introduction.

Of course, we recognize that the Bible is composed of two testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and both of these are widely misunderstood by the masses of men. The divine library is composed of sixty-six books, thirty-nine in the Old Testament, twenty-seven in the New Testament. Many of the books which compose the Bible are misappropriated, misapplied, and misunderstood by the religious masses. There are a total of 1,189 chapters throughout the Bible, and many entire chapters are also misapplied, misappropriated, and misunderstood.

The opening chapter of the Bible, Genesis One, is a greatly misunderstood chapter of the Bible. There are those who claim that it is anti-scientific. There are those who see nothing in Genesis One that is factual, but everything that is fanciful. These conclusions are reached by people who do not understand the great gems of eternal truth which Moses wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and which make up what you and I know as Genesis One. Our faith in the integrity of God's Word truly begins or ends with Genesis One, really with Genesis 1:1.

Also, Acts the second chapter is a greatly misunderstood chapter of the Bible. There are those who do not recognize it as the pivot chapter of the Bible, though, in a very real sense this is its true significance. This is its proper category because the chapters which come before, like a gigantic finger, point to it; and the chapters which are subsequent to it point back to it. Unfortunately, many people do not see in Acts the second chapter the birthday of the Lord's kingdom or the establishment of the church. They do not see the fact that in this chapter the Gospel was proclaimed in its fullness for the first time. Many of the great events which happened upon the day of Pentecost are overlooked by those who misunderstand this chapter. I think it is no overstatement of the fact to suggest that the person who misunderstands Acts Two misunderstands the Bible!

Revelation Twenty is a greatly misunderstood chapter of the Bible.

The premillennial proponents have long parked upon the first few verses of Revelation Twenty, a chapter which is highly figurative and deeply symbolic in the language employed; and yet, they have built their fanciful utopia of a millenium upon an erroneous understanding of Revelation the twentieth chapter. Seemingly, it does not bother them that every fundamental facet of the premillennial error is conspicuously absent from Revelation Twenty. They still contend that it is the basis for their premillennial belief.

Certainly, in listing greatly misunderstood chapters of the Bible, we must say that Matthew Twenty-four is one of the most misunderstood. In fact, it has long been my firmly felt conviction that this is the most misunderstood chapter of the Bible. There are those who consider everything found in Matthew Twenty-four and Twenty-five still in the future or being fulfilled in our day. It strikes me rather significantly that preachers in nearly every generation see in Matthew Twenty-four prophecy of the signs in their day, and their successors in subsequent generations view the chapter as a prophecy of things occurring in their day. I suppose that, if time continues another full century, in the year 2076 there will still be the Garner Teds, Herbert W's, and company who will assure people in the last quarter of the Twenty-first Century that these events "are happening in our day and you can read about them in your Bible." That will continue to be the case, no doubt. It certainly has been the case for many, many years.

There are those who go to the other extreme and suggest that everything found in Matthew Twenty-four and Twenty-five is fulfilled history, that it was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred more than nineteen centuries ago. Whether we like to admit it or not, Max King, through his book, **The Spirit of Prophecy**, has an increasingly significant impact upon the thinking of some of our preachers. I have two letters that came in the mail this week; both of them were written by men who are filling the pulpit and who are definitely under the influence of **The Spirit of Prophecy**. When they are not sure about things which concern final matters, then they will upset the faith of a number of people.

I find it very disconcerting to discover that we have Gospel preachers who really do not know, or cannot be sure, whether Jesus Christ has come the second time, whether it is a matter of history, or whether it is still in the future. I find it frustrating indeed to correspond with some of these fellows, and then have them tell me, "I am still trying to study the matter and I am still not sure whether the final judgment has occurred or whether the resurrection of the dead has occurred." Well, I stand before you this afternoon as one who is absolutely positive that the second coming has not yet occurred, that the resurrection of the dead has not yet occurred, that

the judgment of all mankind has not yet occurred, and that the end of this earthly, mundane sphere of ours has not yet occurred! In fact, if all of these things had happened in A.D. 70, you and I would have never seen the light of day, let alone be present in Memphis, Tennessee the last three or four days in March and the opening day of April, 1976. Those things are yet in the future.

In Matthew the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters, our Lord dealt, I believe, with two main propositions. We will talk, as time will allow this afternoon, concerning these two basic propositions. I believe that he spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem. I believe that he spoke about the second coming. I believe that there are some definite keys which will enable us to better understand this great discourse. I do not believe, for a moment, that Matthew Twenty-four is one discourse and that the beginning of Matthew Twenty-five is a completely different discourse. I believe that, even though this material is found in two chapters as presently divided in our Bibles, they together constitute one discourse, in which Jesus first talked regarding the destruction of Jerusalem; then, he talked in the latter part of the message about the second coming and the great events which will occur at that time. I believe that is the key to understanding this passage.

Also, I believe that it is absolutely essential that we keep in mind that there is more than one question which began the discussion. After Jesus predicted the fall, the collapse, or the total destruction of the temple, the disciples came to him on the Mount of Olives and said, "Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Jesus, therefore, talked about the destruction of Jerusalem; then, he talked about his second coming and the end of the world. This, I believe, serves as a key toward understanding the events which were discussed in this discussion, especially if one notes what I call the time identifying expressions, such as, **then, for then, and immediately after the tribulation of those days.**

Additionally, I believe it is invaluable in a study of this great discourse that we realize Jesus placed within this context a marker, a divider. To speak from a geographical landmark in our country, he erected what might be called the **Continental Divide** at verse thirty-four, where he said, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Now it seems significantly strange to me that a goodly number of our preachers can jump completely over that **Continental Divide**, that clear line of demarcation, that dividing mark in the sermon, and not see a dividing mark at all, actually contending that all of Matthew Twenty-four and Twenty-five now stand as fulfilled history.

One of the letters to which I alluded a few moments ago states that

there cannot be any dividing line in this sermon. The young man suggests, "I believe that Matthew Twenty-four and Twenty-five now stand as fulfilled history." Well, I do not believe that both of these chapters stand as fulfilled history. When Jesus originally gave the discourse, all of it was yet in the future; but from our standpoint that which occurred in regard to the destruction of Jerusalem is no longer future; it is now a matter of confirmed, historical fulfillment. Regarding what the Lord said about his coming, it was future at the time Matthew penned it; it was future at the time the last syllable of the New Testament was completed; and it is still future from our viewpoint today, as we are in the year of our Lord nineteen-hundred-and-seventy-six.

I believe these are some of the keys, along with the consideration that this account is given also in Mark Thirteen and Luke Twenty-one, which enable us to better understand the Lord's message.

It is of interest to observe that our Lord is the one who gave this discourse, and he gave it after he made a rather stunning prediction to the apostles. We learn in Matthew the twenty-third chapter that Jesus had lamented concerning Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

The twenty-fourth chapter opens with the observation that, as the disciples left the temple, they "came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple." How greatly stunned, shocked, and surprised their ears must have been when Jesus announced in their hearing that all of the stones upon which they were looking, every one of them, would be thrown down. The destruction was to be so thorough and complete that not one stone would be left upon another. That was fulfilled minutely when Titus and the Roman army came against the city of Jerusalem a little less than four decades after Jesus gave this message in Matthew Twenty-four. The disciples did not ask him immediately concerning this because they were in the process of leaving the temple area. Then, when they arrived at the Mount of Olives, they raised some questions regarding what he had said.

If Jesus pursued the shortest route in leaving the temple area, in all probability he and his disciples went through the Beautiful Gate located on the eastern wall of the city of Jerusalem and down into the Kedron Valley or gorge below. And then, they must have begun their ascent of the western slope of the Mount of Olives. I think it adds to our understanding and appreciation of this message if we realize this conversation actually occurred somewhere along the western slope of the Mount of Olives or upon its summit. Jesus and the four disciples who asked him about his

prediction were in perfect sight of the temple area as the questions were raised and as the answers were given.

It has been my privilege to walk upon Mount Moriah where the temple was located, to walk in the valley of the Kedron and also along the western slope of the Mount of Olives. Of course, anywhere from the western slope or from the summit of the Mount of Olives, one today has a perfect view of the Dome of the Rock, a Moslem mosque that has occupied that site for some thirteen centuries now. To me it would cause the Lord's sermon to be even more graphic, for the four disciples (Matthew does not identify them, but Mark does identify them in chapter thirteen as a quartet), to ask regarding his stunning pronouncement as they were situated somewhere upon the Mount of Olives.

Peter, James, and John, long known as the inner three, and Andrew came to the Lord and said, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?" It just may have been the case that the disciples thought the temple was so steady and sturdy, so secure in its setting, and such a well built temple that only the Lord's coming and the end of the world could shake that great building to its foundation and cause its collapse. I say perhaps this was a part of their thinking; whether it was or whether it was not, Jesus knew that, that great temple (not Solomon's) because it had been destroyed by Babylon many centuries before, and not really the one that Zerubbabel built because when Herod the Great came to power he took that temple down little by little and greatly embellished and built on to it), at the time he was there had already been in the building process some forty-six years (John 2:19, 20). No doubt the workmen were still working upon it at the very time that the questions were raised to the Lord.

This quartet of apostolic inquirers asked, "Lord, when shall the things be of which thou hast told us; what will be the signs of thy coming and of the end of the world?" Jesus was asked concerning what he had just stated, first of all, the collapse or destruction of the temple; and, that is what he first addressed. Then, beginning in verses thirty-five and thirty-six, throughout the rest of Matthew Twenty-four and throughout all of Matthew Twenty-five, he talked about the second coming.

Jesus answered the first question by suggesting they take heed lest any man deceive them. He announced that a number of false Christs would appear. Josephus wrote that false Messiahs did appear. Even though we have no record in Acts Eight of Simon the Sorcerer actually claiming to be the Christ, nevertheless, he did deceive the people of Samaria "giving out that himself was some great one," deceiving them from the highest to the lowest of them. They were convinced he was "the power of God." There were a number of false Messiahs that came and

went during the years between the time the Lord gave this discourse and the time it was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus said, "Allow not these things to deceive you since I am telling you what is going to happen." He mentioned the fact that there was to be kingdom against kingdom and nation against nation. There were to be earthquakes, famines, and pestilences. If you listen to the so-called prophetic seers of the day, sometimes you hear them park here on these passages. They call attention to some great earthquake that the world witnessed recently, or some war or skirmish that is being fought or has been fought. Then, they apply the language of our Lord in the early part of Matthew Twenty-four to what we are seeing today.

Our Lord did not talk about the First or Second World War in Matthew Twenty-four. He did not talk about the rise of the German or Japanese powers in this chapter. He did not talk about the Communists or the Israeli people and the Arab people and their skirmishes and conflicts with each other. Our Lord talked about warfare as it was to exist until the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, between the time he gave this message and the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. He did not talk about an earth tremor such as we had here in Tennessee and other states just a little over a week ago. He did not talk about the great earthquake which hit the west coast around the turn of the century, about seventy odd years ago. He did not talk about any of the famines or pestilences which hit people in the twentieth century.

Remember, all of these verses appear in the general section in which the Lord said all those things were to be fulfilled before that generation passed.

Jesus announced that this would be a time in which there were to be offenses and the love of many would wax cold. It was to be a time when his disciples would suffer afflictions and persecutions. There were to be murders; there were to be hatreds manifest toward them. One only has to read the book of Acts and the epistles of the New Testament to see every one of these fulfilled.

Our Lord continued by stating that the ones who endured faithfully until the end would be saved, but the end to which he referred was not the end of the Christian age. He was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, and yet, it is not unusual today to hear so-called prophetic seers park on these passages and say, "We are seeing the fulfillment of them right here in our time."

Some six or seven years ago, Mr. Billy Graham was asked concerning the second coming of the Lord, and he wrote in his column (and I am glad he has through the years called it **My Answer** in stead of **The Lord's Answer**, because that is usually what it is, **Graham's Answer** and not the

answer of the Gospel or of the God of the Gospel) about ten indicators that herald the second coming of our Lord. He took every one of them from Matthew Twenty-four, verses four through fifteen. He had batted a zero when he had finished! He did not hit one of them! A man that bats zero in answering questions like that, in my book, has batted out. And still, this man has the ears of the world listening to what he says concerning the Bible. He took such things as the coming of false prophets and teachers, wars and rumors of wars, the waxing cold of love, afflictions, murders, and persecutions and found each of them being fulfilled in our time, indicating we are standing upon the threshold of our Lord's second coming. Mathematically, his calculations were certainly not very desirable, and anybody that misses his Bible math that much is really not to be trusted as a person capable of answering questions about the Bible.

The Lord continued by declaring that before the end came the Gospel was to be preached to all nations for a witness to the people of the world (not talking about the end of the Christian age, but before the destruction of Jerusalem occurred). One only has to read Romans 10:18, in which Paul affirmed that the sound of the Gospel had gone to the ends of the earth and the Word of the Lord to the end of the world, to see that the Lord's prophecy was fulfilled. Paul's affirmation was made about a quarter of a century after the Lord gave the discourse in Matthew Twenty-four. A few years later, he stated in Colossians 1:23 that the Gospel had been "preached to every creature under heaven whereof I Paul am made a minister."

Jesus talked about the coming of the abomination of desolation, which when they saw it coming, they were to, "Stand in the Holy Place, whoso readeth let him understand." Next, he gave them further instructions. Those instructions have no reference to our day, though the Jews are under the fanciful imagination that something terrible is going to happen to the Dome of the Rock, and that in future years they will build another temple on Mount Moriah before the Messiah comes, and subsequently, there will be an abomination of that temple. I am not saying that the Jews may never, in the future, put something they call a temple on Mount Moriah, but they have a real problem, since the Dome of the Rock is there. But, even if they were to put a temple on Mount Moriah, it would not be the Lord's temple; it would be their house. When Jesus left the temple area he no longer referred to it as his house or the Lord's house; he said, "your house." He consigned the Jews to the destruction that was soon to come upon them.

However, Mr. Graham and others think this context refers to something which will occur near the end of time and indicate we are standing upon the threshold of our Lord's second coming. Well now, there

are several things wrong with that perspective. First of all, it is wrong! Secondly, if the context refers to the second coming, then what shall we do with the verses which come next? Jesus said, both in Mark Thirteen and Luke Twenty-one, as well as here in Matthew Twenty-four, that when the disciples saw the abomination of desolation, they were to stand in the Holy Place. That desolation was the coming of the Roman army. The Romans were heathens, pagans; they brought desolation wherever they went. When the disciples saw this coming desolation, it was their sign to leave Judea, to forsake with all rapidity the Jerusalem site. In fact, he suggested that when they saw all of this coming, then they should immediately flee Judea. There was to be a place provided for Christians over in Pella of Perea.

He warned, "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." That would only necessitate more time, and speed was so important at that time. He advised, whenever this time came, they were to pray that the women would not be pregnant or be nursing, and that it not be in the winter or upon the Sabbath Day.

Now this just could not have any reference to the second coming! What difference will it make whether it be in the summer, winter, spring, or fall when the Lord comes? Nobody will be at a seasonal disadvantage when Jesus comes the second time. And then again, what difference will it make whether it be on a Saturday or one of the other six days of the week? And what difference will it make whether a woman be expecting a child or has an infant in her arms? She will not be at a disadvantage in those conditions when the Lord comes. Though, I can see how the references apply in the case of the destruction of Jerusalem. It would be more difficult for a mother in an expectant condition to travel rapidly; it would be more difficult if she had a little infant for whom to care. And of course, travel in the winter months, with the exposure to the elements, would be far more difficult. I can see why the Lord encouraged them to pray it not be on the Sabbath Day. The unbelieving Jews would have the gates locked. That is not the condition now in Jerusalem; at least, it was not when I was there. On their Sabbath, Saturday, I went in and out of the old city, in and out among the new parts of the city, and did not notice an entire gate locked. Nobody tried to keep me from making a **Sabbath Day's Journey**. Some of us took a map of Jerusalem and spent nearly all day walking to places of interest that we wanted to find. But, it was not that way in A.D. 70.

Continuing, the Lord said that it was going to be a time of great tribulation. He was not talking about what the proponents of a future tribulation and rapture period are envisioning today (that the Lord's

people will be raptured in the air for a period of time and there will be a great wave of tribulation that will engulf the wicked of the earth). Our Lord talked about a period of tribulation that was to occur in that generation. As God's Great Prophet, he surveyed the past and looked into the future. He announced that never had anything been equal to what was to come upon Jerusalem and neither would there be anything like it in the future. We can read about more than a million that perished and about a hundred-thousand who were sold into captivity. Jerusalem became the besieged city, the starving city, where conditions became so bad, so extreme, that parents ate the decaying corpses of their own children. Certainly no period of the past and no period of the future equals what Jesus said was to occur and which came upon Jerusalem.

Jesus also affirmed that one need not worry about the real Christ being a concealed Christ. If people during this period were to say, "Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not." Jesus simply informed them that when he comes he will not be a hidden Jesus. He will not be a concealed Christ. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

The reference made to the birds of prey is no doubt an allusion to the fact that Judaism, as a decaying corpse, would be the congregating center for the Roman campaign against the Jews.

Following, there is a section, beginning with verses twenty-nine through thirty-three, in which Jesus said immediately after the tribulation of those days there would be a darkening of the sun, a refusal of the moon to shine, a fall of the stars, and a shaking of the heavens. Then, the sign of the Son of man was to appear in heaven, the tribes of the earth were to mourn, and the angels were to be sent forth with a great sound to gather the Lord's elect from the four corners of the earth. Next, he mentioned the parable of the fig tree.

Now, I know that some of our brethren have trouble interpreting this passage, saying, "But it just seems to us that part of the time the Lord was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and then he switched over to his second coming." I never was satisfied with that interpretation when I first read it from our brethren and heard some of them expound it as being the correct understanding of this section of Scripture. There is one verse that always bothered me. In view of what the Lord said in verse thirty-four, that these things were to happen before that generation passed, I believe that all of these things happened in and prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. But you may say, "Was there a darkening of the sun; did the moon refuse to give her light; or did the stars of heaven fall?" Well, I do not believe the Lord spoke literally here any more than Isaiah

wrote literally in Isaiah 13:10 when he penned the same type of striking imagery relative to the fall of Babylon. Simply stated, that there was to be a falling of the stars and a shaking of the heavenly constellations was a graphic and vivid reference to the fall of Jewish powers, to the shake-up of the Jewish nation, to its destruction as a continuing nation.

But you say, "What about the coming of the Son of man here?" Notice that the sign is in the heavens, not here upon the earth. Notice also, that whatever this passage means it must agree with what the Lord said in verse thirty-four, that all those things were to occur before the then present generation passed. I believe that it referred to the coming of the Lord in physical judgment upon an abandoned, apostate city.

But the question may be raised, "But what about the angels being sent forth?" **Angels** does not always refer to angelic messengers. The term can also mean human messengers. I have long believed that it simply refers to the Lord's messengers. When Judaism was completely eliminated, a grand and great opportunity existed for the spread of the Gospel. After A.D. 70, Gospel proclaimers no longer had to contend with the threat of Judaism. The threat of Judaism to the Gospel was removed.

When Jesus alluded to the parable of the fig tree, he referred to something that they could definitely see, the budding forth of the fig tree in that area. They were near Bethany, which was the house or city of figs. Doubtlessly, the figs had already begun to put forth their tender branches at the time the Lord gave this message. It was during the spring of the year, and that to the Jewish mind was the harbinger of the coming spring and summer just as the appearance of the robin to us is a signal that spring is nearly here.

Verse thirty-four, I believe, is the line of demarcation, the dividing line in this great sermon. Jesus said all those things were to occur before that generation passed. Thayer said of the word **generation**, "It has reference to people living at the same time, especially Jews living at the same time." This is why I believe that preceding verse thirty-four the Lord spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem, and after he announced that the heavens and the earth shall pass away but his word shall not pass away, his language took a different turn. He said, "But of that day and hour" (notice day and hour in contrast with the days that he had talked about) "knoweth no man." They could detect the signs that were to signal the coming of Jerusalem's destruction and the collapse of the temple; the Lord laid them down clearly and specifically. However, they could know nothing regarding imminency of his second coming.

This did not deter people in the first century from deciding they knew the second coming was near, and neither has it deterred people in our day. For instance, William Miller in the 1800's and many date setters since in

the 1900's continued to predict when the Lord should come back. I have been privileged to be in two meetings with the fine congregation in Columbus, Ohio, where brother Emanuel Daugherty preaches. When I was there in 1972, the brethren told me about one of the citizens in Columbus, one of the religious leaders, who announced that the Lord was coming in 1975, and that he, the religious leader, would be crucified on the grounds of the state capital before it occurred. Well, of course, neither happened. We are now living three months past 1975, and the Lord did not honor this so-called prophet in Ohio about when he was going to return; neither did he pay any attention to Charles T. Russell, Judge Rutherford, Billy Graham, or any of the other fellows who have foretold the time of the coming of the Lord.

I was on a lectureship one week last year, and on one of the nights (not the night that I spoke) the brethren sang a song with which I just could not agree. It was the song, "It Won't Be Very Long Til Jesus Shall Appear." I noticed that the song was written in 1925; and seemingly, the elasticity of "It Won't Be Very Long" should now have been reached. I suggested to the brethren that we cannot sing that song in faith since nobody knows whether it will be long or whether it will be a short time until the Lord comes again. If brethren had sung that song in the first century they would have been wrong since the second coming was not near; and we do not know now that it is near in 1976.

Through the rest of this great discourse the Lord talked about the days of Noah. He talked about the preparation of the wise and the foolish servants. He spoke of the goodman of the house, who, had he known in what watch (that is six to nine or nine to twelve or twelve to three or three to six) the thief were coming, would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken up. In the latter part of Matthew Twenty-four, Jesus emphasized watchfulness, preparation, and the idea of being ready every hour of the day or night, because we do not know what hour or day the Lord will come.

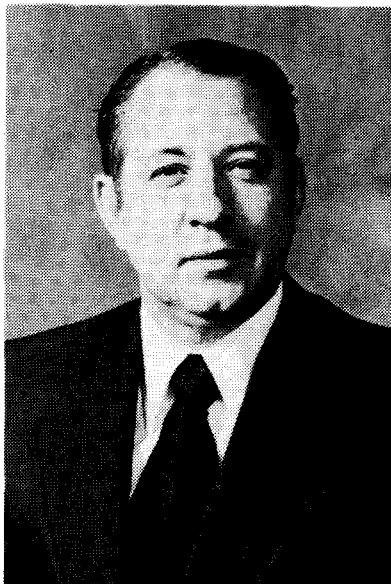
Matthew Twenty-five easily divides itself into three main areas. The first thirteen verses address the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Notice that they all belonged to the bridegrooms, and half of them failed to make preparation, certainly teaching the possibility of apostasy. I thought the other night, as brother Woods spoke so capably about imputed righteousness, if that doctrine had any validity at all, why could not the wise five have shared their righteousness with the foolish five. But, the "not enough" suggests that it could not be done.

Then, there is the parable of the talents (the five talents given to one, two to another, and the one to a third) and the day of reckoning. Finally, from verses thirty-one through forty-six, Jesus portrayed the second

coming, the judgment, and the great separation. The righteous were placed on the right, the wicked were placed on the left hand, and pronouncements were made explaining why the righteous were thus honored and why the wicked were consigned to a devil's hell. The passage ends, revealing that those on the left-hand were sentenced to everlasting punishment and those on the right were privileged to enjoy life eternal. **Everlasting** and **eternal** come from the same Greek word in the original. The duration of the one is the same as the duration of the other.

This is what I have long believed and taught on Matthew Twenty-four and Twenty-five.

Biographical Sketch



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W.N. (Bill) Jackson was born September 5, 1929 in Sheffield, Alabama. He is married to the former Jean Newton, also of Sheffield, and they have two sons. He is a graduate of Florence State University and David Lipscomb College. He has preached locally in Florence, South Carolina; Huntingdon and Somerville, Tennessee; Columbus, Amory, and Fulton in Mississippi; Ipswich, England and is presently with the Southwest church of Christ in Austin, Texas. His literary experience includes three books and a number of Gospel tracts. Brother Jackson has been involved in two religious debates, has fifteen years combined experience in radio and television ministries, speaks on various lectureships, and conducts several Gospel meetings each year.

Chapter Six

Liberalism: Its Challenge to the Gospel

by W.N. Jackson

Our thoughts today will be taken from Second Peter Two as we address the topic, **Liberalism and Its Challenge to the Gospel**. I will not apologize if I say some of the same things which were said yesterday; since the lectureship topic is **The Gospel, the Same Yesterday and Today**, I am sure it has not changed overnight. Therefore, I do not mind repeating some things which have already been said yesterday.

First of all, liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and we need to bear in mind that God warned it would be so. The Lord also warned that the Gospel would be challenged. While it is indeed hurtful to us, at times very painful, and a source of great sorrow on our part, Christians should not be surprised when the Gospel is challenged. The saints of God should never question whether the Gospel will be challenged, but only when.

Notice as the chapter begins, the apostle Peter said, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you..." In II Peter 1:19, the apostle wrote that "We have also a more sure word of prophecy..." He then concluded that chapter with the declaration: "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." They gave us exactly what God wanted given. They gave us the Scripture; they were speaking from God; nevertheless, there were false prophets in the world. Therefore, Peter assured that if it happened in old times, we can safely expect God's Word to be challenged in our day and time.

Also in First Peter One, verse sixteen states that the apostles did not present "cunningly devised fables...but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Remember verse nineteen says the prophecy of Scripture is made more sure, because it is fulfilled or confirmed. The apostles personally witnessed and participated in Scripture's confirmation. They witnessed the fulfillment of Scripture in the person of the Lord and in the events which transpired in fulfillment of prophecies. In spite of the fact that they were eyewitnesses of the Lord's majesty and that the word of prophecy was made more sure, Peter wrote that there would arise false teachers among brethren. Thereby, Peter taught that liberalism challenges the Gospel of Jesus Christ; he warned that it would be so.

Apparently, something has been deficient in our teaching over the last several years since after our young people are taught and obey the Gospel

of Jesus Christ, some months or years later they are shocked to discover that their standard, the standard they should be applying in life, is not the standard which they see in the world. Why should they be shocked? They should know at the very outset that the course they have chosen in Christ is not compatible with the standard of the world. We should so teach people that they should not be shocked. Christians must exhibit a behavior different from the behavior of the world.

Those who obey the Gospel of Christ should not be shocked sometime after they have been baptized to find out that the church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ in which they hold membership, is not like everything else in the religious world. They should expect that difference; they should expect it because we have been so faithful to God's Word in teaching them that at the very outset they learned it would be so.

Why should anyone in the church of our Lord today be amazed and shocked (hurt, yes) that there are false teachers and false doctrines which have arisen in the church of the Lord? The Lord plainly taught that it will be so.

That is point number one. Liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Lord guaranteed that it would be so. The Lord gave us the assurance that the Gospel would be challenged. Satan being who he is, and having the designs that he has, having the purposes in mind that he has, and certainly not being a fool, but an intelligent being, of course will challenge the Gospel. Truth will always be on the march against error; error will always be contesting truth. We need to tell our people so they will expect it.

In the second place, and again based on II Peter 2:1, liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of heresy. Notice Peter penned that false teachers would rise among brethren and bring in damnable heresies. Let us not be afraid of that word **heresy**, because literally, it simply means **opinion**. But, in this case, it is opinion that is damnable. Here it is opinion which is presented as though it were the truth when really it is error. It is opinion which leads men to apostasy, opinion which leads men away from the faith. It is simply the will, the opinions, the **think-so**, and the ideas of men.

It is amazing how much of both secular and religious material laden with error is fed to brethren by brethren. It is amazing how much religious error many of our preachers feed brethren. Every bit of it can certainly lead men to apostasy. It is further amazing how much of such material is studied.

I have made the following statement before, though some have told me that it seems to be an arrogant statement. I have examined it, and maybe

it is an arrogant statement; however, I am going to say it anyway. **I do not believe that an infidel, agnostic, skeptic, or religious heretic who writes on any Bible truth should be able to teach the faithful child of God anything!** Again, some say that is awfully arrogant; but it is not, since the Bible is the all sufficient standard. Preachers, elders, Bible class teachers, and any other Christian should be ashamed to learn any truth from a false teacher when he could have learned it from reading God's Word.

Once when I lived in west Tennessee, I made this statement concerning a widely read and well known denominational preacher. I said I would not expect any child of God to learn anything concerning the truth of God by reading his material. One lady caught me in the foyer, and, per an old expression, **cleaned my plow**. But before she finished cleaning, I had decided I was not the only one going home with a clean plow; so, I cleaned a little. I still make the statement that **we should not have to find out anything concerning the will of God from any sectarian, denominational, liberal, modernistic, or infidelic source!** Shame on us if we do! And yet, many of our brethren, including our preaching brethren, study and quote that type of material.

While driving home from a meeting this past summer, I heard one of **our** national radio broadcasts. It was thirty minutes in duration, and the speaker is well known among us. At the very outset of his lesson he cited one short verse from the Gospel records. In the course of the thirty minutes of his lesson he referred to one other verse. Yet, he resorted to secular and denominational sources, two of whom are confirmed infidels. That passed for Gospel preaching. Billy Graham does that well!

Included in this **supposed preaching** was also a citation from a poem, "Of Days Gone By," something from a novel which he had read, something else from one of the well known theologians of our day, and two citations from infidels who have now passed to whatever reward they did not expect to get. All of that was presented as a Gospel sermon. Brethren, our folks spend too much time reading too much other than the Word of God. When the apostle Peter said that false teachers would arise and bring into our midst heresies which are damnable, he went on to say they would be "even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (No wonder some of our brethren go this far, since they choose to study material other than the Word of God.)

I stood in a religious bookstore, in a state that I'll not mention, operated by our brethren, and noticed a rack on which there was nothing except the works of Harnack, Tillich, Bultmann, Kierkegaard, and a number of others of that stripe. I asked some of the employees why these were separated from the rest of the books. (I believe they ought to have

been separated, outside even.) They happened to be the works which were recommended for assigned study for those men who were supposedly training for service as Gospel preachers.

The Gospel Plan of Salvation was not there. Kurfee's work on **Instrumental Music in the Worship** was not there. Nothing about the restorers was there. All of it was from the side of infidels! How can brethren study that and then purport to preach the pure and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ? It is contradictory to suppose that men can study that and still preach the pure and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is why faithful brethren are so pleased with this fine institution. In training Gospel preachers, the Memphis School of Preaching emphasizes the Volume which is still that which furnishes us completely unto every good work.

It is amazing how busy our brethren are; it is amazing how busy some of our preachers are, too busy even to be faithful in the work of the Lord, too busy to take care of those things which any faithful child of God should be doing, too busy to study the Bible, but able to read all of the infidelic and sectarian material available.

Frankly, I admit I do not know much about sectarian and infidelic material. I would not read such a work entirely for anything. If they have indexes I am thankful. I try to look up some brief statement on some point which I can refute; I am not about to poison what little mind I've got reading that kind of material. When I do not know as much as I want to know about the Will of God (and I never will know as much as I would like to know), I do not have time to waste resorting to such error. Rather, we had better study the divine Volume and try to incorporate as much of it in our minds, hearts, and lives as possible. With God's Will, we can save ourselves and others as well; the other material about which we have been talking cannot save; indeed, it instead will cause men to lose their eternal souls.

In the third place, liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it is based **wholly** on self-will. Let me underscore the words **wholly on self-will**. When one examines either modernism or liberalism, he finds a system of self-will. One is not a liberal unless he first overthrows the will of Jesus Christ and the will of God as revealed in the Bible. Once one has overthrown divine will, there remains only man's will, **self-will**.

Based on their writings, I have long made the statement that some of our brethren of the liberal stripe are on an ego trip. In the course of their ego trip, they ultimately come to think: "I know as much about any religious matter as did any inspired man." It shocked me when I first

heard that from a sectarian preacher, but it is also clearly put forth by some who claim to have fellowship with us.

Years ago, when I was doing my first work in the mission field of South Carolina, I attended the annual Carolina lectureship. I remember that one man had invited a denominational preacher to come, hoping that the preacher would learn something; he needed to. One of the speakers was dealing with a matter which brother Taylor mentioned this morning, men leading the worship service before God instead of women. After the speaker concluded his lesson, several of us gathered around the sectarian preacher to get his reaction. He finally boiled it down to this: "I disagree with Paul on that." "**I disagree with Paul on that**" is indicative of that sectarian preacher's ego trip. He disagreed with Paul because he is a liberal; his sectarian group is a liberal group.

Notice II Peter 2:10 where the apostle Peter said some "despise government." Yesterday we noticed that Jude said some "despise dominion" (government) or rulership. Some men despise authority. That is why they speak against it; that is why they speak against the Word of God; that is why men speak against faithful preachers.

A preacher is not himself an authority, but he, rather, constantly refers to authority. He constantly calls men to stand before and bring themselves into submission to it. Because some men despise authority, they are opposed to the authority of the eldership. They are opposed to all authority; they "despise government. Presumptuous are they."

David said, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins" (Psa. 19:13). David was saying, "O Lord, let me never become so daring and so arrogant that I would presume to speak to thee or, as it were, to stiff-arm my God out of the way or according to my own will, to do my own thing." Peter wrote about the sins of presumption and self-will.

Our Lord addressed the very first requirement of discipleship in Luke 9:23. "If any man will come after me, let him" (first what?) "deny himself." The basis of coming to render obedience to the Lord and taking one's place in God's family is to put down self-will. The basis of faithful, obedient, submissive, dedicated, and consecrated service in the sight of God is to submit one's will to the divine will of the Lord. In all things we must say, "Thy will be done." However, liberalism stands opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it elevates self-will as the standard. All of that persuasion believe they know more than Peter, James, John, Jude, Paul, or the Lord.

Will Rogers, of course, was not a man from whom one can read in the Bible; nevertheless, he made some fine statements, one of which applies here. Mr. Rogers said, "There's nobody on earth as ignorant as an

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educated man if you can get him out of the one thing he's educated in." I think that is true. It is true regarding liberalism. Those who have long sat at the feet of infidels, agnostics, and skeptics have devoured every kind of sectarian, denominational, and skeptical literature; continually putting that into their minds, they have caused the will of God to leave. There is nobody on earth as ignorant as an intellectual. Merely put him to the test of God's will and you can discover him.

Again, liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the system whereby the false teacher uses all the faithful to his own advantage. That is being done, isn't it? You know that it is being done. The apostle Peter wrote in II Peter 2:3, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you..." He was saying the false teacher will engage in business to his own advantage and use you in the process. Because of a lack of discipline throughout the church of the Lord, because of a lack of conviction on the part of many yet faithful Gospel preachers who are wavering because of sleepy elderships, because of a disposition of **the world**, and because of worldliness on the part of many members of the body of Christ, we sit back and let those brethren use us. We let them do with the church as they wish.

We noted yesterday that the **anti** decided he did not want to stay with us and left. However, a liberal will not leave us voluntarily; before he will leave us alone, he will have to be driven out. From his standpoint I understand why he will not leave voluntarily; as long as he stays in the body of Christ he can continue to do all the damage he possibly can. Staying among us he does all of the false teaching he can under the guise of being a Christian, under the guise of being a member of the body of Christ, under the guise of being a faithful Gospel preacher. This is how liberals continue to sow the seeds of skepticism. They make merchandise of the brethren.

Consider some of the programs which the liberals sponsor throughout the land. Whenever they come under fire for having a liberal lectureship, the first thing they do is invite some brother who at least is reputed to be sound. Thereby the program will appear to have an **air** of acceptability and faithfulness. What are they doing? They are making merchandise of the brethren, using them to their own advantage. Liberals are doing it throughout the country.

Things are working in their favor when they can continue to appear anywhere in the brotherhood and teach whatever they want. Hardly anyone speaks out against their error, and certainly precious few ever go to the point of marking and withdrawing fellowship from them. It is exactly as they want it. They can conduct their business of infidelity with

the apparent sanction of the brethren. Liberals proclaim their heresies with the fellowship and support of brethren who do not **endorse** any part of liberalism. The apostle Peter said that false teachers would arise and bring damnable heresies through feigned words, by which they would make merchandise of the brethren.

Are we going to just sit here, and sit here, and sit here, and sit here, and sit here while brethren are being led astray and their souls are being lost? Are we going to let a few (I do not believe it is a majority yet) in the body of Christ do with the bride of Christ whatever they wish? Liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it makes merchandise of the body of Christ. It misuses sacred and divine things to further its own selfish purpose.

Liberalism is a strong challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which challenge the God of heaven condemns. Yesterday, we noted that Jude addressed some who are under the condemnation of God. Verses five through seven name Israel that “believed not,” “the angels which kept not their first estate,” and “Sodom and Gomorrah.” God brought destruction upon each of them for their sins. Two of these accounts are also mentioned by the apostle Peter. In II Peter 2:4-6, three instances are mentioned where God spoke and took action against those who were the false teachers of their day. Peter enumerated three instances wherein men exhibited the audacity to fly in the face of God and to follow a course of self-will rather than the course of God’s will. There were the angels that sinned, the world of Noah’s day, and Sodom and Gomorrah. God withdrew his blessings and condemned the ungodly.

“Going after strange flesh,” as Jude said, or homosexuality, is becoming prevalent in our day. It can be seen on television, in the movies, in books and magazines, in still pictures, and in moving pictures. There are powerful lobbies which work for this filthy sin, trying to corrupt morals, and remove the social and religious stigma attached to it. Remember Romans 1:26,27 also expresses God’s condemnation upon homosexuality.

I remember reading in the **Commercial Appeal** that there is even a congregation of homosexuals in Memphis. An unnamed interviewee stated he or she still attends the church of Christ and teaches a Bible class. This is a case in which the church ought to hire a detective agency to find out who that supposed brother or sister is and discipline the party. For the sin of homosexuality were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed. Jude wrote about those who were “going after strange flesh”; Paul addressed the subject in Romans One and said, “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.” Three inspired writers of the New Testament recorded

God's condemnation for this sin. It is not sickness, it is perversion!

Remember II Peter 2:1 says that false teachers who bring in such things "bring unto themselves swift destruction." Peter continued in the third verse following, saying, "their damnation slumbereth not." As the existence of God is certain, false teachers shall suffer eternally for their wrong doing.

Liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which challenge God speaks against. Liberalism is a challenge which God says we must oppose and which the God of heaven tells us we can meet. Let us never for a moment think that we cannot meet it; at times we may not be meeting it, but we **can** meet it. After chronicling rebellion in heaven and ungodliness in Noah's day, Peter spanned the Mosaical Age and warned of false teachers in the Christian Age. In verse nine the apostle wrote, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

While liberalism is indeed a great challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is a challenge that we can meet, **if** we remain godly ourselves. Peter said the Lord knows how to deliver; that is a promise on which man can count. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. He will not deliver the ungodly. He will not deliver those who let ungodliness take over their lives. Neither will he deliver those who support ungodliness, and he will not deliver those who are silent when they need to speak up. But, he knows "how to deliver the godly out of temptations," just as he knows how "to preserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Finally, in the last part of the chapter, notice Peter taught that liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which unless met, will surely lead the church into perhaps the worst apostasy it has ever known. He made the statement a little bit later, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again..."

Years ago an old brother was teaching the class and referred to **sepulchre**. Somebody said, "Brother so-and-so, what is a **sepulchre**?" If you were brought up in a congregation where there was that kind of teaching, you know hardly any of those teachers would come back with a good answer like, "I don't know." He certainly knew; he had done some research on that! He believed it was a big bird that travels out over the sea and **puckers**. I thought that was the ultimate, until someone told me what an old brother told a Bible class about the dog which "turned to his own vomit again." Somebody in the class naturally said, "Brother so-and-so, what does it mean that the dog 'turned to his own vomit again'?" Well,

he didn't know, as it turned out; but he had done some research on that. So, his answer was, "I believe the apostle is saying that if you go out hunting with your dog" (immediately you know he is astray from the Bible truth), "and your dog picks up the scent of a **varmit**, he will start following that **varmit** over hill and dale, through the plain and through the valley, but sometimes in following that **varmit**, he will come across the scent of another **varmit**. He may turn and follow the **second varmit**. However, the apostle teaches that it doesn't make any difference how far he follows that **second varmit**, he will turn to his **own varmit again**." (Laughter.)

I do not know if that ever happened, but I know some things almost as bad happen in our Bible classes. It is no wonder that we have a liberal problem. It is no wonder that we are not meeting its challenge to the Gospel. There are varmits we ought to be chasing; as we noted yesterday, they are everywhere. The apostle Peter was not teaching a hunting lesson, but he was teaching that liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Christ which shall surely take us into apostasy.

We often apply this passage to an individual child of God who turns, begins to practice worldliness, and leaves the faith. Though the principle is there, the context, beginning with chapter one, pertains to false teachers who "with feigned words make merchandise of the brethren." Brethren, the church, as well as individuals are so threatened by false teachers.

Peter wrote in II Peter 2:20-22, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than in the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Peter there taught concerning anything which would lead the saints of God away from a **thus saith the Lord**, down the road to apostasy.

Liberalism is a challenge to the Gospel of Jesus Christ unless we are godly enough and faithful enough to the Book of God to submit our wills to his and to put his will into practice in every way, up to and including marking and withdrawing from the liberal after we have tried to teach him. If he spurns correction, then disciplinary action must be applied. Pursuing error, he and all those he influences will be led into apostasy, from which, as we all know, precious, precious few ever come back.

I appreciate your kind attention both yesterday and today.

Biographical Sketch

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Guy N. Woods was born September 26, 1908 in Vardeman, Mississippi and was baptized by J.W. Grant on August 24, 1926. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman College. Brother Woods preached locally for a number of years for churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Texas, after which he devoted approximately thirty years to holding Gospel meetings on a full-time basis. He has authored a number of religious books, the latest of which is a commentary on the book of John. Guy N. Woods is also the present editor of the *Gospel Advocate*.

Chapter Seven

Challenges Facing the Church

by Guy N. Woods

I am to speak to you tonight about **Challenges Facing the Church**. I do not wish to leave the impression that I regard all challenges as difficult ones or, for that matter, involving matters not proper. We must not overlook the fact that some challenges are good, as well as being difficult.

I was impressed with a little item I read recently about a man traveling on a mountain road. He was driving on an extremely crooked, single-lane highway. Across the road was a precipice hundreds of feet down; and so, to be cautious, he was driving in the middle of the road, when around the curve came a lady, also in the middle of the road. Both swerved to avoid a collision, and she shouted at him, "**Pig.**" He replied angrily, "**Fat old cow!**" Around the curve he went and demolished his automobile by hitting the biggest pig that he had ever seen, in the middle of the road! So, things are not always what they appear to be, and I trust that will be the case this evening.

The early church had challenges it often faced and met effectively. The challenge of **Phariseism**, as you know, was a continuous battle, not only during our Lord's personal ministry, but also after the church was established (Matt. 23:2ff). **Sadduceism**, a form of intellectualism which characterized the early church, likewise, posed real problems (Matt. 16:12). The twin problems of **paganism** and **idolatry** were matters with which the apostle Paul was forced repeatedly to deal. Too, the challenges of **immorality** and **idolatry** were met by the early church (Rom. 1:18-32).

Consequently, the sacred writings often warn of false teachers and teaching. In I Timothy 4:1 Paul said, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly" (that is plainly and clearly), "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith." In I John 4:1 John warned, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." In II Timothy 4:2-4 Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Why? "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

These words of Paul have ever characterized the church, and they are just as true in our day as they were in the day when originally penned. This is the reason that a pure faith and faultless practice can only be

characteristic of us by an unceasing allegiance to God's Word, and that without addition, without subtraction, without modification. We have overlooked the fact that in spite of the very familiarity which we possess of the Word, there are those who have not heard it, and who lacking such familiarity, obligate us to preach the truth all over again to every generation. If such does not characterize our efforts, apostasy results. So, tonight I would like to speak briefly, and yet pointedly, with reference to what I regard as some of the definite challenges now facing us.

Inertia (Indifference) is slowly choking the life out of many congregations over the land. It is a sad and tragic fact that in the average congregation today not over 50% of the members attend any service except Lord's Day morning services; and in many instances the percentage is even lower. This evidences total disinterest in the progress and work of the church on the part of these people. There is the feeling that there is a sort of sacramental participation in the observance of the Lord's Supper at the eleven o'clock hour, and that this excuses from further religious participation throughout the week. Their lives are thus given to secularism, materialism, and the matters of the world.

There is a great amount of indifference on the part of the average congregation today to the preaching of the Word. Those of us who preach have occasion often to take notice of the vacuity of expression and indifferent countenance that is evidencing a lack of interest in the presentation made. Well, this used to disturb me; but it does not any longer. I once felt badly when I observed somebody in the audience not listening. I took it to be a clear indication of lack of preparation on my part. I relinquished that attitude a long time ago. I know now that when a person exhibits this attitude, it is not a reflection on me—it is a reflection on the person who exhibits the disinterest (Matt. 13:15).

Often, as I preach the Gospel people are spellbound under its influence; yet, somebody else in the building, maybe on the same pew, is utterly indifferent, perhaps asleep! I have been listening for 50 years to excuses people have been giving for going to sleep in church, and I know there is but one reason for it—just **one** reason. I have tested it again and again. When preaching away on some vital fundamental matter and I have observed somebody utterly indifferent, maybe asleep, I stop and tell a really exciting anecdote, one that has a point! As I develop the story I see the countenance lighten; as I build up the interest, he rises with me; when I reach the climax he sees it, laughs heartedly, enjoys it fully, and then, the very moment I begin preaching the Gospel again he goes to sleep! The reason is obvious. He would not go to sleep counting twenty-dollar bills, particularly if they were his twenties!

There is another thing I have observed with no little dismay; and that is the lack of respect for our public assemblies. It is not unusual for me to be in a meeting where brethren stalk in and out, up and down, in the auditorium, and discharge alleged responsibilities without any regard for the preaching. I sometimes see a half dozen of them visiting out in the vestibule all during the service. Well, this friends, is a serious reflection, not only on their commitment to the Lord, but, on their respect for the services of God. Imagine treating the Lord that way who is definitely in our midst (Matt. 18:20).

Indifference or inertia characterizes many people today; many members have not the least hesitancy in abandoning the services, if they feel so disposed, in order to engage in materialistic activities and practices. One can easily see how far removed they are from total commitment to Jesus Christ, and to the cause for which he died. I attend the services of the church, not because I have to, or ought to, although I ought; but because I want to; because I find pleasure and satisfaction in fellowship with my Lord and with my brethren.

In the second place, the church faces the challenges of **materialism**. I think there has not been a time when the church was as financially able as now, or engaged in more promotional activities than today characterizes us. We enjoy opportunity to participate in programs that are beyond belief—or would have been beyond belief—a few years ago. And yet, in many congregations today, this is the end, this is the motivation that characterizes the members; a materialistic, promotional affair, only. I heard of a preacher once who boasted, actually boasted, that the new **church of Christ** auditorium in his community was **eight inches** longer than that of the new First Baptist church building that had just been erected. Out did the Baptists by eight inches! This, friends, highlights, I think, the situation which has become almost chronic in some areas of the brotherhood today.

Some gigantic promotional efforts involving bussing, etc. are adversely affecting the church. Do not misunderstand me. I am not opposed to getting people to church on a bus. If somebody says I am, he is misrepresenting me. But, I think many of the things that go along with such, and particularly the motivation that characterizes such, is indeed questionable. These efforts are not only posing problems presently, but they will contribute to greater problems in the future if the status quo continues.

Materialism influences many people in the church today. I would like for us to get back to a recognition of the fact that, after all, people can worship God just as acceptably in any sort of building as in the very finest.

The building does not contribute to the worship of the church. There is not a single responsibility which we have which we could not discharge under a shade tree in our worship. I agree that it would get a little cold in the winter and be a little wet when it rained! The building is an expedient, not an end; and it ought to be recognized as such. We ought to be extremely careful not to build up a sort of **sanctuary** concept with reference to the church building.

In the third place, there is a great challenge facing the church with reference to **liberalism**. I do not tonight propose to enter into a discussion of all of the various aspects of it, but I do want to pay my respects to some phases of it which I regard as most serious.

First, I think we have moved away from a recognition of what true scholarship is. I have recently conducted a question and answer period at the Crieve Hall congregation in Nashville, Tennessee. I had a question last evening, "Who do you consider are scholars in the brotherhood?" I took occasion to point out that, in my view, there is some misapprehension today as to what constitutes a scholar. The average person assumes that it is someone with a Ph.D. degree, and who obtained the degree by sitting at the feet of a group of liberal denominational scholars at New Orleans or some similar place. Men who have studied the Bible and related matters daily, literally hours daily, for thirty years are not regarded by some as scholars. To me that is an utter, complete absurdity. A **scholar**, in the true sense of the word, is a man who has studied God's Word and related matters, and is able to teach effectively. Jesus spent thirty years of his early life in preparation for three years of activity. The average person today thinks it ought to be reversed; and so spends three years in preparation for thirty years of activity! The true scholar, it matters not how accredited he may be (or may not be), is one who has studied God's Word throughout his life and possesses effectiveness in its presentation.

Many are worshipping today at the shrine of intellectualism. There are some who have the idea that those of this category have some superior insight into God's Word not characteristic of others. Those who hold that view speak contemptuously of men who have been in the heat of battle through the years. I know of an instance in which a man said of brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "That man is no scholar; he has no standing in the scholarly world." There are some matters on which I do not agree with brother Wallace; but I regard him as an excellent example of genuine, true scholarship, unexcelled by any man now on earth regardless of who he may be. Do you realize that many of the men who in times past were eminent scholars in our Christian schools could not today teach in those institutions?

This is no special reflection upon the boards of the schools because they are conforming to the scholastic requirements of the state, but it is a fact that men like N.B. Hardeman, H. Leo Boles, and J. N. Armstrong could not qualify to teach accredited classes in the schools which they founded. Does not this strike you as the utter heights of absurdity? It does me. It exhibits, in my view, the disposition today to change our views with reference to what genuine scholarship is. My impression is that some men who are allegedly scholars among us are leading us away from the truth, or at least trying to, by virtue of the influence that has been brought to bear upon them by denominational theologians in denominational seminaries.

Let me give some examples. The doctrine of **imputed** righteousness is today being incorporated into many articles that appear in some of our papers. This comes straight out of denominational theology. The tragedy of it is that many members of the church today simply do not recognize the nature of it, not being grounded in the faith. One of the greatest threats that the church faces today is the so-called **umbrella grace theory** now being propagated in some areas. This doctrine, if you please, is nothing more than a disguised form of the impossibility of apostasy as taught by the Baptists. In many debates in years past, I met that position addressed by leading denominational debaters, and it is a matter of no little dismay to me to note some brethren today advocating similar views, or positions leading logically to such views.

There is a disposition today to weaken our position on the subject of instrumental music. A large percentage of us do not know why we do not use it, and another percentage would not care if we did! Why is it that these views prevail, friends? It is simply because there has been a lack of emphasis upon these matters. We have not taught and warned with reference to them as we ought.

Many people today are reading and using literature that is not biblically oriented, and less than ten percent of the families of the church of Christ generally subscribe to any religious periodical. It seems to me that this is a tragedy. We are able to spend \$75.00 or \$100.00 a year for a daily paper. We spend much, much more than this to receive by radio and television the news nightly; and yet, the average family does not feel sufficiently interested in the Gospel of Christ to subscribe to a religious paper costing less than one soft drink a week, and thus have it available for themselves and their children. One of the reasons that I am a Gospel preacher tonight is the fact that I began to read the **Gospel Advocate** and listen to able Gospel preachers from the very dawn of my memory.

I cannot recall when I did not know the plan of salvation. I was led to believe that Gospel preachers are men to be respected and that they represent what is great and good in the church of Christ. Suppose that in that day there had been the practice, which is increasingly characteristic of us, to have what is called **youth worship** in which the youngsters are placed in another building, and are thus not able to hear the Gospel preached. Suppose that I had been in that situation of being **baby-sitted** elsewhere. I doubt that I would be a Gospel preacher tonight. I think that these are matters that constitute challenges to the church. Unfortunately, many congregations will disregard and ignore these principles. In another generation or two, there will be apostasy. A headlong plunge into denominationalism will follow. Happy and fortunate indeed are those people who are members of congregations whose elderships recognize the necessity of clinging tenaciously to the truth, and who see to it that the preachers that come their way are men who proclaim the Gospel of Christ and expose denominational errors.

I have observed that there is a very close relationship between these tendencies and dissatisfaction with the old paths. There is a disposition to criticise men who have in the past committed themselves to the propagation of the truth. There is an exact ratio there. As one becomes increasingly absorbed with denominational theology, one has less and less regard and loses respect for such men like David Lipscomb, Alexander Campbell, N. B. Hardeman, and becomes critical of them, and dissatisfied with the translations they used so satisfactorily in the past. All such become enamored with modern speech translations, the design of which, in my view, is often to make a more palatable denominational climate. I believe there is a close relationship between the two.

Our opportunities to teach the truth are rapidly passing. The generation which now knows us will soon know us no more. For many years, I have gone to Jasper, Alabama for meetings where brother Gus Nichols, longtime faithful Gospel preacher, now gone to his reward, preached so effectively. On one of these trips, somebody pointed out to me a cemetery in Alabama where no one has been buried for about a hundred years, the consequence of which is nobody lives who knows or has special interest in the people buried there. Consequently, after certain legal procedures, the stones will be rolled aside and the ground returned to original purposes.

One of these days, it will be very soon for some, it cannot be long for any, there will be no record that **we** lived on this earth. The very spot where we are buried will be forgotten. When that time comes, will God

remember? Faithful, prudent people will give attention to these matters because they challenge us, they face us all, and all of us must eventually die. There were people living in the years of 1400, 1300, and 1200 A.D. How many of them do you know? What were their names? Where are they buried? The memory of them has perished from the earth. If this world stands, such will characterize us. When that day comes, when man forgets us, the only important question is, "Will God remember us?"

Great challenges face us tonight, friends; there is the **challenge of the world**, a vast multitude, millions of people, who need the Gospel of Christ. They need the **Gospel of Christ**, not a watered down version of it. They do not need a diluted type of Bible, but the Word of God without addition, without subtraction, and without modification.

There is the **challenge of an ignorant world**. People all around us are dying without a knowledge of the Truth. We become greatly concerned at times, and properly, about lost people in heathen lands. What is the difference between a lost heathen in Japan and one in Memphis? They are in exactly the same category; and they reached their status in exactly the same way, by having put the Truth out of their hearts. Bear in mind that all nations at one time had the Gospel, but their fathers repudiated it, and their children now suffer the consequences. That is also characteristic of tens of thousands of people in Memphis, Tennessee who will never darken the doors of a New Testament church building, who will never hear the Gospel of Christ preached. And so, there is the challenge of great ignorance around about us.

And finally, there is the **challenge of the judgment** toward which all of us are so rapidly passing, in which our record will be unfolded, and before the Lord we will stand to receive an accounting for our deeds and our actions here. How important it is then, that we put our houses in order, arrange our affairs in such fashion as to be able to hear his welcome call. In that day, it will not be very important what kind of house we lived in here, what kind of business or profession we pursued, what kind of clothes we wore, or what kind of automobile we drove. These matters will have lost significance. But there will loom with vast importance this question, "Am I ready for the judgment?" We will be ready only if we have obeyed his will and lived in harmony with his commandments.

It may be that in this great audience tonight that there are those who ought to obey the Gospel. We are going to extend the invitation and sing an invitation song with the hope that if such you are, you will have the courage, the conviction, and the strength of character to bow to the mandates of the Crucified One and accept his overtures of mercy. To

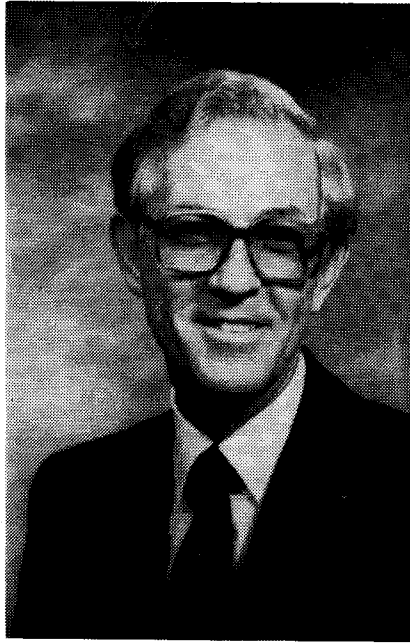
Challenges Facing the Church

become a Christian you must believe the Gospel (Heb. 11:6), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), confess your faith in the Lord (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3). Other than this you are not required to do to become a Christian; less than this you cannot do and become a Christian. These obligations constitute the conditions of salvation. He who would lead you to believe that you can receive pardon of past, or alien sins, short of compliance with these conditions is your worst enemy. He strikes at your most prized possession, your soul.

These are not the conditions of going to heaven. The condition of going to heaven is a faithful, godly life; but, you cannot begin to live the faithful, godly life until you have obeyed the Gospel. Obedience to these conditions usher you into that sphere where you may begin to serve God faithfully. Why not tonight? Why not tonight while together we stand and sing?

Biographical Sketch

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Garland Elkins was born near Woodbury, Tennessee and was reared in the community that bears the family name. He was baptized in July, 1939 by Will Jones and began preaching on May 11, 1949. Brother Elkins is married to the former Corinne Smith of Woodbury, and they have three daughters.

Brother Elkins received his education at Freed-Hardeman College, Middle Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee. He has preached locally in Tennessee and Virginia and conducts a number of Gospel meetings annually. He is the author of a book entitled **The Saviour's Way**, is co-editor of all the **Spiritual Sword Lectureship** books and is co-author of **The Elkins/Ross Debate**. Brother Elkins has written a number of tracts and has much experience in radio evangelism. He also serves as associate editor for **The Spiritual Sword** and is the minister of the Getwell church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee.

Chapter Eight

Laying a Good Foundation In View of Eternity

by Garland Elkins

My lecture today is entitled **Laying a Good Foundation in View of Eternity**. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24, 25, “Everyone therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.” After Paul went to Corinth, he later referred to that visit as he wrote to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 3:10,11. He said, “According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” I do not know how to better describe the laying of a good foundation than by citing these and similar passages. This is, of course, what is meant when we speak of laying a good foundation, but what about laying a good foundation in view of eternity? Whether **eternity** were in the title or not, **eternity** is intended.

You may recall that Solomon said “...Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.” That is what I mean when I speak of eternity. Two destinies await those who have lived in this life: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). Paul wrote three letters particularly to the young preachers Titus and Timothy. In those letters he discussed many classes, conditions, and types of people. Near the conclusion of the last writing he ever did, in the sixth chapter of First Timothy, he used some words which apply to our subject today. He said, “Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high minded, nor have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed” (I Tim. 6:17-19). I suggest to you that in **Laying a Good Foundation in View of Eternity**, the recipe or component parts for the child of God and the implication, of course, for all, are to be found in these and other similar verses. Everyone should lay up “...a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life

which is life indeed.”

First of all, Paul said we must flee some things. “But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content. But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:6-10).

The apostle wrote that we must flee **the love of money**. What brother Hearn said a moment ago about the love of money is simply an indication of the fact which we all recognize, that all kinds of crimes are committed because of the love of money. Men are sometimes murdered when money is the motive and the so-called reward; however, men are murdered when there is no money involved. Immorality is sometimes committed when money is involved; of course, it is not always involved in it. In other words, among the catalogs of sin, one cannot name a single sin which somebody at some time has not under some circumstances committed because of the love of money. It is not money itself which is sinful, but notice, “the love of money” [I have been calling attention to the reading of the **American Standard**] “is a root of all kinds of evil.” Note the results: “...which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” But, we are also to “flee fornication” (I Cor. 6:18); we are to “flee from idolatry” (I Cor. 10:14); and we are to “flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7). Of course, there are other things as well from which we must flee.

But further, we are to follow some things in laying that good foundation. The Bible records, in verse eleven, that there are six things which we must follow: “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” Six sermons could be preached on these six things, but I do not have the time to do more than briefly mention them.

Follow after **righteousness**. The Bible says in Titus 2:11, 12, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” A very good definition of righteousness is simply **right doing**. “...He that doeth righteousness is righteous...” (I John 3:7). “Let my tongue sing of thy word; For all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psalms 119:172).

Paul also said we should follow **godliness**. “...Ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (I Pet. 1:16). I Timothy 4:8 reads, “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.”

About twenty-eight years ago I preached my first sermon in Woodbury, Tennessee (which is my home), on a Sunday morning, before about four hundred people. (I would have been glad to have been preaching before three or four, and I almost wished not to have preached before I had finished.) I used I Timothy 4:8 as the text. I am not going to try to remember the points, though I think I can remember most of them. I pointed out that godliness will cause one to have a good character; godliness will cause one to have a good reputation; godliness will cause one to have peace of mind; and godliness will cause one to go to heaven.

I remember that Joe Lewis was in his prime at the time. I thought that I had never heard (in fact until this day I do not know whether I have known) of a more capable prizefighter than Joe Lewis in his heyday. I remember stating that day, “If Joe Lewis continues fighting long enough, somebody will come along who will knock him out.” Well, it did not happen in his prime, but ultimately that happened. Bodily exercise is profitable, but bodily exercise profits little compared to godliness.

Paul said we are to follow after **faith**. Jesus raised the question whether he would find faith on the earth when he returned. Many of the problems with which we are faced really go back to the root of a lack of faith. That is often the problem. When a person becomes highly critical of the Scriptures, the church, and living the Christian life (this is not always the case, but I have found it to be so quite often), he is lacking in faith; therefore, he lashes out and attacks those things that are divine. I Peter 1:9 reads, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (Incidentally, this shows we are **not saved by faith only** and that we **can fall from grace**.) What is the end of faith, even the salvation of souls! Faith can grow according to II Thessalonians 1:3. There is, though, an end to our faith. We must be faithful unto death, even if we are killed for our faith. “...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give unto thee the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

But, not only are we to follow after faith, we are to follow **love**. This is a term that is paraded around and so often misunderstood and abused. We often think about the great apostle John as the apostle of love, and indeed he was; but, I do not know whether anybody said any harder things than John did. He was speaking in love; he had the right to so speak. John said, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth

God love his brother also" (I John 4:20,21). Peter wrote, "Finally, be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender hearted, humbleminded: not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise a blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (I Pet. 3:8). The rest of the chapter deals with the fact that God's favor will rest upon us. We are to follow love.

I taught school for two years, and we had a bus driver, a member of the church, and another member of the church in that community who had devoted many years to law suits with each other over a little piece of land, that I would have scarcely had if they were to have given it to me. I suppose those men died bitter enemies. On different occasions I thought about John 13:35. "By this shall all men know" [they do not have to guess] "that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

But not only are we to follow after love, we are to follow after **patience**. And how we need that. I heard of a man that came out of a mine (and I suppose if I were going to lose my patience, I might do it if I had to stay in those mines all day) (when somebody was telling me about this, I was in eastern Kentucky in some meetings and was going to go into one of those mines one day; they were blasting in there, so I did not get to go in; frankly, I was glad I didn't; that particular mine did not look very inviting to me), started to get into his car, saw that he had a flat tire, walked back into the mine, got a stick or two of dynamite, and blew that car to smithereens. He would have been wise financially, not only spiritually, if he had followed this instruction.

The Bible says in Luke 21:19, "In your patience possess ye your souls; the **American Standard Version** says, "In your patience ye shall win your souls." Hebrews 10:36 reads, "For ye have need of patience, that having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."

Then, Paul said we are to follow after **meekness**. That is a part of laying a good foundation in view of eternity. I remember that when I lived in Oak Ridge, I saw a little squib in one of the Knoxville papers. It said, "Of course the meek will inherit the earth, because all of the strong people will have already gone to other planets." It equated **meekness** with **weakness**. That is not true.

I have never thought that the thunder killed anybody or anything; it may scare you to death, but it does not kill anything. It is the lightning that kills. I was on a radio program with twenty-two denominational preachers in Knoxville, Tennessee some years ago. I heard them beg for money and present all kinds of schemes. The first day I was there, I said, "Listen. Don't send me any money; I am interested in your soul" (and I think I quoted Matthew 16:26). I said, "The church pays for this program,

and if you were to send any money, I would send it back. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth” (and I quoted I Timothy 3:15). I was preceded by a Baptist and followed by a Holiness. I shall never forget that the Holiness got up right behind me and said, “The devil is in the studio today, telling you not to send in your money!” Well, I got up the next time and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I am not interested in your money; I am interested in your souls. I want you to go to heaven.” (I quoted passages again.) The truth is effective in some instances, to say the least. The Holiness preacher spoke next, and said, “The devil is back in the studio again today, telling you not to send in your money!” He said, “I didn’t get a letter all week.” So, I know that my preaching affected the audience more than it did the Holiness preacher.

We must recognize, therefore, that being patient or meek does not mean an absence of conviction. The reason I mentioned this is that I happened to remember the illustration that I used with those fellows. They came in (they did not have a place to sit as I usually do when I preach) and stood. They would get (I have watched some of them through the window, and I have seen them at other stations) very close to the mike and strain and yell so that the man on the board had to turn them down so they would not knock the radio station off of the air. One day some of them came in and I saw them out of the corner of my eye. I thought I would just see how long they could endure sound doctrine. So, I started; I preached baptism and I identified the one church. I did not have to preach long until one left; then, another left; soon, they were gone. I used this illustration on the radio; I said, “The way some of these preachers yell, holler, and carry on, they must think it’s the thunder that kills, but it’s the lightning that kills. It is not a great noise that does it, it is the truth.” But anyway, we are to follow after meekness.

Then, Paul used a word that is almost a bad word in some people’s vocabulary. In verse twelve he wrote **fight**. “Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.” Here, an older preacher, an inspired apostle, told a young preacher to be a fighter. To the Ephesians, Paul wrote concerning the Christian’s armor (Eph. 6:10-18). You have often heard it said that there is no armor for the back; we are not to turn and run; we are to press forward. Near the conclusion of Paul’s own life, he wrote, “I have fought” (II Tim. 4:7). But, what kind of fight was it? “I have fought a good fight.” There is much difference between **fighting** and **fighting a good fight**.

I knew a man who was easily upset and, as we say, **high tempered**.

This actually happened; he lived on a farm; one night he lost his temper with his cow. While he was milking, she kicked him. He grabbed that cow by the tail, threw that tail over his shoulder, and said, "I'll just throw you away." There he was, trying to throw that cow away, but she was going in the opposite direction. The same man was going hunting one night. He saw his shadow and thought it was a man and was lashing out with his fists at that shadow. His father-in-law was living with them; he came in and saw what was happening. (I would not use this word; I would not call a man a fool, but he did.) He called his daughter, and said, "Come here and get this fool; he's going to kill himself!" The man was shadow boxing. Paul said he had not done that, and we are not to do that. He said, "I have fought a good fight." Timothy was not only instructed to fight, but he was to "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses."

Billy Graham is coming to Memphis, and he is one of the biggest false teachers in the land, one of the biggest! If I were an elder, I think I know what I would do. If I were an elder and had influence over other people, I think I would be saying, "Brethren, let's challenge that false teacher to a public debate." I would recommend someone like brother Warren, who is well qualified, to meet him in debate. I do not think Billy Graham would debate; I am not that naive. With newspaper articles pointing out wherein he teaches error and wherein he contradicts the Bible, some honest people might begin to see some of his false teaching. Personally, I cannot conceive of Paul, Timothy, Peter, or John allowing a fellow like that to come in. I know this is not the only way to do it. We can expose him in the pulpit; we can teach our neighbors, and that may be the way we will have to do it; but, we better do it.

Someone once sent me one of Mr. Graham's columns. Here was the question: "Dear Mr. Graham: In my city there are thirty-five different churches. By reading my Bible, I do not believe that the Lord built thirty-five churches. Which one should I join?" Well, he replied: "Join the church of your choice." He was coming to Clinton, Tennessee after the high school had been bombed as the result of the racial situation some years ago. I was living at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and had a six-day-a-week radio program. About a month before Mr. Graham came to town I read that column everyday. Then I said, "Let's substitute this. Suppose the person had said: 'In my town thirty-five gods are worshipped. Which god should I worship?' Suppose Mr. Graham had replied: 'Well, just worship the god of your choice; one is as good as another.'" I said, "When he comes to Clinton he would have practically no one to hear him. It is no

more erroneous to contend for worshipping thirty-five gods than it is to contend one may worship in thirty-five churches. There is one church; **there is only one church!**" We should not be ashamed nor afraid to proclaim this.

We are to fight against immorality; we are to fight against doctrinal corruption. We are to fight against this **Ketchersidian view**, so-called **Mission Magazine**, and **Integrity** far out type of liberalism and any of the not quite as far out.

Brother McNutt mentioned the television program (I am sure some of you were watching that day) on which I appeared with a Roman Catholic priest, a Greek Catholic priest, a Methodist, a Holiness, a Salvation Army man, and a Christian Church preacher, Mr. Stauffer from the Lindenwood Christian Church, certainly the most liberal, as far as I know, in town. He disagreed with the rest of the panel concerning the mission of the church. I had quoted Acts 8:4. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." That is the mission of the church in a nutshell, even though, there are occasions for benevolence and other things. Mr. Stauffer said he had a little different view. His idea of the mission of the church was advocating the rights of women (you ladies ought to be careful when you are liberated; when I lived in Virginia, the day the women were liberated, one of our elders bought his wife a lawn mower), the rights of minorities, then, he said, the rights of homosexuals. Can you imagine a preacher saying that before thousands of people who may have been watching? The rights of homosexuals. Though I had already spoken, I was determined that if I got to answer that, I was going to do it. And so, when I did have an opportunity, I addressed the subject of homosexuality; I thought that was the one on which I ought to dwell. I said, "Mr. Stauffer says that he advocates the rights of homosexuals. Instead of advocating their rights, they need to repent." Then I quoted Jude seven. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire." You could not see this on the screen, but he was sitting as I remember, to my right, and I just turned and looked him right in the eyes. He just nodded his head yes. I do not think I converted him; I do not mean that. He could not look me in the face, even to the point that he just nodded his head yes.

On the next program (I think with that particular group of preachers) the question was asked (this gets to this matter of fighting for truth), "Should a man be a member of a church to go to heaven?" I will not go into detail because I am sure that some of you saw it; but you may

remember that they talked around and around and indicated, of course, that it did not make any difference. When I had an opportunity to speak, I said, "To go to heaven one must be a member of the church, and there is only one." I could tell that I had struck responsive nerves. I thought, "I'll just go a little bit further." I said, "You cannot read about Catholic and Protestant churches in the Bible." Mr. Stauffer spoke again, saying, "Mr. Elkins and I were together until the 1900's." I had engaged in quite a few discussions with the Methodist moderator, and so, he grabbed that in a hurry. He said with a certain air, "Mr. Elkins, do you admit that your branch of the church of Christ is a split?" I had my little Testament, so I thought I would just use his word **split**. I pointed to my Testament and said, "No sir, I do not admit that we have ever split away from any truth. We have always stood upon the truth. We continue to stand upon the truth." Then again, I turned and looked at Mr. Stauffer, though you could not see this on the camera, and said, "They brought in the missionary society in 1849; they brought in instrumental music in 1859." Again, he just dropped his head and kind of nodded. That is what we are faced with, compromise! It may have begun as a hole in the dike, but I'll tell you brethren, it is an avalanche today! There are those who say we are **crying wolf** when there is no wolf, but there is a wolf! I have often said, as I said earlier, I would be glad to be wrong about any danger; I wish there were none. I do not enjoy controversy per se; some people are so contrary that even their food cannot agree with them. I do not enjoy controversy, but what I enjoy a lot less is sitting or standing by and compromising the truth. When truth was at stake Paul told how long he waited; when those Judaizing teachers came in, "And that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:4,5). Paul had a tender heart; he did not enjoy engaging in controversy. I doubt that any of us here today enjoy contentions. I do not. However, I do not know how to go to heaven without being involved in controversy. We are not involved in a popularity contest; if we are, we are in the wrong work. We would lose it for sure; we would lose that contest. We are to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses." That is a part of laying the good foundation.

Then, in verses thirteen through sixteen Paul gave Timothy a charge. He said: "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good

confession; that thou **keep thou the commandments**; without spot, without reproach, unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only has immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen.”

What was the commandment? Keep the commandment. He said Jesus witnessed it before Pontius Pilate. It is my view that the commandment under consideration here is the holding of the good confession that is commanded. But whether I am right about that or not, I know the Bible teaches we must keep all of his commandments. “Blessed are they that do his commandments” (plural, **all of them**), “that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

I was having a discussion with a man concerning **liberalism**. He asked me this question. “Are you perfect?” Of course, he knew I would have to say no. I wish I could have truthfully said yes, but I knew better, and he did too. He then asked, “Are all of the members of the Getwell congregation perfect?” Well, again I had to, with sadness, admit that we are not. Therefore, with that in mind, he was trying to say that since none of us are perfect, I did not have any right to oppose his and other people’s error. I am not perfect. The Getwell congregation is not perfect. But, I believe that I am faithful, and I believe we have faithful Christians there. The Bible does not say, “Well done thou good and **perfect** servant.” It does not say, “Be thou **perfect** unto death.” That would eliminate us all. But, it does say, “Be thou **faithful** unto death.”

Once, when I was moving to a congregation, one of the elders said, “I hope when you get there you find a perfect congregation.” I said, “If I find them to be a **perfect** congregation, I will contaminate them when I get there, and they will not let me stay.” There are couples in this audience today who are faithful; they have not broken their marriage vows. But, I doubt that there are any couples who would say they have always spoken with the right emphasis at exactly the right time or the men have run the vacuum cleaners at the right time.

I wrote a little article in the **Spiritual Sword** as a result of that conversation to which I referred. It was entitled, “Is It Scriptural for Faithful But Imperfect Men to Oppose Error In Others?” It is, and I used the example of Peter and Paul. Peter, after falling more than once, repented, went on, and could oppose people. So, we are to hold the commandments. In an isolated instance, now and then, we will fail; but, we have the blood of Christ, if we will turn (I John 1:7-9).

We have in some quarters today those who are teaching Baptist doctrine, teaching that one cannot fall from grace. The Bible says you can. But, we do not have to fall from grace. There is provision through the blood of Christ; when we confess our sins one to another, we can pray one for another; we can walk in the light even as he is in the light; we can have fellowship one with another.

Further, Paul said, in verses twenty and twenty-one, “O Timothy, **guard** that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which falsely so-called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith.”

One of the reasons that we are faced with such apostasy today is that many, many, many brethren have failed to **guard**. I think it is a rather true statement, though not a Biblical statement, that those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. That is a statement which has a lot of truth in it.

I once preached for a congregation, at least in a city, in which for forty-six long years there had been no true congregation. The Christian Church people stole the cause. In earlier days they seldom ever built a building; they took them from faithful brethren. There was an older brother who lived there who knew the history well. As I recall, he said that they brought in a fast talking digressive preacher, who could preach it **round** or **flat**, and he was a lawyer. They got the brethren to sell their old building and build a new one, and the lawyer helped with the deed. Then, they approached the brethren concerning the use of instrumental music. They said, “We will only use it during the Bible study,” as if it would be any less sinful to sing with it during that time than during the later hour. But anyway, they got it in. And then, some of those brethren saw that they had compromised. They said, “Oh no, we do not want this!” The digressives said, “Listen, if you don’t like it, there’s the door, out you go!”

It was forty-six years before the truth was ever taught in its unadulterated form there again. The first regular located work that I ever did was in that city. I either had to fight or run, and I was not going to run.

I remember talking to the Christian Church preacher one day. I was standing on the sidewalk talking to one of the members of the church. I did not know that the Christian Church preacher was around. I do not believe it was a love lick; I never have thought so; it felt too strong to be a love lick. He came up and did me like that [SLAP]. I did not even know he was around; naturally it startled me. You know, he violated Scripture; the Bible says “lay hands suddenly on no man.” [LAUGHTER]. But anyway, I extended my hand to shake hands with him, and he shook hands with me

and left a little red ball, one of those little balls used for playing jacks. With sarcasm he turned to brother Staley and said, "Now you can say your preacher's on the ball," and away he went up the street. Well, I said to myself, "I'll let you see whether I'm on the ball or not."

He lived right across from our building and I went over there, I think, that afternoon. He had company; but, he did not mind slapping me on the back out on the street. So, I asked him, "Mr. Rose, I want to know what's wrong with iced tea on the Lord's Table." I do not know what all we discussed; but, I remember that part. He said, "Nothing!" He saw what I was going to do. If he said that the fruit of the vine eliminated iced tea, he knew that I was going to say that singing eliminated instrumental music; indeed, it does. He said, "Nothing!" Well, I went to one of his teachers, one of the most respected women in the Christian Church. I said, "Miss Myrtle, did you know that your preacher believes that iced tea is all right on the Lord's Table?" "Oh, I don't believe brother Rose believes that," she said. "Well," I said, "that's what he said." As the expression is, "the fat got in the fire." I was in town a few days from then at one of our song leader's store when Mr. Rose (he must have been part Irish; his face was very, very red that day) came rushing in there. He said, "You told Miss Myrtle that I said iced tea on the Lord's Table is all right; you're a liar!" He called me out and said that. I thought, "If he won't be truthful, I better not talk with him out here." Very quietly I said, "Would you mind stepping inside so we can talk about it?" I got him in the store where there were several people. I told him he did say it, and whether he admitted it or not he had said it; "The Lord knows you said it. It will face you in the judgment." I said, "Mr. Rose, why don't you defend what you teach?" He was rattled by this time; he said, "I don't have anything to defend." I said, "That's one time you told the truth." [LAUGHTER]. Because brethren did not guard, digressives brought in instrumental music, and for forty-six long years there was no congregation of Christ in that particular town.

I am hearing today in many quarters the type of thing about which I am speaking. Jim Reynolds said this at the Abilene Christian College lectures in 1972: "I dream of the day when there will no longer be a Baptist and there will no longer be a Methodist and when there will no longer be a church of Christ." Then, a little further in his speech he said, "The sickest churches of all are the churches that look just alike; they look like they all jumped out of the same Christmas box." Then Stanley Shipp arose following that lecture and commended all of the speakers, among whom Don Finto was reportedly one. He said, "They all told you the truth!"

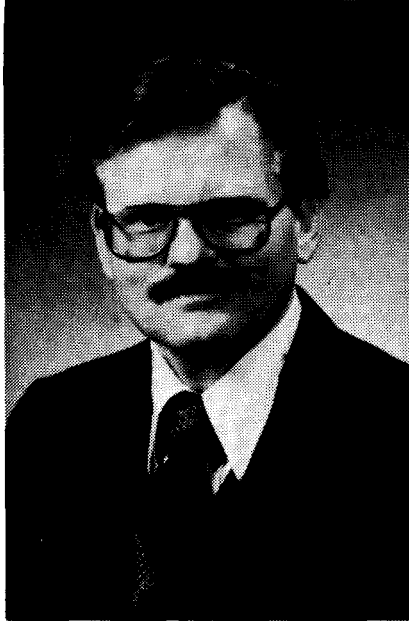
Brother Warren and I went over to the preachers' forum at Searcy a

year or two ago. Brother J.D. Thomas spoke against Ketcherside's doctrine and did a good job. In the open forum I congratulated him; but, I quoted what I just quoted from Jim Reynolds and Stanley Shipp. I said, "I appreciate what you said against the Ketchersidian doctrine, though he was invited out there once." (I could not understand why it would be proper to invite a false teacher like that.) But anyway, I said, "What do you plan to do about this other situation?" He said he did not think Reynolds would be invited again. That did not take care of what was done; hundreds of young people were there; they laughed like they were in a theater; they applauded like they were at a ball game; one man actually cursed! Brethren, if you are going to lay a good foundation for eternity, you are going to have to do some guarding. I need to begin with myself in this matter of guarding. I need to examine myself often to make sure my attitude is right, to make sure I am teaching the truth, and to make sure I am following the will of God; so do you.

But in conclusion, I want to suggest that Solomon worded it in such a way that I think would summarize the whole lesson. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:13,14). Thank-you.

Biographical Sketch

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Pat McGee was born July 19, 1940 in Wichita, Kansas. He is married to the former Fay Mays, and they have three sons. Brother McGee attended Freed-Hardeman College, Harding College (B.A.), Harding Graduate School of Religion (M.A. and M.Th.), and has participated in special studies at the University of Hawaii. His local preaching ministry has taken him to: Clinton, Arkansas; Pensacola, Florida; Knoxville, Tennessee; Jakarta, Indonesia; Singapore; Malaysia; and Chicago, Illinois. Presently, brother McGee is in his fourth year of work with the North Fifth and Grape church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. He has preached in almost every state of this country and in over thirty foreign countries.

Chapter Nine

The Need for Sound Doctrine In Our Time

by Pat McGee

It is certainly an honor and a privilege to be here on the lectureship and associated with these men. I love and esteem them because of their work's sake, their stand for the truth, and their concern for the souls of men.

The subject on which I have been asked to speak this afternoon concerns the matter of sound doctrine and **The Need for Sound Doctrine in Our Time**. The theme of the lectureship concerns the matter of calling men back to the Bible and the restoration plea. The apostle Paul said, "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). Contained in that admonition is the very principle of calling men back to the same—the identical—doctrine as taught by the inspired prophets and apostles in the first century church. And thus, it was the exhortation of the apostle that the very **same** doctrine, the sound doctrine of the blessed Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, be taught to faithful men who themselves would be able to pass that **same** sound doctrine down to a future generation, and in turn that generation would be able to pass the **same** sound doctrine on and on down through the years. Our plea is a Bible plea, to call men back to the Word of God. The heart and the core of the Bible, the Word of God, is its truth, its sound doctrine. The necessity and essentiality of preaching and teaching **the** sound doctrine is what we want to think about this afternoon.

The restoration concept is needed only where there has been a departure from the faith. In I Timothy 4:1, the apostle Paul talked about some men who would depart from the faith. If men had never departed from the faith, then there would be no need to return to the faith, for they would be already in the faith. Since men have departed from the faith, it is therefore, our solemn responsibility to call men back to the faith. Thus, to restore "the faith" in our time is our duty.

It may be thought of, not so much as a restoration effort, as a reproduction effort. The seed which is the Word of God (Luke 8:11) produces life. That life is eternal (I John 2:25). First Peter 1:21-23 speaks of the fact that we have purified our souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren and that we should love one another from the heart fervently, having been begotten again by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever. Then Peter described that Word of God through which the new begettall has come as a seed. And that seed is

eternal. It lives eternally. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass by, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). So, the seed is indestructible. It is eternal. It lives. It abides.

Therefore, it is our task today to take that same seed and implant it, engraft it into the hearts and the minds of men. As men receive with meekness that word which is engrafted, that seed is able to save their souls. Thus, we reproduce through the impartation or implantation of the spiritual seed of the will of our Lord, the pattern or plan of our Lord, and the truth as it is revealed in the New Testament. Therefore, the reproduction concept is identical with the restoration principal or plea; that is, to call men back to the Word of God.

There is absolutely no substitute for truth. Jesus said, "...If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). There is not anything which we can substitute for truth and make the end result something good for men, pleasing to God, and acceptable to the Lord who loves the souls of lost men. There just is not anything with which we can supplant truth and come up with something which is an improvement upon or equal to truth. Truth is something which is to be bought and never exchanged. "Buy the truth, and sell it not..." (Proverbs 23:23). Therefore, truth is essential, and the apostle Paul admonished men to stand in the truth.

Regarding the need for sound doctrine in our time, recall the familiar words of the apostle Paul in the closing chapter of his last epistle. "Preach the word; be urgent in season, and out of season..." God's people must never lose their sense of urgency, instancy, enthusiasm, zeal, and devotion in the work of Gospel preaching. "Preach the word; be urgent in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For," he says, "the time will come..." (Paul then explained the necessity, not only for sound doctrine, but for patience, longsuffering **and** doctrine.) "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine..." Men will no longer endure the Gospel of Christ, the pattern of God's precious will, God's plan, God's purpose, God's blueprint. They will not be able to stomach **the old paths**. I recently heard of a preacher who said, "I just can't stomach the idea that we hear in the church about returning to the old paths." This is the same idea about which Paul wrote in I Timothy 4:1-4. Some are not able to love and to endure the sound doctrine. Jeremiah said of such people, "They have no delight in it," that is, no delight in the Word of God. (See Jeremiah 6:10.) Some men just simply do not enjoy sound doctrine. That attitude is reflected today in various ways. Paul continued, "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will

heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth” (note that truth and doctrine are interchangeable in this context), “and turn aside unto fables.” Thus, the need for sound doctrine is apparent.

In I Timothy 1:3, the apostle Paul said that men need to be protected from those things that are contrary to sound doctrine. They need to be protected from error; it is the responsibility of every faithful Christian, of every faithful Gospel preacher, and of every elder in the church to protect any soul from error, because error is deadly and damnable. The apostle Peter referred to false teaching as “destructive heresies” (II Pet. 2:1,2). That means it brings the ruination and the destruction of the soul (Rev. 20:10). We are to protect men from that which is contrary to sound doctrine.

In I Timothy 1:10, Paul discussed matters which are “contrary to the sound doctrine.” That means they are beyond the doctrine of Christ or beyond the pattern of God’s explicit and implicit authority reflected in his Word, in his Will, in the Bible, in the Truth. Titus 2:6-8 depicts the faithful Gospel preacher as one who is sober. That indicates he is not to be frivolous and trite in the exposition and the treatment of divine Truth, for these are things with which there can be no comedy. The apostle Paul affirmed that while others ridiculed and laughed he preached words of truth and soberness (Acts 26:25). Words of sobriety ought to cut into the very depths of our souls because they are serious, somber, and sober words. A faithful Gospel preacher must preach soberly, somberly, and seriously, not tritely and trivially.

Paul said that a preacher should preach without mixing **corruption** with doctrine. In doctrine he is to show uncorruptness, gravity, and sound speech which cannot be condemned (Titus 2:7,8). Sound doctrine cannot be reproached and cannot rightly subject to criticism, because it is the word of truth from the Gospel. I have often heard it suggested that it is really impossible to always preach the truth. Well, of course, such a suggestion is not only foolish but it flies in the face of any number of passages and warnings in the Word of God where God’s children are, in fact, told to do that very thing. (See Matthew 28:20; Acts 20:27; II Corinthians 2:9.)

Others express the same sentiment in various ways, such as, “Well, nobody can preach all the truth.” But that is not what the apostle Paul said. He declared, “I am pure from the blood of all men.” Why was he pure from the blood of all men? Was it because he was sincere? No, not just that. Why, then? Well, because Paul proclaimed “the **whole** counsel of God.” That is why! He gave the Word of God in its totality, the truth of

the Gospel in its wholeness. Paul hearkened to the words of Jesus who said, "Teaching them to observe all things." Similarly, the apostle Paul to the Corinthian church in II Corinthians 2:9, "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye are obedient in all things."

In I Timothy Six the apostle said Christians are to keep the commandments of God without reproach and unrebukeable (I Tim. 6:14). That is the kind of responsibility that Christians and Gospel preachers have in teaching and practice. It is a serious and somber charge and obligation if there ever was one.

There are men who are denying the fact that there is any Biblical pattern, plan, or blueprint. They say this in order that they might undercut and set aside the appeal to return to the Bible and the need for restoration. Among the things they say is the following, "one cannot restore the New Testament church because the Bible is not a blueprint; it is not a pattern." Such fanciful philosophies are found abundantly, mostly in the magazine known as **Mission**, which has been the cutting edge of liberalism in the churches of Christ since its inception.

Here I have beside me stacked a number of articles. Though I am not going to read all these to you, permit me to illustrate with this article, "The Risk of Abandoning Pattern Authority" by the editor of **Mission** magazine. This article appeared last year in the month of May. The summation of this article is that no one can ever really know when he gets back to the true pattern; so no one should ever be dogmatic about what is actually right or wrong in religion. Here I quote, "There is no fail-safe formula to be found in the Biblical text in restoration attempts." "No fail-safe formula!" All of this is, of course, just simply theological **gooblygook**! It is a fanciful way to say, "I deny the Bible; I reject it, I categorically cast it aside as of no value, of no worth, of no significance in restoring the New Testament way."

Here is another article from **Mission** magazine in which this question was asked and then answered: "Is the restoration principle valid? The restoration principle is based upon the assumption that the Christian church is or has been apostate." (This, he says, is an **assumption**; the church is **assumed** to be apostate and therefore, thought that it must be restored to its original form. Further, the restoration principle **assumes** that the Bible provides a pattern or blueprint by which such a restoration can be made. So, it is denied that there is any pattern or blueprint to be found in the Biblical text.) Then the writer ridiculed the idea of a restoration plea, saying, "Suffice it to say, there is nothing in the New Testament canon" (he said "nothing") "which states that future

generations must go back to the Bible for detailed instructions for work and worship." Now, this is just one example of a very popular attempt, that is succeeding in many areas among us as some are denying the restoration principle and the pattern principle as found in the Words of God.

Another article in *Mission* magazine a few years ago had this to say about the restoration pattern or blueprint. The author wrote, "The Scriptures do not provide a plan, pattern, or blueprint. The faithful Christian does not see the Bible as a blueprint for building a church or a textbook for doctrine or a road map from earth to heaven." One wonders why we have the Bible at all. In fact, the man who wrote this article is neoorthodox. He sets aside the Bible as objective and makes his own experiences to make his own subjective truth, which for him becomes truth by which he relegates the Bible to nothing, literally, nothing. That is the thrust found in numerous articles in recent journals and magazines where brethren are not able to put their fingers on the exact point that the writer makes. Perhaps the writer is really neoorthodox. Such brethren deny the objectivity of Bible truth and rather maintain the objectivity of their own subjective life experiences as truth.

The author continued, "The Bible is a gathering together of many books, each with its own teaching, its own doctrine, and its own view of Jesus Christ...Therefore, words which ought to be used only to point to the truth of God may not be used of Scripture." He is saying there is a difference between the Word of God and Scripture. One must listen closely to their ploys and plays on words. Liberal brethren make a difference between the Word of God and Scripture. "Scripture," he says, "is not absolute. It is not inerrant; it is not infallible; it is not perfect. Only God's truth is." Scripture isn't; only God's truth is? May I kindly suggest that such language, if it had been spoken back during the days of Moses, would have resulted in the author being smitten dead in his tracks! It is that blasphemous!

There are others among us who illustrate the obvious need for sound doctrine because of their departure from it. Their determination is to divide the church of the Lord in our day through their own human philosophies. Let me bring to your attention a statement from a book entitled **What Lack We Yet?** (Notice the belittling of doctrine implicit in this statement.) "What we in the church of Christ lack is the honesty to **de-essentialize** our beliefs." "De-essentialize our beliefs and see if some third-rate doctrine has been elevated to the front burner where it does not belong." Now he is talking about what he says are **third-rate doctrines**. "One has lost his sense of doctrinal priority altogether, for example, if he

seriously thinks that the question of instrumental music has the same weight as the resurrection and atonement of Christ.” This obviously, among other things, indicates the complete ignorance on the part of that writer of what the instrumental question involves, that is, the denial of the authority of Christ. If Christ’s authority is denied, he might as well have never been resurrected or made the atonement. That author is ignorant of these things, willfully, perhaps, as Peter said.

Continuing the quote, “The tragedy of such a distorted hierarchy of doctrinal priorities is that Christians waste time and energy championing a secondary belief and never join hands with their brethren in spreading the Gospel.” Of course, this is pure poppycock again, since many of us have joined hands together in preaching the Gospel here and around the world. This is another straw man. What this person has done is to very cleverly wrap his language, offering smooth words and fair speeches (Rom. 16:18). He is leading a movement to get brethren to see a supposed priority of doctrines. Upon what basis are we to determine what is a primary doctrine, a first-rate doctrine, as opposed to a second-rate doctrine, a third-rate doctrine, and so forth? Where does the Bible give instruction that the atonement is number one in the category, whereas the instrument is number three, or wherever he may want to place it? He places it at least at number three here. This article was written by a man whose articles appeared in **every** major brotherhood publication within the last year. He is extremely popular. He is a professor at a Christian college, and he is as dangerous a false teacher as I can place my finger upon at this moment. The book that I am reading from is **What Lack We Yet?** The author is Arlie Hoover.

This same man has written a book supposedly on Christian evidences, defending Christian faith; the book is **Dear Agnos**. (See **The Spiritual Sword**, July 1977, for an exposure of this book.) In one section of his book he talks about the reliability of the Bible; “Can we really trust our Bible?” Here is one statement that indicates the confidence that he has in the Bible. He says, “All I have tried to establish in this chapter is that the Bible is a substantially reliable, historical document.” Now, note the word **substantial**. That is the key word. What if you were to have a preacher preaching at the church where you are who it was known was **substantially** faithful to his wife? You would not want a preacher who was just substantially faithful to his wife. You would want one that was faithful. This man is saying that the Bible is not always faithful; it is not always reliable, but it is substantially reliable. Now what that means, you see, is that a cloud, a shadow, hovers over the whole, and, we can never really know anything absolutely. Brethren, that is blasphemy! It is downright

liberalism! There are things far worse than this, if conceivable, in this book. This is a terribly dangerous book, and he is a terribly dangerous man. We have no personal axe to grind against him, for we love his soul. However, we must despise the damnable doctrine which he is teaching.

He deals with the so-called problem of evil in Christian evidences. This, of course, is one of the big things that atheists attempt to use to discredit the concept of God and the existence of God. He tries to deal with this problem but makes of it a miserable mess. He says, "My dear friend" (as if he wrote this book to his friend), "I said that Jesus helps us with the problem of evil." Well, that's nice, isn't it? **Jesus helps us!** Then he goes on to say, "But even Jesus doesn't completely solve it." Now, you think about this! Here is at least one problem; in fact, what is the greatest dilemma that the unbeliever, the atheist, has to present to us; this man places in print that even Jesus Christ does not settle the issue in that problem. That is why I said it is blasphemy of the rankest sort. It is just a very dangerous thing.

All of this indicates the **necessity** in our time for a return to sound doctrine. There are attacks being leveled against the church and the Word of the Lord from various places which, if not **answered** and **exposed**, and those brethren who will not repent, **marked**, are going to lead the church into greater digression and open division. It is going to come if brethren do not repent.

There is a new book just released by Sweet Publishing Company, the liberal publishing company in Austin, Texas. They have never, as far as I know, published a book that has not, to some extent, been tainted with either denominationalism or liberalism. This new book in the introduction makes this statement about the Bible: "Man can use various scientific tools to understand and reconstruct historical facts, but there is no way by a scientific method to verify or disprove the accuracy of theological interpretation by the various Biblical authors." First of all, the Biblical authors did not impose **theological interpretations** upon their books. This is error number one in this book. This error is coming and it is sweeping the Christian colleges. It is sweeping across the church; there are just more and more and more and more articles filling up magazines such as **Restoration Quarterly** and the **Firm Foundation**, and others where tacitly, if not just explicitly, the inspiration of the Bible, the inerrancy of the Bible, the integrity of the Bible, the authenticity of the Bible, the genuineness of Scripture, the reliability, and the trustworthiness of the Word of God are being called into suspicion. There is a need for sound doctrine in our time.

Secondly, he says, it is impossible to verify whether historical facts are true or not true. That is the second problem here. In other words, he has

involved himself in the same thing that many of our brethren who have entered into the area of Christian evidences have done. They have said: "Here we have the Bible, a book, but we really do not know if it is the Word of God. The probability is that it may be; the possibility and plausibility are such that we could even form a strong hypothesis." I am not making these words up; I am quoting them. Is it a **hypothesis** that the Bible is the Word of God? In the final analysis, some brethren would have us believe we can never even know anyway. That is what this fellow is saying. Just boil it down to its nuts and bolts; we could not know if we **had** to know that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Further, he declares, "This must be accepted by faith or rejected by unbelief." In other words, what he is saying is that knowledge does not even enter into one's assessment of the Bible. These men make a distinction between knowledge and faith. The idea is that knowledge may bring one along so far, but one cannot **know** if God exists; one cannot **know** if the Bible is God's Word; one cannot **know** if Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God; one cannot **know** if the instrument is wrong. **One cannot know anything!** One must make a **leap of faith**.

He says, "The Christian accepts the theological presupposition that all Scripture is inspired of God...God cannot be limited to any set of abstract religious declarations deduced from Scriptures by his creature man. Man cannot anticipate how God will behave in any given situation. God is not programmed to act according to any logical human system. He is God. He acts as he wills as each new situation arises." Well, that is the God of Pantheism. That is a Humanistic concept of God where God acts arbitrarily. That is error!

The truth of the matter is that the Bible is God's will, God's mind; God is never going to do **anything** beyond and above what he has said in his will. Jesus said in John 10:35, "...the scripture cannot be broken..." John 3:33 reads, "...hath set his seal to this, that God is true." Romans 3:4 declares, "...Let God be found true, but every man a liar." Let God be true! In Romans Chapter Nine, Paul said that God finishes his Word and executes it. God will not bargain with his Word and change his will. To suggest that, "Yes, I know the Bible teaches that, but maybe later on God will change the Bible," is to suggest something that is heinous and despicable. Such disparages the nature of God. To place God above his Word is to make a distinction between what is in God's Word and what is in God's nature, God's mind, God's will. There is no difference.

The statement that God cannot be limited to any set of abstract religious declarations is dangerous. It is liberalism. He is saying the Bible does not reveal much at all about God and that God may do anything as he

chooses. This is another attempt to belittle, ridicule, and set aside the Word of God. We need to open our eyes. The need for sound doctrine or a divine blueprint in our time is an essential need. We must begin to emphasize that there is a divine blueprint just as there was for the construction of the ark. God said to Noah, "Make an ark of gopher wood," and we know that is truth. Further, God told Noah **how** to do it.

In I Timothy 3:14, 15 Paul said, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men oughtest to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Paul wrote that men might know **how**...That implies a pattern; that implies a blueprint. As God told Noah **how** to build the ark, God has given us the **how** we are to conduct ourselves in the church. He has given us a pattern or a blueprint for it. God told Noah, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood...pitch it within and without with pitch..." We know that Noah did that, because the Bible says, in Genesis 6:22, "Thus did Noah; according to **all** that God commanded him, so did he." Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah...prepared an ark." How did he do it? He did it **by faith**. What does that mean? Well, he took God at his word. God said do it this way. Noah, in his humility, contrition, reverence, respect, and august awe for the Word of God, humbled himself and said, "Lord, I'll do thy bidding, just as thou hast said." "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded..." Is that legalism, Noah? No, it isn't. What liberals think is legalism is spirituality in its highest form.

First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." The brethren among us who belittle and mock the supposed Pharisaical attitude that God's faithful children have toward the New Testament system, the law of Christ, do not understand the concept of law and grace any more than they understand the Biblical doctrine of love. They have misused love many years. God said build an ark. He gave him a plan, and Noah followed the plan by faith. He took God at his word. He did it, and he found grace. That means that grace is limited, and there is a principle that is unalterable. Grace is hemmed in by God's will, and there is never an occasion where grace extends beyond the will of God. Never!

Recently, a book was printed wherein a brother espoused the position which we have just mentioned. He presented the following question. "If I really try to follow the Bible, honestly wanting to serve God, but misunderstand an important concept here or there, will God destroy me or will God reject me?" Well, of course, he responded, "That's up to God." He wrote, "The answer to the question is beyond my depth." He never

did identify what important concept he had in mind. What if that **important concept** were to concern the deity of Christ? The implication is that one cannot even know about that; that is beyond our depth. What if that important concept were to concern the inspiration of the Scriptures? What these men do not want to do is to come down hard on the truth. They are afraid of it. They are scared to death of it. Their looseness and liberalism drives them back from those things to the position where they don't know anything. And because they think they do not know anything, they want you to think you do not know anything. And if you do not think like they think, then you are a bigot, narrowminded, and unspiritual; you are Pharisaical.

When God's faithful preachers and teachers see that sin is sin, that heaven is real, that hell is hot, and that sinners will lose their souls, they will lose their souls too if they do not preach the truth. We must preach it (II Tim. 4:2). We must stand for the truth (Jude 3). The author of the volume under our scrutiny (**The 20th Century Sermons**, "Steps to Life," by Lynn Anderson, page 71) says, "That's up to God." "But," quoting again, he wrote, "are we forced to assume that God has a kind of a harsh, legalistic approach to things?" The answer he intends is obvious. No, we are not forced to assume that God is harsh and **legalistic**. Then he wrote, "My whole salvation is based on the trust that God's mercy is broader than God's law." Back about three years ago, Carl Ketcherside brought out a book, **The Death of The Custodian**, in which he took this view about grace, that grace totally annuls law. That is the **grace only** idea which affirms that anything that is in the Bible is really inconsequential, because in the final summation, grace is going to cover it all anyway. These two views are identical. It is as though this writer lifted it verbatim out of Ketcherside's book. I am convinced that he did.

He wrote, "My whole salvation is based on the trust that God's mercy is broader than God's law." Where does the Bible say such a thing? That may sound nice to some, but the obvious question ought to be: "Where does the Bible say that?" Where does the Bible say that God's grace is greater than God's law? Does the Bible say that? "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God..." (II John 9). Does that author's statement sound like II John Nine? Does it sound like grace is going to extend beyond God's law, God's will, the doctrine of Christ? That is not what John thought at all.

This concept of grace only is **all over** Abilene, in which city I preach. It is **all over** that part of the country. When I travel in meetings and lectureships like this, people tell me, "It's all over where I am too." It is sweeping the country. It is as wrong, devilish, and destructive to the

ongoing of Gospel truth, the cause of Christ, and the continuance of the old paths among us as anything could conceivably be.

He continued, "I don't know how many degrees of differential God will allow before he rejects us. Our salvation is dependent on his mercy and grace, not on your absolute correctness." There is the same theory. It is preached, as I said, all over Abilene, by Lynn Anderson, preacher at Fifth and Highland, which congregation sponsors **The Herald of Truth**. This man is about the biggest false teacher that I have ever known.

Brethren, we are in a fight. We are in a fight for the existence of the cause of Christ, right now. We are seeing the floodtides of digression washing at the foundation of Biblical truth and the precious church of our Lord which he purchased with his own blood. It is not a time to be indifferent. It is not a time to shrug our shoulders complacently and to ignore the solemn and serious matters and problems that are being presented to us this week.

Did you read, a few weeks ago, of the account of a derelict in Chicago that had lain for two weeks in a garbage dump in a basement? Rats were eating the flesh off his body and he was crying and screaming for help. People heard his cries and moanings. People heard his pleading for help. In two weeks rats ate away his legs, his fingers, and his flesh; they almost ate him alive. God forbid, that faithful children of God should be as negligent in hearkening to the pleas faithful brethren have made this week! We must arise in the strength of the God of Israel and fight the good fight of the faith (I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7). **If we back-up, who will stand-up!**

Biographical Sketch

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Chapter Ten

Danger of Perverting the Gospel

by Ernest Underwood

I think all of us, if this were assigned to us, would probably go to the passage that I am going to cite, Galatians 1:6-10. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ."

In this passage the apostle Paul told the Galatians that he was disappointed. He marveled in the fact that they had turned away from the Gospel which they had so recently learned. The reason they had turned away from the Gospel was that there had been some teachers who had come in, who had first troubled them, and then, proceeded after this troubling to pervert the Gospel. The apostle Paul told the Galatians, if anyone, even though he were an angel from heaven or an inspired apostle, should preach any other Gospel than that which he had preached, that person was to be anathema. He then concluded by saying Christians must please God rather than man.

There is an interesting statement in this particular text to which we should pay attention. Paul said, "... there are some that **trouble** you, and would pervert the gospel ..." It is interesting to note that with every perversion there must first be a **troubling**. The Greek word here is "**tarassontes**." This word comes from the root word, "**tarasso**," and according to Thayer, it means, "To render anxious or distress, to perplex the mind of one by suggesting scruples of doubts." Now notice what Thayer said. He said, "to render anxious or distress," to cause someone to be anxious, or to cause someone to be distressed, or to raise doubts in the mind by suggesting scruples and so forth. The **Analytical Greek Lexicon** defined "**tarasso**," "to unsettle, to perplex."

Now notice; there is that stirring of the chaldron, as it were, and then with this stirring of the chaldron, the unsettling of people's minds. Then after this has been accomplished, there comes the perversion of the Word.

In Acts 15:24, Luke records James' use of "**tarasso**." "Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment." Here James said that some had gone out and they have **troubled** the church; there is our word. Through troubling, souls are subverted. Souls are undermined. The rug is cut out from under Christians, so to speak. In this passage then, we can see that troubling comes first, then perversion, and then the subverting of souls. And brethren, this is going on, not only in the larger religious world today, but this is going on in our brotherhood, day in and day out!

In the lesson today, I want to note some ways and methods by which this is being done. First of all, I want us to note the sources of perversion. There are some areas, and there are some identifiable sources from which the perversion is coming. I have listed these in three different categories, starting each with an "**A**".

One source of perversion comes about by the **attitude**. In order for one to pervert the Word he must first have a certain attitude about that Word, and that attitude is a lack of respect for it. When men begin to pervert the Word, you can mark it down that they have lost their respect for the authority of the Word of God. We have seen this attitude in our brotherhood, and we have seen it, of course, in the religious world. There are many who no longer respect the authority of the Word of God. They place their family, their ancestral or parental religion, their feelings, or any multiplicity of other things above the Word of God.

Then, there is the attitude of intellectual snobbery characteristic of our day. This is not a new attitude, though we too have almost developed a **clergy**. This area, I suppose, is a personal peeve of mine. I have noticed in some of our announcements of Gospel meetings and lectureships, references to brother so and so, Mr. so and so, and Doctor so and so. It doesn't bother me to ride down the street and see in the wrought-iron of some denominational church that here is so-and-so, pastor, Ph.D. But it bothers me a great deal when I see that on the lawn of some of our brotherhood buildings. It's intellectual snobbery and if you don't have that particular degree, if you are not in the upper class, then who are you? Who are you that someone should listen to you, after all, all that you did, students and alumni, was graduate from the Memphis School of Preaching. Where did you go to school? Well, read with me John 7:48. "Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?" What do you see there? You see intellectual snobbery.

I am not against education; however, I have contempt for those who place it above the Word of God. We need to have the proper attitude.

There is another attitude, the attitude that any school, any editor, any college, or any paper is the final authority in brotherhood matters, and if you disagree with a given school, if you disagree with a given paper, or a certain editor, or a certain college — then you are wrong. Again, I am not against our schools; I am a product of them. But, I am against the idea that they are the determining factors, and that they hold the final say in matters of God's Word or in matters of religion.

Brethren, it is the Gospel, not this school or that school, or this editor or that editor, or this well known brother or that well known brother to whom we must appeal in religious matters. We have known too many who were once faithful but have gone into apostasy. As this attitude prevails, it is one of the sources of perversion of the Word of God.

Now let's hit home; let's bring it down very close to home. There is yet one other source of perversion, the ungodly lives of some of our members. Some think nothing of engaging in the sins of dancing, drinking, and sexual immorality; yet, they still expect to be treated like they are the best members in the congregation when they attend Sunday morning services. This attitude itself is a perversion, and causes a perversion of the Word of God in those that look to them. Was it not our Lord who said, "Ye are the salt of the earth ... ye are the light of the world"? When we as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, begin to engage in these types of sins, we express contempt for the Word of God. When we express that attitude, other people are influenced by it and the Word is perverted.

The second "A" is **ambition**. There are some ambitious people in this world. They are ambitious for fame; they are ambitious for wealth; they are ambitious for popularity. They desire power. Brethren, this will be the only statement I will make about it, but there is a movement running rampant through our brotherhood that is based on this very principle of the desire for power. The **prayer partner** concept found within that movement is nothing more than the old Catholic idea of the power of the pope. Where there are junior and senior prayer partners, it will develop into that. I know whereof I speak; I have been there!

There is a desire for power wherein one man's word is better than another man's word, and my say is better than your say, and more powerful than your say, and you must yield to me. When men desire this power they will pervert the Word of God. We are all students of history and know that shortly after the beginning of the church, apostasy followed. Why did the apostasy develop; because men desired power. It began in the eldership, mainly, where men desired power. That same apostasy is among us today.

There is also the desire for wealth. How many "poor" **fake-healers** do

you know? None—right? We do not know any poor **fake-healers**. Why are they rich? By his own admission, Oral Roberts came to Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1948 with twenty-five dollars in his pocket. And, of course, you know about his financial status today. (It is an interesting thought that he now has a leper in his student body, isn't it? I wonder why he does not heal that man. However, that is another thought.)

There is the ambition and desire for pre-eminence. We all know of Diotrephes. He desired to have the pre-eminence; he would not submit, even to the apostle John. Let me ask a question. Let's probe a little bit here. When did the doctrine that the eldership has no authority begin to make inroads? In my studies, I found that when a group of preachers wanted to be the **big boss** in their respective congregations and wanted to be **the authority** in congregational affairs is when they began to say that elders do not have any authority. They wanted the authority for themselves and they began to then decrease or diminish the authority of the eldership. Finally, some of them have now said that elders have no authority whatsoever. Why don't they have any authority; because the preacher wants it! It's an ungodly and unscriptural desire, but it is there. Some preachers usurp the authority of elders.

There is the desire for popularity. What will we do for popularity? The desire to be popular equates to numbers, numbers at all costs. I was told by a man who preaches in Shelby County that he desires to be the preacher of the biggest church in the brotherhood. He told me that with his own lips. And he also indicated that he would do anything in order to accomplish that goal. He is already on that route to doing anything, anything that will bring in numbers. To be popular, some evidently believe that "the ends justifies the means." Brethren, when we have these ambitions, there is going to be a perversion of the Word of God! When we drive to fulfill ungodly ambitions, there will be a perversion of the Word.

The third "A" is **alterations**. Think back with me to the time when certain movements began to affect our brotherhood. (Brother Robert Taylor could do this better than I can. He has done a good work on the versions.) When did men like those of **Integrity** and **Mission** magazines begin to raise their ugly heads? Well, it was after the **Revised Standard Version** arrived. Back beyond 1947, 1951, or along there, one did not find much alteration in the church. Yes, there was some, but now you find it pretty well embedded. When did the charismatic movement come in? It came in with the **Good News for Modern Man**; good news, my foot! When did we begin to have the umbrella of grace idea, that a man can sin and when he sins he is automatically forgiven of that sin? That is taught by brethren!

A teacher from one of our schools argued with me in my office that when a man sins, before he has a chance even to recognize, repent of, and confess that sin, God automatically forgives it. He said that is the way God does it every time. Furthermore, this instructor said that God automatically forgives sin so when man finally gets around to confessing it, that he is confessing a sin that God has already forgotten about. When did such a doctrine develop; when the "Paraphrase" came in.

Alterations are brought in by the "so-called" versions. We joke sometimes, saying, "The **King James** was good enough for Paul, and so, it's good enough for me." Brethren, that is almost true. Although he didn't use the **King James Version**, and I know that, the **King James** and **American Standard** versions are accurate and comparable to what he did use. We need to stand and defend these, and as far as I am personally concerned, have very little use for the others.

Then, another alteration is that of attempting to justify a practice or teaching. When I was growing up, in fact, when I began to preach, back in 1959, the idea of marriage, divorce, and remarriage for any (every) reason in full fellowship with the church was unknown. Then, as marriage, divorce, and remarriage became more prevalent, it began to come into the church, not creeping; it just came in like a gully-washer or frogstrangler. When it came in, brethren had to do something about it; they either had to condemn it or justify it. What did they do? They justified it by twisting Scriptures and mutilating the Word of God. The children's church idea and all the gimmicks that are being used came about as alterations of the Word of God.

These are the sources of perversions: attitudes, ambitions, and alterations. But then, what are the **methods of perversion**? Of course, I do not have time to even think about all of them; but, one method that has seemed to be very effective is to ridicule and discredit all who would contend for the **old paths**. I do not know if you know it or not (of course, he is in our audience today), but brother Franklin Camp is an old moss back; I know because I have been told that. The type of preaching that he does is antiquated and outdated. Robert Taylor is a witch-hunter because he dealt with the versions; I know that because I have been told that. Well, what are they doing, who so address these brethren? They are trying to discredit and ridicule men who will stand and proclaim the old paths boldly. Unfortunately, they have a great deal of influence over some of our young preachers, especially among the **intellectual group**.

"Don't you know that Campbell was an itinerant backwoods preacher?" Of course, anybody that makes that statement displays his ignorance of the life of Campbell. While I lived in the state of Florida (the

last time I lived there), brother Foy Wallace spoke in a Gospel meeting there. I invited a young man, a graduate of one of our schools of preaching (It was not Memphis; it was not one of our sound schools.) to hear brother Foy Wallace. I have heard him before and have known him for some time. The young preacher said, "That old man doesn't have a thing to say that I need to hear." I looked him straight in the eye and said, "Young man, I'm not angry with you for that statement, but I pile upon you the deepest pity that I possibly could." Later, that young man left his wife, ran around with his secretary and began selling tombstones. It is not good that he has done this, but it is good that, since he has that attitude, he got out of the preaching business. We do not need that kind of preacher in the brotherhood.

"You're too hard; you are unloving." How many of us have had that spit into our faces? "You're too unloving; you don't love the brotherhood," some say. Of course, they think of love as some sentimental, sickly thing. They do not think of love as a disinterested love, seeking that person's best interest. So, they ridicule.

Another method of perversion is changing a word, ignoring the context. The statement is made frequently that, "You can prove anything by the Bible." Of course, that is not true. One can "prove" anything by words, if he mutilates them. I could prove that **up** is **down**, if I could get you to believe that, that way is down. There are those who are mutilating the Word, adding words and taking it out of context; this is not new.

What word did Satan misuse (the only word) with Eve? He said, "Thou shalt **not** surely die." **Not** is the only word he changed. God had said, "Thou shalt surely die"; Satan said, "Thou shalt **not** surely die." The devil used this method of perversion.

I believe it was brother Clark this morning who used the passage in John where Jesus promised the apostles, that after his departure the Comforter would come and guide them into all truth. There are brethren today who are applying this to us. Some campus works (not all campus works), especially **Crossroadism**, are using it. I know first hand; I lived there three years. I met with them, and there wasn't a day in three years that I did not deal with **Crossroadism**. I know whereof I speak. When asked why they believe that the Holy Spirit helps them understand hard passages or why they believe that the Holy Spirit helps them to do right and keeps them from doing wrong, they say, "Well, did not Jesus promise that he would send the Comforter to us?" If the Holy Spirit helps them to understand hard passages, brethren, then they have **divine interpretation** and they ought to write it down. If the Holy Spirit helps them to do right and keeps them from doing wrong, **impossibility of apostasy** is true. If

they fall then, it is the Holy Spirit's problem; it is his fault.

In addition to the changing of a word or taking a passage out of its context, the use of ambiguous language is another method of perversion. Isn't it interesting and strange that some intellectuals can make a thirty minute speech (I think there was something in the Gospel Advocate this past issue about that) and it would take them a book to explain it away?

Another thing (getting back to the translations for just a moment), isn't it interesting that these fellows, who are so intellectual, cannot understand the **King James Version**, while those old moss back, antiquated farmers fifty, sixty, and a hundred years ago understood it enough to preach the Gospel and cause untold thousands of souls to be saved? Isn't it interesting that they understood it, but our intellectuals cannot?

Concerning ambiguous language, pick up a copy of **Mission**, pick up a copy of **Integrity**, and even some of our bulletins and one cannot know what they are saying. If you question them on any point, they respond, "Well, I didn't mean it that way." Question them on another point and they will say again, "Well, I didn't mean it that way." Who can know what they mean?

The use of the word **miracle** is an example. They say when you question them, "I didn't really mean **miracle** like **miracle**. I simply meant miracle like baptism is a miracle, in the same sense that the resurrection was a miracle. But, I don't really mean **miracle**." Well, what does he mean? All these arguments have been made to me.

Another method of perversion is placing undue emphasis upon one aspect of the work of God, to the exclusion of all others. The **total commitment movement** which is running rampant throughout the brotherhood does this. Nobody that I know, no Gospel preacher and no faithful Christian, is against evangelism. Most Gospel preachers have given up work by which they could have made more money in order to evangelize. Additionally, many Christians are sacrificial givers so that the world can be evangelized. Stating that evangelism is all that one must do or putting such undue emphasis on it to overrule family ties, even in Christian families, is a method of perversion. The **total commitment movement** even presumes a license to rule on whom one may date or on one's participation in athletics.

We pondered **sources of perversion** and **methods of perversion**, now consider, our third point, **fruits of perversion**. What fruit can we expect to come from a perverted Gospel?

Paul said, beginning with Acts 20:28, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to

feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Here we have it. "Grievous wolves" enter in, but not as wolves, Jesus previously warned. They come as smiling sheep. They have the voice of a wolf and the wool of a sheep. They have the voice of Jacob, but the physical features of an Esau. They come privately through the side door.

Paul said, "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." From what, to what, were they to be drawn? They were already in the truth, but were to be drawn away from the truth to be disciples of perverse teachers. A drawing away or falling away of disciples is a fruit of perversion.

Remember the church at Galatia. Paul told them they had removed from him who had called them, unto another Gospel which was not really the Gospel; it was a perverted Gospel. Later, he wrote that the Galatians had fallen from grace and had been bewitched.

They fell from grace by trying to be justified by the law. That was the specific characteristic of the Galatian perversion. They were falsely taught by judaizing teachers that one had to be circumcised in order to be saved. **Fallen from grace equates to being severed or cut off from Christ.**

"The entire denominational world stands as a colossal monument to the perversion of the Word of God." I have made this statement on radio, television, in public, and in private; and I have never been challenged. In the next issue of **Oracle of Truth**, I will be issuing a challenge for a debate, knowing that the one challenged will not accept.

I have also made this statement, and neither has it ever been challenged. "According to the scriptures, there's not a single denominational body upon the face of God's earth that has a right to exist; not a single one." Brethren, **it is time that we quit being ashamed of saying we are the only true church.** If it offends, let it offend. Let's not say it offensively, but if it offends then let the truth offend. I am sure that Jesus offended the Jews, the religious leaders of the day, when he said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do ..." (John 8:44). We know that they were offended at him. Jesus did not purpose to offend anyone, but his speech offended them.

We must speak inoffensively because we are interested in people. But if truth offends, then let it offend; because, brethren, **if we are not the "only" church, we are not the church at all.** I do not blush a bit when I say that. The entire denominational world stands as a colossal monument to the perversion of the Word of God. The denominational world is different,

because it is founded upon a foundation other than the Word of God; it is founded upon the sand rather than upon the rock. The denominational world is also the fruit of the perversion of the Word of God rather than a direct product of the pure Word of God.

Another fruit of perversion is the cultic group. No one likes to be referred to as cultic, but those who are should be addressed for what they are. Cultic groups, children's church advocates, and fornicators in the church (some brethren talk about having an affair when they really mean they have committed fornication) are a result of a perversion of the Word of God. Furthermore, those who advocate the error found in books and in speeches are pushers of perversion.

The most saddening fruit of perversion is the population of hell. Hell will be populated densely because through the centuries men have perverted the Word of God. Honest and sincere souls have been led down the path of perdition to an ever burning, everlasting hell. Sincerity and honesty alone will not keep one out of hell, but obedience to the Word of God will.

Having considered some of the fruits of perversion, let us draw toward a close by noting, **the remedy**. There is a remedy which can be summarized with three words, each of which begin with an "R."

There must first be **repentance**. Without repentance from perversion, perversion will continue. There must be that repentance, turning away from, changing of mind, putting pride in the pocket. One must say as the prodigal son did, "I have sinned," not, "let's make a deal." We have too many brethren who want to make a deal, rather than repent. Once, in a reconciliation meeting, so-called, in which I was involved, all we did was make a deal; we did not intend it that way, but that is what it turned out to be; they deceived us. (Since, I have publically repented.) There must be repentance, not a cover up.

Secondly, there must be **renunciation**. The young man down in the hog pen said, "I have sinned; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me your servant." He said he had renounced that way of life; before he had demanded his inheritance and his leave, but afterward, he came to his senses. He saw the degradation of sin, and renounced it. For example, some folks when they give up Masonry just quit paying their dues. Then there are others who do the right thing and renounce it. We need to renounce our sins, our perversions.

Thirdly, there is a need to **return** to the Word of God and to God's order and system of things. God's way, his message, his law, and his method of things will not always be the most popular way. Seldom will it ever be the crowd pleasing and crowd drawing way, but it will always be

right.

Brethren, the church faces a present crisis. There are those without who hate us; they despise us, and they ridicule us. Then too, there are those from within who are seeking her destruction. In both cases, they are troubling, and then, they're perverting. May we ever bear in mind that a perverted Gospel is a damning Gospel, and a perverted Gospel will only produce spiritual perverts. It will not produce Christians.

May we as preachers, elders, elder's wives, preacher's wives, men, women, boys, and girls, in the local congregations and in the brotherhood at large, determine that we will not be troubled by the perverter! Let us determine not to allow him to pervert, and prepare ourselves to meet him on every avenue, and at every stand that he takes! We must challenge him every time that he attempts to pervert the Word of God! Our children, our grandchildren, and generations to come depend upon us. May God give us courage.

Thank-you.

Biographical Sketch

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Glann M. Lee was born April 9, 1935 in Wayne County, Tennessee, was baptized June 18, 1949, and began preaching in 1950 at the age of fifteen. He and his wife have three daughters. His training was received at Freed-Hardeman College and Harding College of Bible and Religion. He has served as local preacher for congregations in Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, Alabama and Florida. He presently works with the Palm Beach Lakes church in West Palm Beach, Florida. He has been involved in written debates and radio work and has authored tracts, articles, and outline booklets. He preaches in several evangelistic meetings annually and speaks on various lectureship programs.

Chapter Eleven

What In the World Is This World Coming To?

by Glann M. Lee

Recently while sitting in my office, the phone rang. The person calling asked, "Brother Lee, what is this world coming to?" There were many reasons why I was not emotionally ready to deal with the question. In the ten days preceding and including that day, six Gospel preachers had called to tell me that they were giving up full-time preaching. They gave up the greatest work on earth. I believe preaching the Gospel is the greatest work on earth. One of those calls had just come a few minutes earlier from a fine preacher of the Gospel whom I had known from the very first day that he stood before an audience to proclaim the Gospel. When I hung up the phone I was in tears. I was heartbroken. The secretary brought a note into the room and found me weeping.

That same morning a brother had called, a preacher of the Gospel, to discuss with me some things that were disturbing to him and to me. We discussed a congregation which calls itself a church of Christ, where recently two women from a denominational church had come to testify on a Sunday night. A young man where I preach, who is assistant superintendent or principal of one of the schools, told me about it. He gave me a note from one of the ladies (I have it in my files at home), which read, "Sunday night we testified at the _____ church of Christ, instruments and all. That's the most unusual church of Christ that we've ever visited." That is one of the things the preacher and I had been discussing. I was not prepared when the caller asked, "What is this world coming to?"

The preacher and I had discussed a congregation that had recently invited a Roman Catholic priest to come on Sunday night and explain "the Christian belief of the Roman Catholic church." The congregation calls itself a church of Christ. It is understandable why I was not ready for the question. Among other things, we had discussed a former president of a school, who for all practical purposes is no longer associated with the Lord's church. We discussed a congregation that had invited Mormon elders, who were hardly old enough to shave, to speak to the young people of that congregation. We discussed a congregation, where on Sunday morning just a few weeks earlier, one of the teenage girls stood before the congregation and made an appeal. I am talking about a church of the Lord.

I was disturbed and heartbroken when the question was asked of me

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that morning, "What is this world coming to?" Look at our inflation, the immorality of our day, the skepticism, the ungodliness in high places, and the lack of Bible knowledge on the part of our people. I do not travel as extensively as do some brethren, but in my travels I am amazed at the ignorance on the part of many of us in the Lord's church. Look at the conditions about us and the world situation. All of these things were bearing on my mind that day when the question came, "What is this world coming to?" I was not emotionally ready to discuss it.

The Bible tells us what this world is coming to. In I Corinthians 15:23-28, the apostle Paul said, "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom of God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

The world is coming to a time when it will be invaded from outer space. We have had a visitor from outer space. Jesus Christ, God's son, left the portals of heaven to live among men to show men how to live. He died for our sins and ascended back to the right hand of God, leaving us a message from outer space. We talk to outer space in prayer, to God.

On the first Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord, a spiritual rocket ship was launched for outer space. All those who obey the Gospel by confessing their faith in Christ, repenting of their sins, and being baptized for the remission of their sins, may climb aboard that spiritual rocketship. Anytime they want to, they may get off the ship. This world is coming to a time when it will be invaded from outer space, when the Son of God will come, not as Savior but as Judge.

This world is coming to a time when there will be a general judgment. All nations shall be gathered unto him, and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Those represented as the goats by the Lord shall go away into everlasting punishment (Mat. 25:46). To those represented as the sheep he will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you..." (Matt. 25:34). As our Lord ascended back to heaven, two men stood by who said, "...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). In Acts 17:31 Paul said, "...he hath appointed a day, in the which

he will judge the world..." God will judge the world by the divine standard. In John 12:48 Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

God has never tolerated ungodliness for a long period of time. Sooner or later there has always come a time of judgment. Be sure your sin will find you out; sooner or later it will. God told Babylon there would come a time when he would put a period at the end of Babylon. God warned Rome there would come a time he would put a period at the end of Rome. God said to spiritually corrupt Jerusalem that he would put a period at the end of their spiritual reign, and it came in A.D. 70. I do not know when God may choose to put a period at the end of America or any other country, but I do know that when any nation becomes internally rotten, sooner or later there comes the time when God puts a period there.

This world is coming to a time when grace will have ended. From our text Paul tells us, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God..." The kingdom indicates a period of grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2: 8-9). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). God, through his marvelous grace and love, sent his Son to die for the sins 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). "But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5: 8). One of the most beautiful songs that has ever been written, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me," states God's love for us. Man was lost, helpless, hopeless, undone, and God, through His marvelous grace, provided a plan of salvation. The righteous need no grace in heaven. Flesh stands in need of grace, but there will be no flesh and blood in heaven. We will have a spiritual body adapted to our surroundings.

This world is coming to a time when there will be no more temptation. Think how marvelous it would be if we were able to leave this building, get into our automobiles, drive to our destinations, be able to listen to our radios, watch television, see the billboards, read the paper, etc. without

being continuously bombarded by various kinds of temptation.

Some years ago, on a Sunday evening following a lesson on the love of God a man responded to the Gospel of Christ. All of his family were members of that congregation. Two or three days later we were talking in my front yard. He said, "Preacher, you do not understand my temptations." I am confident that I did not. I told him that there was one who does understand his temptations. There is one who cares. I called to his attention a very beautiful song, **Jesus Cares**.

The apostle John wrote: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut up at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face: and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 21:22; 22:5).

This world is coming to a time when there will be no more death. Oceans could be filled with the tears which we have shed at the passing of friends and loved ones. There is nothing wrong with crying when loved ones pass from this life. At least three times in the life of the Lord it is said that he cried. He may have cried more than that. In the Garden of Gethsemane he cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." If there were any other way, let that way be the way of redeeming man. There was no other way. He cried over the sins of Jerusalem. We need to cry over sin.

We live in a day when people do not commit sin: **they make mistakes!** We need to see sin as sin. We need to hate sin as God hates sin. God loves the sinner, but he hates sin. We have difficulty sometimes separating the sinner and the sin as the objects of our hatred. We are to love the sinner,

but we are to hate the sin. I love me; I hate sin. If I can separate me and the sin in my own life, should I not be able to separate the sinner and sin and love the sinner and hate sin? Jesus cried over the sins of Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). Jesus cried at the graveside of Lazarus. One of the sweetest verses in all of the Bible is sometimes referred to as the shortest verse (it is the shortest in English, but not in Greek), "Jesus wept."

I recall when the message came to me that my mother was dead. My family and I were in a motel in Jackson, Tennessee. I was notified the day after my mother passed away. I remember the feeling that I had when I heard those words, "Son, your mother is dead." All of my brothers (I have no sisters) and their families had already gathered at my home by the time I arrived. Many friends and relatives were already there also. As soon as I got out of the car, they came and put their arms around me and cried. We cried like babies. They said, "We understand." How many times we have tried to comfort one another with those words. We understand, but we really do not; we try to understand. We can only "weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice" (Rom. 12:15).

There will come a time when there will be no more weeping, no more crying, no more pain, no more death. Revelation 21:4 reads, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Today we open graves and lay the dead in graves. At the Lord's coming the graves will be opened, and the dead shall come forth. The righteous shall be with God eternally, and the unrighteous shall be doomed to eternal condemnation (John 5:28,29).

This world is coming to a time when God's way will be vindicated. God means what He says! We need to preach it like it is! When the Bible declares that there is one church, I know that there is one church. There is going to come a time when God's will on that matter shall be vindicated. When the Bible declares that we are to eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, I know that we are to eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week. When the Bible tells me that I am to worship God in song, vocal music, I know it does make a difference how I worship Him in music. When the Bible says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24), I know that it makes a

difference how we worship God.

Paul said to Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Preaching brethren, we need to be longsuffering. Suppose God were as impatient as we sometimes are? Think how long he waited during the days of Noah. We need to learn patience. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4: 2-4). Timothy was further exhorted to do the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:5). Preaching the Gospel is a work. The apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

This world is coming to a time when there will be no more mixing of the righteous and the unrighteous, the godly and the ungodly, the Christian and the sinner. From our text in I Corinthians 15, Paul said, "each in his own order." In this life, often the wicked despise the righteous, though they may turn to the righteous in times of distress for comfort.

There is going to come a time when some families will be completely separated. I can picture the Lord's coming. He will sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him will come a father and a mother. The Lord may say to that mother, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you..." He may say to that husband, "Depart from me; I never knew you." He may have been a good, godly supporter of his wife, concerning her material needs. He may have helped in the rearing of the children; however, as a non-Christian, he could not nurture them in the admonition of the Lord. Although a good provider, he never obeyed the Gospel. There is going to be a separation.

I can picture the Lord upon the throne of his glory, and before him come godly parents and their children. The Lord may say to the parents, "Come ye blessed of the Father." He may say to the children, "Depart from me ye who work iniquity; I never knew you." They never obeyed the Gospel. There may be a brother or sister in the flesh, one a Christian and the other not, and the Lord will say to the Christian, "Inherit the kingdom

prepared for you.” and to the one who is not a Christian, “Depart from me; I never knew you.”

The prophet Amos said, “...prepare to meet thy God...” (Amos 4:12). We often sing that as an invitational song. Let us sing it not necessarily as a song of invitation, but as a song of encouragement. Let it encourage us in living the Christian life, in standing for the right, and in being prepared when our Lord comes.

I call your attention to this reading from the apostle Peter: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking 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? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (II Pet. 3:1-4).

(Note: I am indebted to Franklin Camp for suggestions for thoughts in this presentation. GML.)

Biographical Sketch



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W.T. Hamilton is a native of Bowie, Texas and a graduate of Freed-Hardeman College. He is married to the former Carrie Nichols, and they have two children. Brother Hamilton has done local work in Bowie, Gainesville, Lamesa, Plainview, and Waxahachie, Texas and Fredrick, Oklahoma. He now serves as preacher and as one of the elders for the new Clear Lake City congregation in Houston, Texas. Author of three books, he also serves on the editorial council of **Power For Today** and is on the staff of **Twentieth Century Christian**. Brother Hamilton has conducted Gospel meetings in twenty states and has spoken on lectureships at most Christian colleges and schools of preaching.

Chapter Twelve

Jesus Christ, The Great I Am

by W.T. Hamilton

The subject of this lecture is **Jesus, The Great I Am**. Immediately John Eight comes to mind as the appropriate text for the lesson. It is often good to have a text; however, it is not essential. It is good to have a beginning point and a concluding point, even if somewhere in between we **go everywhere** preaching the Gospel!

When studying the statement of Jesus, "Before Abraham was, I am," it is important to examine the context in which this statement was made. Additionally, the general context of the book of John will help us to see the background matter and the purpose for which John was written. John tells us **why** he wrote: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31). Even a casual reading should cause one to understand John wrote that men might believe. This Gospel record is a book to initiate faith by giving evidence pointing to the deity of Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is important that we have reasons to believe. After they get away from home for awhile, some young people who were reared in fine Christian homes quit going to church and finally renounce their faith. Then we shake our heads and wonder how that could happen. There may be many reasons for it, though I wonder if often the cause is that we have failed to give our children reasons to believe. We sometimes try to pass our faith down to our children somewhat like we would the family inheritance. We want our children to believe because it is the right thing to do. We want them to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, because we believe that. So, we tell them they ought to believe, however, we do not tell them how they can believe. We never explain to them the evidences that point to Christ's deity. "These things are written that ye might believe." Basically, the Book of John was written to initiate faith in the hearts of those who read it. In the book of John, seven times he claimed to be the "I Am." Seven times some outstanding miracle is recorded. Additionally, many of his discourses and conversations are recorded as well. There is a climax in Chapter Eight where the evidences are presented that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

JESUS WAS QUESTIONED

There have been a lot of changes in customs over the years. In the First Century, when one preached, there were apparently many interruptions. Though I have been preaching several years, on very few occasions has anyone ever asked a question or commented from the audience. It has happened, but it does not happen often. In fact, we are in such a sophisticated age that if anyone were to say **Amen** above a whisper, it would scare most preachers half-to-death! There was a time back in the First Century that when a man rose to speak, people would interrupt to ask questions. That was occurring in the speech recorded in John Eight.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," (verse 12). Then the Pharisees interrupted and asked him questions. Jesus presented himself as the light of the world, which is to say, the Christ, the Son of God. But he did more than **claim to be** the light of the world. If I were to come before this fine audience and say, "I am the light of the world," you would exclaim that brother Hearn selected the wrong person to be on this lecture program this hour. But if I could bring in a man who was born blind and heal him so that he could see, that would become a different matter! That is what Jesus did. He claimed to be the light of the world, but he was able to prove his claims by healing a man who was born blind. Jesus **demonstrated** that he is the light of the world. He presented evidence by which faith could grow in our hearts. We believe him to be the light of the world because of what he did in healing the blind man (John 8:12-20). He then talked about the necessity of believing in him.

Afterward he talked about the importance of being free, saying, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Pharisees interrupted him, saying, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free" (John 8:33)? How short man's memory can be when he begins to rationalize! The Jewish people had been in bondage in Egypt; they had been in bondage in Babylon; and, at the time Jesus was talking to them, they were in bondage to Rome. Yet they said they had never been in bondage to any man. Jesus, though, was talking about a bondage greater than the others, the bondage to sin. He explained to them that if they knew the Truth they could be made free from the bondage of sin.

JESUS GAVE EVIDENCE OF HIS DEITY

After he talked about bondage, he began to present evidence that he

was the Christ, the Son of God. It is this evidence about which I am going to speak this evening. Though the Lord did not present all such evidence in this context, he presented enough for that audience to believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Learning about the deity of Jesus Christ is basic to the ABC's of the Gospel. If Jesus is not the only begotten Son of God, there is no validity to any facet of Christianity. But if he is the Son of God, as he claimed, then he must be the Lord of our lives. The whole of Christianity stands or falls on the deity of Jesus.

HE DID NO SIN, JOHN 8:46-50

This study actually commences with John 8:45, "And because I tell you the truth, you believe me not. Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (The King James translation says, "convinceth.") "And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:45-47). One statement in particular amazes me everytime I read it: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" Can you imagine a man standing before an audience of any kind, even an audience of his friends, and issuing an invitation like that? Jesus stood before those who were his enemies, and asked, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" Is there anybody in the audience this evening who would come up before these people and say, "Here I am, get out your magnifying glass, look me over, and see if you can find anything wrong with me"? Who would say, "Examine my life and read my diary, talk to my enemies and my friends, and look into everything that I have ever said, thought, or done and see if you can convict me of sin"? I would not dare give you that kind of invitation concerning my life. You would not have to look very far. There are people in **this audience** who could tell you a few things I would not want told! "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" I could not say that; Jesus did! He could say that because he did no sin. The Pharisees put forth every effort to convict him of sin, but they failed.

The Lord's enemies started looking for something wrong early in his ministry. In the fifth chapter of John, for instance, Jesus cured a man who had been lame for thirty-eight years, and said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." That should have been an occasion for rejoicing in that city. A poor, helpless cripple for thirty-eight years, not even able to get himself down into the troubled waters, was suddenly leaping and walking and carrying his pallet around with him. A keen interest should have been generated in the onlookers. However, they failed to see the man made well. Instead, they only saw a man carrying his bed on Saturday, contrary

Jesus Christ, The Great I Am

to their traditions. "The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured; It is the sabbath day: It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, he that made whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then they asked him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk" (John 8:10-13)?

On another occasion when Jesus was accused of breaking the sabbath, he responded, "...What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matt. 12: 11,12). When he justified himself, they dropped that charge. However, they made another charge when they discerned that Jesus claimed to be of God and equal with God (John 5:18). Their argument was invalid because the Lord had healed a man who had been a hopeless cripple for many years. Being able to do that, they should have listened to his claims about himself.

THEY SOUGHT TO KILL HIM

Jewish hatred had grown so intense that they were insistent on putting him to death. Matthew's account (Matthew 26:59ff) records how they looked for false witnesses to testify against Jesus. Mark's account says, "For many bore false witness against him but their witness agreed not together" (Mark 14:56). Then some presented testimony concerning what Jesus had said about the temple. "And there arose certain, and bore false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together" (Mark 14:57-59). The Jews failed to acknowledge that the Lord was talking about raising up his own body from the dead in three days. When asked by the high priest if Jesus claimed to be the Christ, Jesus answered that he did. Consequently, for what they believed was blasphemy, the Jews condemned Jesus to death.

HIS INNOCENCE WAS PROVED

Though the Jews condemned Jesus to death on the ground of blasphemy (of which he was innocent), they made a different charge before the Roman authorities because the Romans had taken from the Jews the license to execute their criminals. Since Roman statutes did not address **blasphemy**, they took him to Pilate and said Jesus claimed to be a

king. That was a different matter! One thing Caesar would not tolerate was competition! Whenever a man claimed to be a king, Rome became alarmed. So Pilate decided to hear the case. He talked to Jesus, during which Jesus explained to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world and that he was the King over the spirits of men, and thus Caesar's kingship was not threatened. Pilate agreed that Jesus posed no threat to the Empire. However, he sent the Lord to Herod. Neither did Herod find fault with Jesus. When Jesus was sent back to Pilate, Pilate's wife said he was a just man. The old centurion said he was the Son of God. The dying thief said this man had done nothing amiss. Judas said he had betrayed innocent blood. At least six witnesses said he was innocent. Yet the Jews cried out that Jesus should be crucified. Though never convicted of anything, Pilate turned over the sinless, perfect Christ to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

HE WAS SINLESS DESPITE TEMPTATION

The reason Jesus did not sin is not because he was not tempted. Hebrews 4:15 says: "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We know that Jesus was severely tempted. In Matthew Four, after he was baptized, he went to a wilderness and fasted for forty days and forty nights. When he fasted and hungered, Satan came to him and challenged the Lord to turn stones into bread. Jesus resisted that temptation and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Satan then took Jesus up on a high pinnacle of the temple and said, "Cast thyself down." Quoting Scripture, Satan continued, "For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." Jesus replied, "For it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Then the devil took Jesus up on a high mountain and told him to fall down and worship Satan for which he would receive all the world's kingdoms. Jesus responded, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

These three temptations correspond to the three avenues of temptation: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride or vainglory of life (I John 2:16). All of my life I have heard people trying to figure out which one of these is which. Does the "lust of the flesh" correspond to the temptation when Satan told Jesus to turn stones into bread? Was Satan appealing to the "lust of the eye" when he adjured the Lord to cast himself down? Was it an appeal to the "pride of life" when the devil invited Jesus to fall down and worship him to receive the kingdoms of the world? (Satan offered the Lord a crown without the cross.)

I believe there is a broader application than that, and we need to see it. I can see all three of these avenues of temptation in each one of the incidents cited; there is something that appeals to the eye, to the flesh, and to the vanity of life in each of Satan's three temptations. Matthew Four does not chronicle the only occasion on which Jesus was tempted. Luke's account says, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him **for a season**" (Luke 4:13). Evidently, he came back again, again, and again. Jesus was tempted in all points like we are.

To what degree did Jesus empty himself of his eternal deity during the time he lived in a flesh-and-blood body? People have been arguing about that for two thousand years, and I doubt if we are going to settle it to the satisfaction of everybody. This we do know; he lived as a man in the days of his flesh to the extent and to the degree that he could be tempted in all points like we are. If he did not, then Jesus did not face life like we fact it and did not have all of the experiences which confront us. The Bible plainly declared he was tempted in all points like we are; yet, he never sinned.

A person (Jesus) who could be tempted to the extent that Jesus was and always knew the right thing to say and do to put the devil to flight (thereby refraining from sin) would not stand before an audience and **falsely** claim to be the Son of God. Inasmuch as he did what he claimed to do, and though tempted he repelled the devil, he was able to stand before his enemies and say, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" There is no doubt that he told the truth. He is the Christ, the Son of God.

THE JEWS REJECTED THE PROVEN CLAIM

After Jesus declared himself to be the light of the world, he proved it. Jesus demonstrated reasons to believe in him; instead, the Jews responded, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil" (John 8:48)? How typical a picture of human nature! Sometimes today people refuse to believe faithful preaching and offer excuses and make accusations. Fortunately for preachers, opponents of the Gospel do not typically endeavor to exact death on bearers of the Gospel.

TO REJECT HIS DEITY IS TO REJECT OUR FORGIVENESS

Beginning in John 8:51, Jesus again declared himself to be the Christ, the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." To this also the Jews reacted in disbelief. "Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil.

Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself" (John 8:52, 53)? Though Jesus spoke the Truth, the Jews did not believe him.

It is true that Abraham and the prophets had died physically. In fact, all men up to that time, except Enoch and Elijah, had died physically. Jesus, however, was not talking about physical death. Great men of the Old Testament sometimes lived a great number of years, but **they all died**. All men have died except the two just mentioned and those who are living now. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die..." Everybody is going to die physically. Jesus, instead, was talking about spiritual life. **Death was the penalty for sin which Jesus offset**. In fact, everything that we lose through Adam, we gain through Christ. What we lose unconditionally in Adam in that sin entered into the world and all men die, we gain in Christ. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). What we lose unconditionally in the flesh by sin (separation from God) we can gain through Jesus Christ according to the provisions he has made for us. Sin causes us to become guilty, but through Christ we can be forgiven of our sins. We can have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7).

FORGIVENESS IS PROVIDED BY THE GREAT "I AM"

We need to preach more about forgiveness than we do. There are many brethren who are carrying a guilt complex around with them. They do not know what it means to be forgiven, or at least they do not know how to forgive themselves. They come to a preacher with their problems, and between the sobs and tears, they reveal that they have tremendous guilt feelings. They do not realize that they can rid themselves of guilt by Jesus Christ. Hence, some may go to a psychologist who does not recognize Christian principles and may be told to stop feeling guilty. In essence he is saying, "Be guilty, but learn how not to feel guilty." That just complicates the problem. **We are guilty, but the solution is to be forgiven so we will no longer be guilty**. Then we should realize we have been forgiven so we can forgive ourselves.

I know a preacher (a friend of mine) in west Texas to whom a sister came and poured out her heart. She told him what a terrible thing she had done and asked him to pray with her; so they had prayer together. He asked God to forgive her. A week or two later she came back to his office and rehearsed the same thing. About a month later she came back and

told him the same story again, saying, "I want you to pray that God will forgive me." He said, "No, I will not do it." That shocked her. Not often does one ask a preacher to pray and he says, "No." Of course, she wanted to know why. He said, "Well, about a month ago, we asked God to forgive you for that sin; when he forgives he forgets, and I am not going to remind God of it any more." I think he made a good point.

When we ask God to forgive us, and we comply with his laws of forgiveness, we are no longer guilty, and we do not need to be hesitant to say that we are innocent and clean. We cannot say we have never done wrong, but the blood of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to forgive every sin we ever committed. Until we begin to enjoy forgiveness, we are not going to be able to help other people very much as they seek to obtain it. The Lord forgets when he forgives. We do not need to carry a guilt complex around with us if we are not guilty. We should ask God to forgive us when we do sin and ask him to keep us from sin. We should do our best not to sin, but when we do sin and the Lord forgives us, there is no reason to carry around a guilt complex. Sin renders us guilty before God, but the blood of Jesus Christ, when we contact it, and it is applied to our lives, can free us from that guilt.

FORGIVENESS RESTORES FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Sin will cause us to lose fellowship with God. Isaiah said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1,2). Sin separates man from God. Thanks to God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, those sins can be forgiven, and we who once were far off can come nigh unto God. We now have access to the Father from whom we were separated by sin through the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:18). Jesus can undo what sin has done. Though sin renders us guilty, the blood of Jesus can forgive us. Though sin separates us from God, through Jesus we have access to the Father. Though sin causes death, through Christ we may be raised from the dead. Therein has Jesus offset the penalty of sin. This is what Jesus was talking about when he said that "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Though this beautiful statement is conditional, yet in it the Lord made a promise to us. If we will keep his Word, hide it in our hearts, live by it the best we can, and meditate upon it day and night (Psa. 1:2), then we can avoid spiritual and eternal death.

Only deity can make such a promise. As the sinless Son of God, in whom could be found no sin, Jesus made the most magnificent promise: "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death (John 8:46-51).

That is the promise of the great "I AM." Thank God for him.

Biographical Sketch

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Chapter Thirteen

The Unchanging In a Changing World

by Basil Overton

Today I am going to address the unchanging blood of Christ in a changing world. There are some things which do not change. However, living in a changing world, perhaps we are in the beginning of a major social revolution. Therefore, we should not be surprised if the church is affected and influenced by this sort of change, though there are some things which do not change.

Beginning with I Peter 1:18, writing to the brethren who were confronted with a wave of persecution and harassment that was coming upon them because of their faith, the apostle Peter, by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, lifted their minds above the temporary and the transient and gave them a more perfect view of the Christian religion and the hope of God's people. He reminded them of a number of things, among which was that they "were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain manner of life received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot."

Doubtless the worldly wise appraise things differently. The worldly wise would say it is foolish to say that silver and gold are corruptible things and the precious blood of Christ is incorruptible. They would probably say any fool knows that blood is corruptible, but gold and silver last on and on, perhaps as long as anything in this world. But, the wisdom of the world to the contrary notwithstanding, what Peter said remains unchanged and just as true as ever. He had reference to the spiritual significance of the blood of Christ, its incorruptible redeeming quality. Obviously, Peter did not mean, nor does the Bible teach, that anyone is saved by the literal blood of Christ. The Bible never teaches that the literal blood can wash our sins away. There is a deeper meaning to the application of the blood of Christ, a spiritual significance.

The great painter, Rembrandt, painted a picture of the scene of the crucifixion. He painted a self portrait in the edge of the scene. Someone chided the great master saying, "Aren't you bragging on yourself? Aren't you conceited in that you would put your picture in such a scene?" He answered, "You completely misunderstand. I put my picture at the edge, in the shadow of the cross, because I feel very strongly that in a sense, I was there."

In this Twentieth Century of enlightenment, the modernists tell us we

do not need to preach and talk about blood. They say we do not need a religion of blood. Some brothers would reprove such songs as **What Can Wash Away My Sins?** and **Nothing But The Blood Of Jesus**. Some would say it is folly and foolishness in the age of enlightenment to sing **There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood**. However, in this changing world there is something unchanging and unchanged—the precious blood of Christ. In all of its bloody history—and it has bathed itself in its own blood—never has the world needed more to see itself in the shadow of the cross. Never has it needed more the meaning and the significance of the precious blood of Christ than in this age of change.

I believe that we have the greatest opportunity in spite of all the discouraging elements in our world. It seems to me that God has opened greater doors, perhaps than ever before. After all, people are still people. Actually, we have not changed greatly from the time of Adam. There is absolutely no scientific evidence whatsoever in this world that man has ever been anything but an upright, intelligent being just as he is today. I challenge every evolutionist under the sun to prove otherwise. According to what we know, not somebody's guesswork, man has not changed.

Man has not changed from the standpoint of what he needs physically. Somebody asked if I had ever been on a diet. I answered yes, a big one, for forty-four years. I have been eating about the same food for all of those forty-four years. I could live another thousand years eating cornbread, green onions, and white beans often. I do not desire a great deal of change in my diet. I could live another thousand years preaching the Gospel and enjoying the association of the men and women here today. I do not want any change in some respects. Man is still what he has always been.

Basically, God Almighty in his infinite wisdom designed our bodies as the Psalmist declared in Psalm 139:14, "...I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." In ascribing unto God all the wonders of this world and the wonders of our own human selves, he said in verse six, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." God in his infinite wisdom, by which he weighed the hills and valleys and mountains in scales, also designed our human bodies. He made them so that they will not crave much change insofar as diet is concerned. Man does not recognize that the same God Almighty, by the very same infinite wisdom, formed and fashioned our souls and so framed them that they always need the same nutrients. Our souls are so designed that God has prepared the kind of nutrition for them which they need and crave. Often in frustration, people come to me for counseling, and I say, "Your trouble is your soul is starving, and you do not know it."

People are falling apart and bursting at the seams as it were because

their souls are starving. The blood of Christ does not change; its purpose does not change and does not need changing. We need something else for our souls about like we need another sun in the sky. We do not need another sun in the sky at all. Some things do not change. The blood of Christ is one of them. In all of its spiritual significance, the blood of Christ remains the same. I should like for you to think about the significance of blood in the Bible.

First of all, to paraphrase very briefly the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, Moses received instruction from the infinite God that the people were not to eat blood, as repeatedly stated in that chapter, for "the life of the flesh is in the blood." The blood is the life of all flesh. Moses did not know that, but God did. Medical men have only recently discovered how true this really is and how vital blood is to living organisms which have blood.

Notice the connection between life and blood in Ezekiel Three. In paraphrasing a lengthy discussion, God said, "Ezekiel, if you do not warn the wicked from his wicked way and tell him he is going to perish, his blood will I require at thy hand. But, if you tell him about his wickedness and he does not turn away from it, then you have delivered your soul even though he does not repent." Notice how the words **life** and **blood** are used interchangeably. His blood will I require at thy hand. However, I will not require his blood at thy hand if you tell him, even though he does not repent. You have delivered your soul! Delivering one's soul in such a responsibility is the opposite of having one's blood upon him. The significance of blood concerning life and the soul can be ascertained.

In Matthew Twenty-Seven, there is an interesting testimony by the apostle Judas. In a sense, the testimony of Judas is more significant than that of the other apostles because he had already betrayed the Lord Jesus, having sold him out for thirty pieces of silver. He brought the money to the chief priests and elders, cast it down before them and said, "I have sinned." He might have added, "But, I suppose that isn't too bad. I know Jesus better than you. He sinned some too." He did not say that. Judas said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," meaning he had betrayed an innocent, pure, sinless life.

In the same chapter, the same way of referring to blood is presented when Pilate asked the question, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?....They said, Barabbas." Then Pilate said, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" When the multitude said to crucify him, Pilate asked what evil he had done. Pilate had confessed the innocence of Jesus. Seeing that he was not prevailing, that a tumult was being formed, he took water and washed his

hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." However, that statement was not sufficient for Pilate to relieve himself from the guilt of the blood of Jesus. He was virtually using the term **blood** for the word **life**. Pilate denied responsibility for the fate of Jesus. The Jews used the term **blood** in the same way, responding, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

In the city of Jerusalem the apostle Peter preached to some people who had the same disposition as those Pilate confronted. In Acts Five, the apostles accused the chief priest, among other Jewish leaders, of crucifying Jesus. (Some people believe if a person is religious, he is acceptable to God. However, religious people were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion.) In the context, the high priest addressed the apostles, saying, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (What a wonderful compliment!) When these same Jews had spoken to Pilate, they had wanted the blood of Christ on them; however, they told Peter they did not want the responsibility of his death upon them.

Peter was not bringing the blood upon them; it was already upon them. There is a sense, though, in which he was trying to bring the blood of Jesus upon them, the spiritual sense. He was trying to get them to obey the Gospel as some did in Acts Six when "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." The blood of Jesus was upon them in the saving of their souls.

In Acts Twenty, the man from Tarsus stood before the elders of the church of Ephesus and said, "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:25-27). The apostle Paul was saying **blood** and **life** are associated and connected. He was saying he would not be responsible for the eternal destiny of those who heard him preach, yet did not heed God's Word. They could not deny that he told them the truth. Certainly, he did not mean that he himself preached literally to every person in the world. However, Paul could truthfully say that whosoever heard him preach could not declare in the judgment that Paul did not tell him the truth. Paul said, "I am pure from the blood of all men." Let us remember the significance of blood in the Bible.

The second major point which I intend to emphasize is how great the blood of Jesus really is. The apostle Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the

riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). We have already noted in I Peter, beginning in verse eighteen, that we are redeemed (meaning everybody who wants to be redeemed can be redeemed) through the blood of Christ. It means that there is enough power in the blood of Christ, in all of its spiritual efficacy and significance, to cleanse every sin in every person in all the world. That is how powerful the blood of Christ is. Paul repeated this to the Colossian brethren, “In whom we have redemption through his blood...” (Col. 1:14).

One might naturally ask, “Why is the blood of Christ that powerful? How can it be true that the blood of Christ can cleanse everybody from his sins?” The answer is simple and yet profound. It is because his life was so much better than ours. Because of his wonderful life, he can cleanse all our sins. Because his blood was shed, he can cleanse all our sins. In Romans 3:23-25, the apostle Paul wrote, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation...” Therein is an allusion to the Mercy Seat of the Old Testament. The Mercy Seat was on the top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place where God met with his people. God met with the high priest who offered blood upon the Mercy Seat for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people. John said in I John 2:1,2, “...If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” The apostle Paul said in Romans 3:25,26, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation...” (Jesus is our mercy seat) “...through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

In Romans 1:17, it is declared that in the Gospel is revealed the righteousness of God. It is my firm conviction that it is **what God says is right**; it is that to which we must submit ourselves, not God’s personal righteousness. The Jews were not ignorant of the personal righteousness of God. They knew about God’s personal righteousness. In Romans 10:1-3, Paul penned, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” The “righteousness of God” in Romans generally refers to what God has said is right for us to do. We are to submit ourselves. Unfortunately, many

people misunderstand, believing that God is so good and righteous, they will be saved by his righteousness. This is not so. To be saved by his righteousness we must surrender ourselves to God's teachings, to become "...servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:18).

However, it seems that when the apostle, in Romans 3:26, said, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness" he was making a distinction from his regular use of the term righteousness. The context implies that he was discussing the personal **right-ness**, the personal purity, the personal innocence, the personal perfection and holiness of Jesus Christ. Hence, because Jesus is perfect, his blood is that by which we can be saved. Therefore, the death of Jesus could not have meant anything more than the death of anyone else had it not been for his life. His death is significant only because of his life, and his life was perfect.

It is impossible that imperfect men could have concocted a perfect character like Jesus. It would have been just as miraculous had they done that, as it was that Jesus was born, as the Bible teaches, by the virgin Mary, came forth from God, and is all he claimed to be. Jesus was so good and holy that Paul seemed to be saying, "I want you to know that the death of Jesus declares how right he was and how good he was. If it had not been for his rightness, his holiness and perfection, he could not be the propitiation for our sins, as he is through faith in his blood."

The third major area of thought for this lesson is that it is impossible to properly understand the meaning and the benefits of the blood of Christ without understanding some other very vital matters.

To summarize the third point, some people have become very emotional about the blood of Christ. They may sing about the blood of Christ, preach about it, talk about it, and pray about it. However, there is no need to pray, to sing, to talk, and to preach about the blood of Christ unless one can connect it with what the Bible connects it in so many passages.

First of all, there is no need to refer to the blood of Christ separate and apart from the covenant of Christ. Some people say it does not matter about the covenant or law of Christ; the real importance is that one has the blood of Christ. However, the Bible does not say that it is simply the blood of Christ that is important. The Bible refers to the blood of Christ in connection with the covenant. Even when Jesus established the Lord's Supper, he took the fruit of the vine and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant," the new testament. When the apostle contrasted the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, or showed the difference in the two systems, the Mosaic system and the Christian system, he said, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of

how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:28, 29)?

It is not merely the blood which is significant, it is the blood of the covenant to which we must appeal for redemption. Therefore, unless one can see the connection between the blood and the covenant, one cannot see the blood! Do not preach about it, talk about it, or sing about it unless you can see the connection between the blood and the covenant. In Hebrews 13:20, the inspired penman wrote, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant..." There again is the blood referred to as the blood of the covenant.

To paraphrase in a brief statement the main argument of the apostle in Hebrews Nine is to say that nothing under the Old Covenant was acceptable unless the blood had been applied to it. Moses put the blood on the book, the people, the tabernacle, and the furniture; he put it on everything. The purpose of the argument is obvious when you read the chapter and contrast that blood with the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ must be on everything, meaning that it must be in his covenant; otherwise, it is not right. People sometimes ask why we do not have instrumental music in worship. There are a lot of arguments one can make. However, it can be summed up in one argument. It is not under the blood of Christ. His blood has not been applied to it. Unless it is in the covenant of Christ, it is not under the blood. That is the argument of Hebrews Nine; otherwise, I see no argument in the chapter.

There are those who do not see the significance of the Lord's Supper. The prime significance is its connection with the blood of Christ. A man told me, "I've been a Christian fifty years and I've never eaten the Lord's Supper. It doesn't make any difference, just so you've got the blood of Christ." However, what the man failed to acknowledge was that one rejects the blood of Christ when he rejects the Lord's Supper. How can brethren be so careless about the Lord's Supper? Do they not understand the significance of the precious blood of Christ? Brethren make mockery of the crucifixion when they carelessly and indifferently forsake the Lord's table on the first day of the week. I believe the Bible teaches this in principle concerning the Lord's Supper and the blood of Christ.

Is it not terrible that Satan has taken something so sacred as the Lord's Supper and made it into another sacrifice called **The Sacrifice of the Mass**? A sacrifice! Jesus is daily sacrificed, just as he was on Calvary, even though Hebrews said he was offered **once** and for all, meaning for all time

and for all people. The Roman Catholic system, however, says that Hebrews is not true! Jesus is sacrificed anew every time the priest officiates and **performs a miracle**, by changing the bread into the literal flesh and the fruit of the vine into the literal blood of Jesus.

It is not a sacrifice at all! It is a memorial. Satan has prostrated this wonderful, sacred supper into that which will center power in men. Naturally, if people think a man can perform a miracle every time he takes the bread and fruit of the vine, they are going to stand in awe of that person. No wonder Cardinal Cushing said that every priest is another Christ; he is not an ordinary man. No wonder Catholics highly esteem the priest.

I was amazed in reading the great treatises of Mr. E.M. Marvin, a Methodist minister back in 1861, **Errors of the Papacy**. (Get it if you can; it is the best thing I have ever read on these matters.) He said, "If Christ is eaten, that is, if this is the literal flesh and the literal blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, and Christ is eaten, he is not remembered." How true that is. If the tombstone is the person, it is not a memorial to him. If you have a loved one in the cemetery, the tombstone bearing the name of the person is not the actual person. If that tombstone were the actual person, the tombstone would not be a memorial of the person. If the Lord's Supper is Jesus' literal flesh and literal blood, it is not a memorial of him. It is Jesus. If he is eaten, he is not remembered.

In the next place, people say they do not see any connection between baptism and the blood. People who discredit baptism do not know the meaning of the blood of Christ, for it is by baptism that we reach the precious blood of Christ. In Acts 2:38, the apostle Peter said, "...Repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins..." When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper he said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). If one looks in both the Greek and English texts, in both passages, of Acts and Matthew, they read, "for the remission of sins." How could baptism be for the remission of sins when the blood of Christ is for remission of sins? The blood of Christ was shed for remission of sins. At the same time, through baptism souls reach the remission of sins.

Many people know of the remedy, but they do not know how to apply it. One is just as important as the other. Knowing the importance of the blood of Christ, yet not knowing how to apply it, will not reap the benefits. The religious world today does not know how to reach the blood of Christ. It may know the blood's importance and its power. Many denominational preachers preach just as powerfully and as eloquently as we do that the blood can save. Yet, they are not any better off if they do not know how to

reach it. Baptism is the way to reach the blood.

Lastly, some say, "The church is not important, just so long as you have connection with the blood." Yet, the blood saves in the church. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28). One cannot even preach about the blood of Christ without preaching about his church.

Biographical Sketch



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Pervie Nichols was born near Glen Allen, Alabama, October 18, 1912. His wife was the late Mary Evelyn Evans of Jasper, Alabama, whom he married on June 2, 1942. To this union were born two daughters. He was baptized in 1930 and began preaching in the Jasper, Alabama area in 1939. He attended Freed-Hardeman College and has served churches in Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama. Since 1977 he has served as minister of the Midway church of Christ near Jasper, Alabama. For ten years (1950-1960) brother Nichols served as editor of the **Way of Salvation**; he has served as editor of **The Bible Way** since 1960 and has contributed material to several other publications. He has extensive experience in radio and television preaching and is the author of a number of tracts and booklets.

Chapter Fourteen

The Bible and Bible Prophecies

by Pervie Nichols

The subject assigned to me this afternoon concerns the Bible and Bible prophecies, from which we can prove the Bible to be inspired. I like to study Bible prophecy and its fulfillment. I believe that prophecies are some of the greatest faith-building Scriptures in the Bible. To many of you, these things certainly will not be new. You have studied them many times, and even to student preachers they will not be altogether new.

For the duration of this period of study, I invite you to consider with me a few of the many Bible prophecies which through their fulfillment prove the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. I affirm without hesitation the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God and believe this proposition can be proved. Evidence of its inspiration may be obtained, of course, from several sources, one of which is internal evidences—Bible prophecies. When people are asked to believe something, they generally demand proof. Usually, the greater the value of the thing proposed, the greater the demand for proof. All of us should be careful about things in which we place our faith. The Bible is no exception. When people are asked to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God, they have the right to demand proof of its inspiration. The apostle Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:1, “Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.” I believe we have an obligation to prove the Bible to be inspired.

Is it a waste of time to try to prove the inspiration of the Bible? Some think so. About three years ago a young preacher, a student in a graduate school, was visiting in a Bible class where I preach. We were talking about the Bible and proof of its inspiration. He said, “Brother Nichols, I just wish you preachers would stop trying to prove the Bible is God’s Word when you know you can’t do it. You can’t prove the Bible to be the Word of God to individuals who don’t already believe it.” Where in the world did they get their information to believe it in the first place, if in some way, form, or fashion, it was not proved to them? It is nonsense to think one cannot prove to someone, not already a believer, that the Bible is inspired.

It is profitable to consider the external evidences of inspiration, which certainly are plenteous. But, consulting such evidences is unnecessary in order to determine the validity of the Bible. Between the covers of this Book lies abundant proof of its inspiration. We refer to this as internal evidence. The Bible can stand on its own; it can vindicate itself. If it cannot do so, then it is unworthy of our confidence, faith, and trust; and

ought to be relegated to a place of little or no importance. If the internal evidences are unreliable, then, as far as one's eternal welfare is concerned, it is no more valuable than a Sears Roebuck catalog. But, these internal proofs are reliable, and they, alone, are sufficient to prove the inspiration of the Bible.

It is good to study the internal evidences—Bible prophecies—and to show from within the Bible itself that it is inspired. But some object to this. They say, "You cannot prove something to be true by the thing under consideration. Hence, turning to the Bible to prove its inspiration is unreasonable, since that Book is the thing under consideration."

I have lived in the Jackson (Mississippi) area now for fifteen years. During this time we have conducted a thirty minute television program each Sunday morning. I often receive various questions and comments. Not very long ago an individual wrote: "Even though I believe the Bible, I just wish you would quit referring to things in the Bible to try to prove its inspiration...Sensible people are not going to accept the evidence that the Bible itself presents to show it is inspired."

If one cannot use internal evidence to prove the inspiration of the Bible, then the theory that one cannot prove a thing by the thing itself must be true. However, those who contend for such a position will not stick to it.

Let me illustrate. Suppose I am an automobile salesman and a man with this idea, and his wife come shopping for a new car with certain qualities. When they show an interest in a particular automobile, I begin to tell them of its wonderful features: its cushioned ride which makes it just float along, an automatic transmission which operates so smoothly, and the quick **pick up**. At this time the man interrupts by saying, "All of that may be true, Nichols, but we would like to take it for a ride." And so I suggest, "Good, you and your wife come out here where we have a horse and buggy, and we will take a ride in it to prove to you the qualities of this automobile." As a reasonable person, the man responds that the qualities of the car cannot be demonstrated by the buggy and he expects a demonstration of the car. Hence, the man does believe that in some areas the qualities of a thing can be proved by the thing itself. Why is it that some people accept reason in every area except in the field of Bible study? Bible prophecies—internal evidences—are sufficient to prove the Bible's inspiration.

PROPHECY

The word **prophecy** comes from the word **pro** which means **before** and

phanai which means to **speak**. It signifies the speaking forth of the mind and the council of God. Thayer says of it, "It is a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purpose of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden, especially by foretelling future events."

TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS

Prophets in both the Old Testament and the New Testament claimed to be inspired. But the claim to inspiration did not necessarily make one a true prophet. There were false prophets who claimed to be inspired (II Cor. 11:13-15; Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 23:16-32; 28:9; Matt. 7:15; I John 4:1). Their false teaching proved them to be uninspired.

TESTS OF TRUE PROPHETS

The claim of a true prophet was supported by his own known character as a man of God. And, a true word of prophecy could not subvert or contradict other Truth or previous Words of God. A test of a true prophet was the fulfillment of his prophecy. Did his prophecy come to pass when he said it would be fulfilled? David claimed to be inspired (II Samuel 23:2). When the apostles were in the process of choosing one to replace Judas, Peter said, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus" (Acts 1:15-26). David was a true prophet.

There is a great difference in those true prophets of the Bible and latter-day prophets, such as Jeane Dixon and others. Most such predictors do not claim to be inspired; they simply claim a special sense of perception. True Bible prophets made no claim to being geniuses of some cult or occult; instead, they claimed that what they said came from God. Their prophecies contained no **maybes**, while Jeane Dixon says maybe this will come to pass, or maybe that will happen. Not one Bible prophecy appears anywhere in Scripture with the least uncertainty respecting its fulfillment! The mere guesses of latter-day prophets are not equal to the prophecies recorded in the Bible.

**SOME PROPHECIES WHICH PROVE THE INSPIRATION
OF THE BIBLE****Deuteronomy Twenty-eight**

Let us consider a few Old Testament prophecies; Deuteronomy 28:49-57 is a prophecy concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation. First of all, the Lord was to bring against the Jews a nation from afar, swift as an eagle flies, a nation whose language the Jews would not understand. Secondly, the Jews would neglect to care for the old and show no mercy for the young. Third, Judah and Jerusalem would be besieged, the gates and the high walls would be torn down, and their hope of survival and safety would be destroyed. Fourth, the citizens would suffer unparalleled horror. Some would eat human flesh. A great number of the Jews would perish in the siege, besides the multitudes to be carried away as slaves. In the next place, the Jews would be plucked from the land, scattered over the earth, and find no rest. Their name was to become a by-word among the nations. And yet, in spite of all this, another prediction promised that God would not completely cast them off; He would not permit them to be utterly destroyed.

Let us summarize. This prophecy is remarkable. It was minutely fulfilled some 1500 years after it was recorded. In his **Book of Antiquities**, Josephus, a noted Jewish historian, verified the fulfillment of this prophecy. He listed the same things that the prophets said would come to pass concerning the nation of Israel.

According to prophecy God did not completely destroy the Jews. They are, and have always been, a distinct people, and are a monument to the fulfillment of this particular prophecy.

Joshua Six

In Joshua Six there is a wonderful prophetic statement concerning the one who would rebuild Jericho. Joshua announced that there would be a curse upon any individual who would rebuild that city (6:26). The sixteenth chapter of I Kings records the fulfillment of Joshua's prophecy. "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun" (I Kings 16:34). Joshua said the city of Jericho would be rebuilt, but that it would be rebuilt at the cost of something. Some 520 odd years after the prophecy was initially made, it came to pass

when Hiel began to rebuild the city of Jericho. While building the wall of the city, he lost his firstborn; as he finished it, he lost his youngest son.

I Kings Thirteen

In the thirteenth chapter of I Kings there is another prophecy. After King Solomon passed from the scene, Rehoboam, his son, became king in his place. The people of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam because he threatened to inflict cruelty and further burden them. "...My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (I Kings 12:14). The ten northern tribes rebelled against him and went to serve Jeroboam, who built altars at Dan and Bethel. They began to worship false gods under Jeroboam's leadership.

Now to Chapter Thirteen and the prophecy: "And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out," (I Kings 13:1-3).

That prophecy was fulfilled about 350 years later and is recorded in II Kings Twenty-Three. In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah began to put down idolatrous worship. "Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel" (II Kings 23: 15-17). Reference is to that prophet who stood by the altar of a false god, and, in the presence of Jeroboam, proclaimed the curse. Remember, the prophet even named the man, Josiah, over 300 years before he was born.

Daniel Two

A lack of time prevents a discussion of all prophecies which prove the inspiration of the Bible. But let us consider a prophecy concerning the kingdom of God, recorded in Daniel Chapter Two. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. In this dream he saw an image. In interpreting the Babylonian King's dream, Daniel described the image (Dan. 2: 31-35). He then gave the interpretation (verses 36-45). Daniel identified four world kingdoms represented by the image: the head of gold—Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Kingdom; the breast and arms of silver—the Medo-Persian Kingdom; the belly and thighs of brass—the Grecian Kingdom; and legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay—the Roman Empire. Those world powers were to appear in that order. Then Daniel said: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (verse 44). This has reference to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ—the church. "The days of these kings" refers to the fourth world empire—the Roman Kingdom.

THE KINGDOM

1. **Daniel said the kingdom would be of divine origin.** "The God of heaven" would set it up. This God did through Christ his only begotten Son (Matthew 16: 18,19). The church or kingdom is that "stone" that "was cut out without hands" (Dan. 2:34). Hence, the Lord's kingdom or church is not of human origin. 2. **The kingdom was to be established during the days of the Roman Kingdom—the fourth world empire.** We are told that this fourth and last world empire began with Augustus Caesar, 31 B.C., and fell A.D. 476. The date of the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ falls within this period of time. Thus it is in complete harmony with this prophecy that the church or kingdom was established in Jerusalem in A.D. 33, while Rome was at the height of her power (Acts 2:1-47). This is the "kingdom of heaven," preached by John and proclaimed by Christ (Matt. 3:1; 9:35-38).

Previous to Pentecost, following the resurrection and ascension of Christ in A.D. 33, the inspired writers of the Bible wrote of the kingdom as **future**. After that date it is referred to as **an established fact of history**. During his personal ministry, Jesus referred to the church as future (Matt. 16:18,19). Here that institution is styled both "church" and "kingdom," terms which suggest different characteristics of the same institution.

That the kingdom was established on Pentecost following the ascension of Christ may be seen from this statement of the Lord to his disciples in Mark 9:1: "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." This passage tells us when and where the kingdom would be established. (1) The kingdom would come **with power**. Jesus promised that his apostles would receive power when they received the Holy Spirit which he would send upon them (Acts 1:8; John 16:13). (2) They received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). (3) The power would come with the Spirit. (4) The power came on Pentecost. (5) The kingdom was to come when the power came. (6) The apostles were in Jerusalem when they received the Holy Spirit with the power. (7) Therefore, the kingdom came **with** the power, and thus was established in the city of Jerusalem on Pentecost following the ascension of Christ in A.D. 33. If the kingdom has not yet been established, there are those on earth today well over nineteen hundred years old. Jesus said that some of his audience would not die till they had seen the kingdom come with power.

On the day of its establishment about three thousand became members of the church (Acts 2:38-47). The Corinthians were in the church (I Cor. 1:2) and ate the Lord's Supper in the kingdom (Luke 22:29; I Cor. 11). The Colossians and the apostle Paul were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13-14). John was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9). The kingdom is now a reality. 3. **In this vision, this stone (kingdom) smote the image on the feet.** This is representative of the aggressive nature of the church (II Cor. 10:4-5). In Ephesians 6:11-17, Paul enumerated the various pieces of the Gospel armor which are **defensive** in nature. Then, he mentioned the only part of the armor which is **offensive**, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Hence, the Lord's church, each member of it, must be militant or aggressive, as the prophet said.

Deuteronomy Eighteen

In the time that remains, let us consider some prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19 is a prophecy of Moses regarding Christ. Hundreds of years later it was fulfilled.

The apostle Peter applied that prophecy to Christ. He said, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every

soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22, 23). God the father declared that his Son is to be heard ((Matt. 17:5). He now speaks to mankind through his Son (Heb. 1:1-5). Jesus speaks through his written Word—the New Testament. His Word is to be obeyed (John 12:42; Hebrews 5:8,9). Hence, Christ is the fulfillment of that Mosaic prophecy.

Isalah 7:14

In spite of the controversy regarding this prophetic Scripture, I still do not hesitate to apply it to Jesus Christ. One fellow-preacher said recently that he had quit using this Scripture because of the controversy about it. Another said, “Why not use only those passages about which there is no controversy?”

Doubt about the application of Isaiah 7:14 to the birth of Jesus casts a shadow on the entire Word of God. It reflects upon the integrity of the prophet and his prophecies depicting the trial, crucifixion, and suffering of our Lord. And what about his prophecies respecting the church? Does it not also reflect upon the credibility of Matthew, who applied the passage to Christ (Matt. 1:22-23)? If we were to refrain from using any passage about which there is controversy, we could use very little, if any, of the Bible. Every Scripture which has to do with conversion, the divinity of Christ, or the kingdom is controversial. In fact, the whole Bible is controversial to some people. Some of the most wonderful prophecies in the Word of God, such as Isaiah 7:14, are among the endangered species.

Isalah 7:14, A Messianic Prophecy

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Some contend that the word “virgin” should be translated “young woman.” In the **Revised Standard Version**, the word **almah** occurs, for which was actually inserted, “young woman.” The Greek Old Testament renders the word **parthenos**, the purest Greek word for **virgin**. The apostle Matthew quoted the Greek Old Testament, and he wrote that the word in this passage means **virgin**. The word “almah” is “virgin.”

Edward Young, a noted Greek and Hebrew scholar, wrote, “At the outset we may confidently assert that the word **almah** is never employed of a married woman.” A **virgin** and an **unmarried woman** are not equal terms. A faithful translation of **almah** and the contexts of Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22,23 requires the sense of all that is meant by **virgin**. An

unmarried woman, young woman, or unwed girl could be a harlot. A virgin is one who has never known a man in the sexual relationship. Martin Luther said, "If any Christian or Jew can prove to me that in any passage of Scripture that *almah* means a married woman, I will give him one hundred florins." Someone might object that Luther was not a Greek or Hebrew scholar. Whether he knew one word of Greek or Hebrew, or not, no one accepted his challenge and tried to claim the money.

It is contended by some that Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in the days of King Ahaz and that the "young woman" was probably one of the young maidens of the king's harem. Hence, the birth of Jesus was not the fulfillment of it. If this theory is true, then Matthew was neither a true prophet nor a genuine apostle. Matthew recorded the angel's promise to Joseph that Mary would bring forth a son, "and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He then wrote: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet..." and then quoted Isaiah 7:14. Matthew said that the virgin birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of this Scripture. Was he wrong? Did he simply use it only as an illustration? If Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled during the days of Ahaz, or at any other time prior to the birth of Christ, I challenge anyone to find a record of it, either in the Bible or secular history.

Isaiah said that the child was to be a boy and his name was to be Emmanuel (God with us). Matthew said that Isaiah had reference to Christ, that his virgin birth was the fulfillment of the prophecy. Matthew was a true prophet. In the **Adult Gospel Quarterly** of the **Gospel Advocate** series, Brother Guy N. Woods wrote: "Isaiah 7:14 finds its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus to Mary the virgin. Anyone who denies the Messianic application of Isaiah 7:14 does not deny it as the result of interpretation. It is simply unbelief, and that I believe."

PLACE OF BIRTH

My time has expired, but allow me to mention two other prophecies. Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. The Bible records two cities by that name. The prophet specified which city. He said Jesus would be born in Bethlehem Ephratah—Judah (Micah 5:2). This prophecy was fulfilled about 700 years later (Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:1-7).

TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Isaiah described the trial and crucifixion of Christ (Isa. 53:1-12). This prophecy was fulfilled about 740 years later (Matt. 27-28).

How could all of these prophets be so accurate in their prophecies? The apostle Peter answers: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).

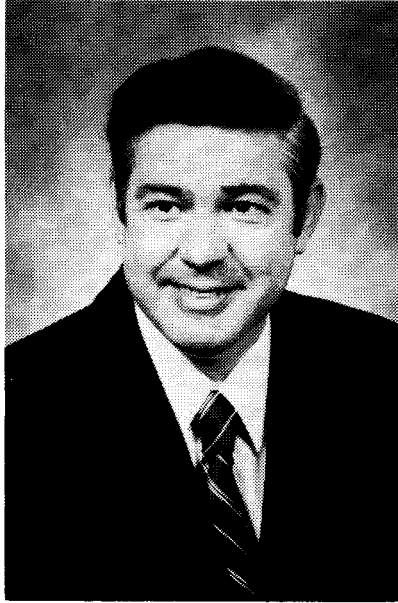
CONCLUSION

So the Bible is proved by **prophecy**, by **internal evidence**. Anyone who has any doubt about its verbal, plenary inspiration has no business trying to teach its contents. Let us be thankful to God for giving us such a wonderful book, with its faith-building prophecies. Let us accept the Bible for what it is and believe and obey its instructions so that its promises may be ours both now and forever.

Thank you very much.

Biographical Sketch

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J. Noel Merideth was born October 15, 1941 in Humphreys County, Tennessee. He and his wife, Betty, have five children. Brother Merideth received his training at Freed-Hardeman College, Bethel College (B.A.), Scarritt College (M.A.), and Vanderbilt University Divinity School. He is the owner of Merideth Publishing Co., editor of **Christian Light**, and author of **Sermons and Studies** and **A Commentary on Galatians**.

Chapter Fifteen
A New Gospel for a New Age
Is Not Needed

by J. Noel Merideth

We are delighted that you are here. For the next few minutes, the subject on which I will be speaking is entitled, **A New Gospel For A New Age Is Not Needed**. The day and time in which we live in the United States is becoming more secular and more materialistic. In a recent survey of the people who do not go to church, Princeton researchers found that most of them felt they could be **good Christians** without being connected with a church of any kind. That is an unscriptural feeling which many people possess. People are too often secular and materialistic, and they are not attuned to things religious in nature. However, we do not need a new Gospel. We simply need to preach the old Gospel, the Jerusalem Gospel, the Gospel of the Bible. That is what we all need.

First, the Gospel of Christ, in which lies man's salvation, is based upon the principle of God's grace. Ephesians 2:8,9 states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." We are not saved by grace alone, but by grace through faith. We are not saved by works of boasting or of human merit. Various kinds of works are found in the Bible. There are works which are approved, and there are works which are not approved. We are saved by works which are approved, works which God requires. We are neither saved by works of human merit, nor are we now saved by the works of the law of Moses. Rather, the principle upon which God now acts is grace. The Greek word for the **grace** of God is **caritos**, literally, **the unmerited favor of God**.

The **motive** which moved God was **love**. John 3:16 states, "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." The **power** which God uses in the operation of salvation is the **Gospel**. Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation..." The **cleansing agent** that makes salvation possible is the **blood of Christ**. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). The one who reveals redemption to us is the Spirit. This revelation is made known and found in the Bible. "But God hath revealed them unto us by

his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10). The place, the sphere, the location of salvation is in the body; salvation is in the church. Acts 2:47 states, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Literally, the footnote of the **American Standard Version** reads, "those that were being saved." The church is the body of the saved. It is, indeed, comprised of the people of God.

Today, we simply need to preach the Gospel. The Gospel is composed of the primary facts of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. We go through that form when we die to the love and practice of sin. We are buried with Christ in baptism and rise to walk in newness of life. In I Cor. 15:1, Paul said, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first 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." Because of what Jesus did, because we obeyed the Gospel, and because we are following in the footsteps of Jesus, we all share the hope of the glorious resurrection in which we shall be with Christ throughout eternity.

Let us consider what needs to be preached today. Foremost, preachers need to preach the Word of God, the Bible. Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Notice, he said, "preach the word." We are living in a day and time when people want to change the preaching of the Word. In a church where I worked we hired a young man to work with us and lead singing. He attended one of our Christian colleges. This young man said that some of his fellow alumni who claimed to preach were talking about preaching. They said, in their view, today men need to learn how to better relate to people. They do not need to go through the business of quoting book, chapter, and verse. Men need to learn the techniques of relating to people in order to better relate to the audiences before whom they speak. This young man said this view was characteristic of several of them. This is most unfortunate because that is a false view. What we need to do is to learn to preach the Gospel to people. That is what is most needed. The Bible says preachers are to simply "preach the word," not seek out some new Gospel for a new age. We need to learn to relate the Word of God. The Word is the only source of hope for eternal life in heaven. The Word is what we need to preach.

In most seminaries today (perhaps many of them are cemeteries) one

can scarcely enroll in a course on counseling. That is the big fad. I was talking to a very old professor one time in college, and I was asking about a certain phase of current philosophy. He said, "Well, all these things come in fads," which is very true. The fad now is counseling. Look at the courses offered at the various colleges and seminaries. Look at how many courses they have on counseling. The courses are filled. Many people are intent upon turning preachers of the Word into counselors of human philosophy. More is studied about Maslow and B.F. Skinner than about Jesus, Paul, James, and other Bible characters.

The fad today is not to see a preacher, but a counselor. He has a form from which he asks questions. A person is first quizzed when he sees a counselor. Then the counselor looks in a book to discern, according to the questions which were asked and answered, the type of personality the subject has. There are all kinds of personalities, and each person will supposedly fit into one of those pigeon holes. Because one might have answered the questions in a certain way, and because he is thought to fit into a certain pigeon hole in human psychology and human counseling, the counselor decides how he will talk to the subject before him. Counselors correct one's life according to human psychology and human counseling. Brethren and fellow preachers, what we need to do is preach the Word. We do not need a new human system of psychology and counseling for people. What we all need is preachers who will simply preach the Gospel of Christ.

Some of our television and radio preachers preach up to the point of telling people the plan of salvation, and then they stop. They submit to network or political pressure. They will not say that the employment of mechanical instruments of music in worship is sinful. They will say the churches of Christ sing. Of course, we sing, but the Bible also teaches by necessary inference that mechanical instruments of music used in worship is sinful. We need to preach the Word. We need to preach that we sing and that worshipping with mechanical instruments of music is wrong.

While I was in a meeting some time ago, a man and his wife took me out for dinner. When attending such meetings, the preacher delivers the sermon every night, and the brethren feed the preacher each night. I meet a lot of people, usually fine people. I believe I have met some of the finest people alive. Our brethren who live and work and try to do what is right are fine people. Occasionally, one meets a fellow like I am going to describe. The brother had a fabulous car, he had a fabulous house, and he was taking me out to have a T-bone steak. I was getting ready to carve it, and he said, "Brother Merideth, I think there are a few things in the church which we ought to change, don't you?" I said, "What do you have

in mind?" As I was preparing to whittle on my steak he said, "Well, for one thing, I think we should drop the invitation. I don't see why we have to extend the invitation." I was in a Gospel meeting. The whole purpose of the meeting was to extend the invitation each night! Brethren, we got into a discussion right there. I do not remember much about the steak for we really had a lively discussion! What we need are people who will preach the Word. Preachers need to study the Bible, learn to use the Bible, and teach what the Bible says.

Secondly, elders do not need a new Gospel. Elders simply need to follow the Gospel which we have had through the years. Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The responsibility of an elder begins with taking heed to himself, to ensure he is right in his life and in his beliefs. He is to take heed unto the flock.

Some years ago, I remember a man who had just been appointed an elder in Arkansas. He took me for a ride in his truck. He had a farm, and we drove around it. He said, "Brother Merideth, I have just been appointed an elder." I asked, "Well, what is your concept of being an elder now that you have been an elder for awhile?" He said, "I think one of the gravest responsibilities that I have (the other elders had done so well through the years with the congregation where he was) is guarding the flock against wolves and not letting them in." What a statement, what an elder, and what a tremendous elder he is! He is an elder who is willing to face his responsibilities, not only to take heed to himself, but to guard the flock against the wolves. There are wolves out there. The elders need to guard the flock; they need to be qualified, and they need to arm themselves with the Bible to see that the Word of God is preached from the pulpit and taught in the Bible classes from week to week.

In Nashville, Tennessee some years ago, there was a church that started straying and doing some rather unusual things. People began to dress unusually. One fellow told me, for example, that he thought it was a little unusual for a fellow serving the Lord's Supper to wear a Mickey Mouse T-shirt. I also thought it was unusual. They not only dressed a little differently, they began to do things a little differently. Some fellow wanted to be anointed with oil, but they did not have any. So, someone ran down the street to the drug store and bought some Johnson's Baby Oil. Then the church started inviting some far-out fellows to speak. They espoused the modernistic idea of unity in diversity in which **love** overlooks error. Love is indeed a cardinal characteristic of Christianity. The

meaning of love, however, is not to unite people who believe just anything and everything. That is not love. That is an incorrect understanding of the meaning of love.

Faithful brethren began to speak out against them while others said, "Leave them alone. They are doing a great work. Look how many people they have there." The number of people seems to be the criteria by which many brethren operate. It is their yardstick. "Look how many people they have gathered together." They did gather a large group of people together. Billy Graham does that. Oral Roberts does that. Numbers is neither the criteria nor the yardstick by which to measure whether or not anything is right. Years ago, I saw an article in the **Gospel Advocate**. The title of the article was "**N-U-M-B-E-R-S.**" **Numbers** does not necessarily spell strength. The people had a big crowd. They said, "Well, it's got to be right, it's got to be great, look at the crowd." Now, look how great. The elders **voted** eight to three to have mechanical instruments of music. They decided to change their sign from **Church of Christ** to **Christian Assemblies**. Look where they are now!

Years ago, brethren were saying they were headed in the wrong direction. Others said, "Oh no, leave them alone. They are doing a great work." Look where they are now. Somewhere along the line elders did not do their job. In years past, the church had fine elders, but somewhere along the line elders did not do their job, and they let wolves into their flock. They let the wolves in. Elders do not need a new Gospel. They do not need something unusual, strange, and sensational. They just need to hold on to the old Gospel. That is what they need.

Thirdly, deacons need to stay with the old Gospel. They do not need a new Gospel. Recently, I was in a meeting in Georgia. Many men were inducted into the armed services and got a lot of their shots there, so they remember that place. A deacon and his wife had a cute little boy about three years old whose blond hair looked like someone had put a bowl on his head and cut around it. It was that kind of haircut. He was the cutest little boy. The little boy was in an accident the week I was there in the meeting. While he and some of his cousins were playing, a rod holding clothes fell on his head and cut him. He was taken to the hospital to receive some stitches. He got a bad lick. Fortunately, he was all right. Naturally, the family had been upset and concerned. In the course of conversation, the deacon (who had done well and had a good, high paying job) said, "Brother Merideth, I like my job, I like many things, and I like church work. I'm willing to do anything in the church that I can that's right. I like to help the preacher, the elders, and the brethren. I am willing to help." That is what deacons are supposed to be doing.

The word **deacon** means "one who serves." The etymology is "one who hastens as to kick up dust" (not dust of trouble) "to show that he is moving." Deacons need to live by the Gospel, and serve by doing what they can.

Once I was in a congregation where a deacon had been mayor of the town, on the board at the bank, and on several finance committees in the area. When I first met him, I thought a fellow like that must be highbrow, wear the best suits, and have a lot of people serve him. But, he would get up early each Sunday morning, go down to the building, turn on lights, and turn on the heater or the air conditioning depending upon the season. He would check to ensure everything looked well and was straightened throughout the building. He was also the last one to leave. He turned out the lights and locked the doors. When I was out of town, he made sure the mail was picked up. He was willing to take care of anything which needed to be done. Imagine a man like that willing to serve as a deacon in the church. When he died there was a full house at his funeral (and well there should have been) because he had served and helped a lot of people. Deacons do not need a new fangled Gospel. They just need the old Jerusalem Gospel, the Gospel of the Bible.

What do members of the church need? They simply need the Gospel. They do not need a new Gospel. There are people in central Florida who think that we need a new style of the Gospel. While in a lectureship in Montgomery, Alabama not long ago, I was drinking coffee when someone walked up and said, "I think there has been too much unjust criticism of our brethren in central Florida." He said, "It's all over the matter of methods or means." I replied, "Now, wait a minute; I know of several churches which have been split over their **methods**. There is something wrong when that happens." Paul said, "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16: 16-18).

In one church in Florida some of these brethren said, "We don't like the elders, we don't like the preacher, we don't like the deacons, we don't like the members. They are not doing things the way we think they ought to be done. They are not having **soul talks** like we think they ought, so we are going to start our own." What gives one the right to divide churches? God's people are to be united. Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing,

and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (Cor. 1:10).

While I was on a trip to Florida someone came to me and said, "I like the **New International Version** (NIV). Don't you think we should get this **new** version to our members?" It is new, it is a popular thing. I asked, "Are you serious?" He said, "Sure." (He had been making announcements for the NIV in one of the lectures.) I said, "Wait, come here and let me see you a minute. Do you know all of what is in the NIV?" "Well," he said, "lots of good things." I replied, "Yes, it has within it some good things, but there are several errors within the NIV as well. Do you know what is wrong with it?" He said, "I don't know about that." I responded, "Did you know that Romans and Galatians speak of man's **sinful nature** in the NIV? Do you believe you have a **sinful nature**? Do you believe a little child has a **sinful nature**?" He replied, "I didn't know that was in there." Ephesians 5:19 reads, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" in both the **King James** and **American Standard Versions**. The NIV says "make music." I asked the fellow, "What **kind** of music do you want?" He said, "I didn't know that was in there." He was going to recommend the NIV without knowing its contents. In Acts Chapter Two of the NIV, **Hades** is rendered "the grave." How can one effectively study with Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists using the NIV? One would have trouble. He said, "I was glad that one of our men was on the translating committee, and I thought that it looked good to the public." Isn't that a great argument for a translation! I said, "H. Leo Boles was asked to be on the **Revised Standard Version** committee, and when he saw what they were doing he quit."

We need to read the Bible and study it, using standard translations. My father could understand them and he did not have much education. My mother could understand them too. I have found the problem is not in understanding; living and doing what it says is the problem. Beware of the people who push new translations when they have not taken the time to read and study them.

Recently a lady from Georgia wrote me and cancelled her subscription, because I am **against original sin**. She believes the Bible teaches original sin, total heredity depravity. In Psalms 51:5, the Psalmist said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." I think Hugo McCord best answered this issue. He said that a man could be born in a potato patch but he doesn't have potatoes in him until he eats them. Men are born in a world of sin, but they do not have sin in them until they actually sin.

There are people now who want us to believe something new concerning the family. Families do not need a new Gospel. We simply need the old Gospel preached to the home and the family, especially since families are coming apart everywhere. Some time ago, a large church experienced about twenty-five divorces within a short span of time. Several of their young couples had traveled out West. Somewhere along the way several of them paired with the wrong spouses, and when they returned, they began divorcing and remarrying. That is not right.

Once I wrote about a fellow who wrote in a book that Paul's statements countermand the statements of Jesus. That is not right. Consequently, the man wrote me a letter. In it he said he did not mean, by **countermand**, that the statements contradict. I wrote him back, "If you did not mean that, you should not have used that word. You should have used another word." He replied, "In sixteen pages of your paper, I noticed a misspelled word." I could not resist telling him that in three pages, he had spelled **countermand** wrong three times. (A misspelled word and a word inserted which teaches error are not reasonable comparisons.) In truth, Paul does not countermand, contradict, or revoke even one of the statements of Jesus.

There is one divinely acceptable reason for divorce and remarriage. The Lord said, "...whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). The word **except** means **if** and only **if**. Jesus was saying one has a right to divorce and remarry only **if** fornication occurs. The Greek word for fornication is **porneia** which means all sexual impurity; specifically, the physical act. People sometimes argue that Jesus said, "...Whosoever **looketh** on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). They continue to reason that many people have lusted after others; therefore, would not most people have a reason for divorce and remarriage? However, the Greek word **morchia** may mean, "it is done in the mind." This is not the word used in Matthew 19:9. In Matthew 19:9, the word used is **porneia**. It means the actual physical act, an active sin committed with married people, unmarried people, homosexuals, lesbians, or beasts. God intends marriage to be the kind of marriage that it ought to be. God did not intend that man should have to remain married to a woman who is immoral and commits fornication. Consequently, there is one provision for divorce and remarriage. Nor did God intend for a woman to have to remain married to a man who is immoral and commits fornication. There is only one Biblical

exception permitting divorce and remarriage. Three persons participate in every marriage. A man once said, "It takes two people to get married—the woman and her mother. Actually, it takes three persons to get married—the man, the woman, and God. God always enters every lawful marriage. "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). Marriage is a serious thing to be approached with caution and care. Young people need to be taught how important it is to be very selective and careful when they get married. Among other reasons, God is present in every marriage.

Many people may have had grandmothers like mine. I remember my grandmother saying repeatedly, "When my children married, they married. I did not expect them to run home to see me all of the time. I expected them to care for their husbands or wives." She said, "I was willing to help them if they desperately needed help, though I expected them to remain married."

Guess what else Grandma could do. Grandma could get up early on Sunday morning, fix breakfast (homemade biscuits, ham, and eggs), get the family out of bed and dressed, wash the dishes, gather the eggs from the chickens, and maybe milk a cow or two. Perhaps she would even help harness the horses, after which, when all the little children were gathered up, they drove several miles to the church building, arriving thirty minutes before time for services to start. Some of our brethren today get up with difficulty on Sunday morning, get dressed, usually skip breakfast or gulp down a drink of something, jump in the car and speed down the highway to the church house which may be just a few blocks away. Then they duck in either five minutes before or five minutes after time to begin and say, "Boy, we just made it!" How could grandma do what she did? She **wanted to!** She **wanted** to make those preparations and to attend the services of the church. That is the difference. If we want to do something strongly enough, we can make the appropriate preparations.

We do not need a new Gospel. We need to read, believe, obey, follow, understand, and love the Gospel which we have. We need to be willing to listen to the Gospel when it is preached. A youth director who heard one of our preachers deliver a sermon concerning the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion from Acts Chapter Eight told some of the members, "That was the most boring sermon I ever heard in my life." Someone needs to take the youth director aside and talk to him. Imagine anyone saying a sermon from any chapter in the Bible was the most boring sermon he had ever heard! Such persons need to start reading their Bibles.

A young whippersnapper heard the late brother Nichols preach and

afterward said, "Anybody could do that!" One old preacher grabbed him and said, "Sonny, let's see you try it!" Yes, just let him try it. He probably could not quote twenty verses if his life depended upon it. If he had learned to quote from the new versions, he probably could not quote any of it correctly. We do not need a new Gospel. We just need people to preach, believe, love, and follow the Gospel we have had all of the time. We do not need a new Gospel; we simply need to follow the old one.

The Gospel is something by which we can die. All of us, as we go through life, realize sooner or later that we are going to walk in the silent halls of death. We are all going in that direction. "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1,2). One day we will fall victim to death, then we will look to the glorious resurrection. One day we will see God as he really is, walk into that city which has gates of pearl, walls of jasper, streets of gold, the tree of life, and the throne of God. Finally, we will bask in the light of God.

Thank you for listening.

Biographical Sketch

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Dan Jenkins was born July 24, 1939 in Huntsville, Alabama. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman College (A.A.) and David Lipscomb College (B.A.). He is married to the former Judie Kircus, and they have four children. He has done mission work in New Zealand, the Fiji Islands, Western Somoa, and India. He preached for the Sandusky church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama (1969-1973) and has been with the Shades Mountain church in Birmingham since 1974. Brother Jenkins has taught at West Birmingham Christian School, Jefferson Christian School (Birmingham), the Tauranga School of Preaching (New Zealand), Alabama Christian School of Religion, and Birmingham School for the Deaf.

Chapter Sixteen

No Room for Compromise In Bible Preaching

by Dan Jenkins

We live in an age of compromise, and children of God must be aware that there are areas in which there can be no compromise. Some have forgotten that in matters of faith there can be no giving up of Truth for any reason. We have just listened to a wonderful, stirring lesson about the home. Some brethren are willing to forsake the principles set forth, but faithfulness demands that we not compromise. In the history of the church there have been too many battles fought, too many debates conducted, and too many lives spent in trying to build up the kingdom of God for us to give up those things. The truth we have is the result of godly men giving their lives so that we might have it.

Regardless of our age or position in the church, we must remember that there are areas where we simply cannot compromise. Young men who are attending the Memphis School of Preaching (and those of us who are not so young, who have preached for many years) need to recognize that our heritage is to faithfully present God's eternal truths. This is the pattern clearly set forth in his Word. Both Old and New Testaments portray the kind of uncompromising preachers and preaching which God wants on this earth. These men of old serve as illustrations of the principle of our lesson, there is **No Room For Compromise**.

Looking back to the Jews' captivity in Egypt, Moses stood before Pharaoh with a message, "Let my people go." After a few plagues had been exacted upon Egypt, Pharaoh was ready to make a deal. He said, "Why sure! It's alright to worship God, but just don't go out of this land. Worship God in the land of Egypt." Had some of our brethren been there they might have said, "That's a wonderful idea! It's not unreasonable for us to make this concession in view of that made by Pharaoh. We are still able to worship God."

Picture the character of Moses. His message and his calling were too great for him to turn from that which God had called him to do. He was to bring his people to Mt. Sinai that they might worship there. Later, after Moses had refused the king's first offer, Pharaoh said, "It's alright to go out of the land, but don't go very far." Again, with the devil working through him, Pharaoh tried to persuade Moses to compromise. However, there is no room for compromise when the Truth is involved, therefore Moses refused to do such. Pharaoh continued, "You can go, you can go as far as you like, but leave your wives, children, and possessions."

Regardless of the offers put forth by Pharaoh, Moses refused to compromise in the least! Brethren, we must pattern our lives after those faithful men who have served God in his kingdom. We should look to this story and learn of the example of Moses in refusing to give up the Truth.

Joshua forever stands as another example for us as a faithful servant of God. As he stood before the nation of Israel he said, "...Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Joshua declared that there was no room for compromise where Truth is involved.

Remember the words of Samuel to King Saul when Saul brought back the best of the Amalekites' animals for sacrifice. In contrast to the uncompromising spirit of Samuel, some of my brethren, had they been there, might have said, "Well, Saul, you meant well in what you did." The words of Samuel echo into our own day: "Behold to obey is better than to sacrifice." Those of us who preach the Word of God need to stand for Truth as Samuel did.

"To obey is better." This stands in sharp contrast to many today whose philosophy seems to be **peace at any price, peace in any way**. I wonder what some would have done had they been before King David when he had taken Bathsheba for his wife. What would their attitude have been? Who among them would have said, "King David, thou art the man"? Brethren, when Truth is involved there is no room for compromise.

One reason there are problems in the church today is that while some preachers will generally preach against sin, they will not preach against sins. There is a difference between the two. Many preachers never get right down where people live and deal with the situations in any specific way. While they may talk of sin, they never preach against sins. Nathan's forthright dealing with David's life must characterize our own attitude. The uncompromising attitude of the prophets of God must be ours. They would not yield in matters where Truth was involved.

One only has to read of Elijah, God's prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, to find what God expects of his servants. In I Kings Eighteen he boldly confronted false teachers and stood for Truth. When the prophets of Baal were unable to bring down fire from heaven, Elijah mocked these men. Why, because there is no room for compromise when Truth is involved! Had some of our brethren been there they might have said, "Well, let's build two altars here, one for Baal and one for God. Let's compromise in favor of a peaceful coexistence." Elijah would not compromise. Where Truth is involved no prophet of God dare go before a king or any man with a compromising spirit. Preachers today who stand before men in the name of Jesus must not alter the truths of God!

When God gave his commandments long ago, Moses said, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2). Compromising Truth, adding to and taking away from it, causes Truth to cease to exist. An examination of the Old Testament prophets, their character and attitude toward sin, demonstrates that the prophets of God, men whom God called and inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit, were the kind of men who recognized that there is no room for compromise.

Listen to Isaiah. “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward....From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa. 1:4,6). There is no room for compromise! God said to Isaiah, “...Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make 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. Then said I, Lord, how long...” (Isa. 6:9-11). The prophet recorded that God’s message would not be popular. It would make people’s hearts fat and their ears dull of hearing. It would blind them since they would not accept it. If there ever was a time to change the message to make it more acceptable such would be the time.

How long was Isaiah to proclaim this message? The Lord continued, “...Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate” (Isa. 6:11). Brethren, there is no room for compromise as long as there are cities, houses, men, and land!

Recall how Jeremiah stood before his people and said, “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priest bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so...” (Jer. 5:30,31). What had happened? The priests and prophets had compromised, and the people were enjoying it; that was exactly the way they wanted it. However, contrast the uncompromising attitude of Jeremiah. How popular was Jeremiah for his stand for Truth? He was cast into the miry pit. He was called a traitor, yet he stood for Truth.

Brethren, read the book of Jeremiah and see how specific his preaching was. His was the kind of preaching that will touch the hearts of men and women and change their lives. Such preaching may not build **great churches** with respect to numbers, but it will build congregations

which are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. It will cause Truth to shine and ring out around this earth again. Jeremiah was not the kind of individual who would compromise Truth. He described those who would "...bend their tongues like their bow for lies" (Jer. 9:3). Picture an archer with a bow in his hand as he pulls back the string. See the string as it gives in every direction which the archer desires. False prophets bend their words and the Word of God in every direction which people desire. Jeremiah continued, "...they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth" (Jer. 9:3). May God help us to never alter his Truth; may we be valiant for the Truth.

As we journey through the Old Testament looking at the prophets' uncompromising spirit, let us not overlook Ezekiel. "And he said unto me, son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them...And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ezek. 2:3-5). Likewise, every Gospel preacher on this earth, whether his auditors hear or forbear, needs to stand for Truth. The people must know that a **prophet** has been among them.

To see Ezekiel's devotions to Truth, open your Bibles and read the first verse of almost every chapter that he wrote. "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying..." (Chapter Fifteen). "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying..." (Chapter Sixteen). "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying..." (Chapter Seventeen). "The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying..." (Chapter Eighteen). Over and over again, in almost every chapter appears, "The word of the Lord came unto me..." Those who occupy the pulpits must recognize that the Word of the Lord has come unto them. Their message must be permeated with a "thus saith the Lord." There is no room for compromise.

In the book of Daniel, a young man who was hundreds of miles from home stood valiant for Truth. He was not defiled with the food offered to him by the king. He understood that when Truth was involved there is no room for compromise. Did Daniel as a young man make a mistake that he later would have changed? As an old man, nearly seventy years later, he stood before Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, to interpret the handwriting on the wall. Belshazzar told Daniel he would reward him greatly for his interpretation. "Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give they rewards to another" (Dan. 5:17). Notice how Daniel was willing to risk his favor with the king when

he said, "This is the interpretation...God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it...Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Dan. 5:26,27). Daniel's speech could have cost him his life, but he was willing to forfeit it, if necessary, in order that he might gain his soul. There is no room for compromise.

Consider the remainder of the Old Testament. Hosea said, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (Hos. 4:1,2). As one might imagine, Hosea was not popular in his preaching. However, he knew he could not be a prophet of God without speaking the Word which God had given to him.

Joel 2:12 states, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God..." Joel faithfully, uncompromisingly proclaimed God's message to a sinful nation.

Amos also boldly declared God's Word. "Thus saith the Lord; for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof..." (Amos 1:3). "Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof..." (Amos 1:6). Verse nine continues, "Thus saith the Lord; for three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof..." Verses eleven and thirteen similarly refer to the transgressions of Edom and Ammon, and in Chapter Two the Lord refers to the transgressions of the Moabites (verse one), Judah (verse four), and Israel (verse six).

People did not understand Amos. In Chapter Seven, Amaziah, the ungodly priest, told Amos to go back and preach in the land from which he came. "Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son: but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit..." (Amos 7:14).

Preaching is not a job by which men can gain personal popularity. Unlike Amos, some men endeavor to create goodwill toward themselves as they stand before audiences. They pose one of the gravest dangers to the kingdom of God. In contrast, when a man determines to be a man of God, God's man, he is one of the greatest blessings which can be found on earth.

How I wish we had time to look further through the Old Testament to view the prophets of God, but we are almost out of time. Moving to the

New Testament, focus on the voice of one in the wilderness by whom multitudes from Jerusalem, Judea, and around the Jordan were stirred by his preaching. Many went to John to be baptized of him, confessing their sins. Soldiers asked what they should do. Leaders asked what they should do. John the Baptizer did not try to win a popularity contest; he told it like it was. There is no room for compromise in preaching. The Baptizer was imprisoned because he told King Herod it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. Some today would not do that. Brethren, there is no room for compromise!

Jesus is the greatest example of uncompromising preaching. In John 6:15 the people were ready to take him by force to make him king. As Jesus revealed the Truth of God to them, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?...From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:60,66).

What is Truth worth? Is there room for compromise in preaching? Read on and visualize Jesus seeing the multitude diminish in size. Then, see him with his heart broken as he turns to his apostles and says, "Will ye also go away?" Brethren, Jesus would have stood there while every one of his apostles, every follower on the earth, left, and he would never have compromised the Truth!

Recall Stephen as he preached to the Jewish council, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears..." (Acts 7:51). There is no room for compromise, brethren.

See Peter as he stood before the Sanhedrin and said, "...Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19,20). Brethren, there is no room for compromise.

Hear Paul as he wrote concerning the conference in Jerusalem: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). Do you know why he took this position? Because there is no room for compromise in Bible preaching!

If we were to compromise, what could we give up? What would we want to compromise about our God? Would we want to announce to the world that God is such a loving God he will accept anybody? Such preaching of the Word of God is not conveying the Truth. Yet, some teach that God is so loving that he would never send anybody to hell. Shall we allow the world to go to hell, brethren, because we do not preach the Truth? Shall we compromise by saying God is so harsh and vicious, unloving, lacking in tenderness and mercy that he would leave the

prodigal son in the foreign land, longing to come home? We simply cannot compromise one thing about our God.

What about Christ? Do we want to compromise concerning Christ? Does it make any difference whether he was born of a virgin? Does it make any difference whether he performed miracles? Was he Emmanuel? I am not going to compromise one thing the Bible teaches about Christ!

Is the Holy Spirit the area in which we are willing to compromise? Shall we compromise what the Bible teaches about the work of the Spirit, thus encouraging brethren to become so emotionally stirred apart from the Word of God that they will not listen to it? Shall we so compromise that brethren begin listening to a silent, inward voice which will lead them from God? I will not compromise what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

Shall we ignore what the Bible says about itself? Do any of you want to so compromise the teachings of the Bible that we no longer have any light from God? Shall we exclude the spiritual food, the milk and the meat of the Word? "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Who is ready tonight to give up the Word of God which is able to build us up and allow himself to become a spiritual dwarf? Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Do you dare give up his cleansing Word? I am not going to compromise anything concerning the Bible!

Shall we compromise where the church is concerned? To do so would endanger that holy, divine institution planned by God, prophesied by his servants, promised by Jesus, and erected upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, for which many righteous and noble men have given their lives over hundreds of years! Shall we compromise the kingdom of God, the church of our Lord, in any way? This would remove from the world the one institution in which salvation can be found. I am not going to compromise concerning the church.

Shall we compromise our worship? Are we prepared to say it does not really make any difference how one worships God? Read in the Bible of Cain, Nadab and Abihu, the golden calves erected by Jeroboam, and the calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai. There was some Truth in each of these worshipping efforts, but the ungodly spirit of compromise made each of them unacceptable. There is no room for compromise here!

Shall we compromise what the Bible teaches concerning morality? Immorality has saturated our nation and threatens to flood into the church; shall we stand idly by? There is no room for compromise where

Truth is concerned!

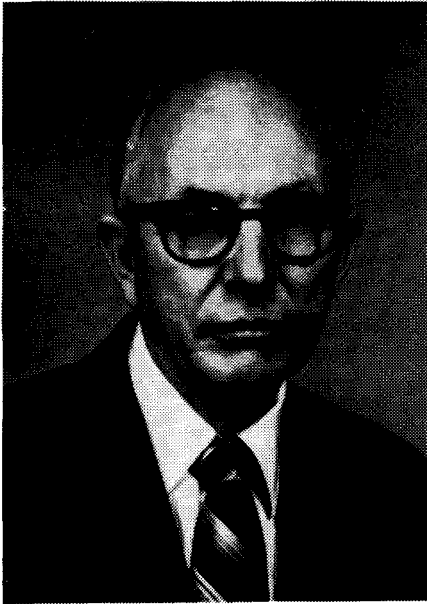
Shall we compromise Truth pertaining to the providence of God? Shall we give up Bible teaching about God's great concern for us? Shall we deny his interest in our prayers and our lives? Shall we lead men to believe that God is not concerned for one who reaches out to him in the midst of adversity?

Brethren, I will not compromise Truth, whether it pertains to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the church, morality, providence, or any other thing which is found in the Word of God. Our Savior lived on this earth and gave his life and said, as he instituted the Lord's supper, "This is my blood of the new testament." The blood of Jesus sealed this covenant. Think of the arrogancy of a man who would take one iota of this Truth, sealed with the precious blood of Jesus, and compromise it. There is no room for compromise!

Shall we compromise the plan of salvation, stating that a man does not have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? The Bible says, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Is repentance necessary? Does man not have to change his heart and life when he becomes a child of God? Does not the Bible say that he commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30)? Dare we compromise the confession that Jesus is God's Son when the Bible says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9)? Shall we compromise the necessity of baptism when the Bible says, "Baptism doth also now save us..." (I Pet. 3:21)? Shall we compromise faithful Christian living? The Lord said, "...be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

May God help us to spend the rest of our days valiant for Truth, never compromising Truth.

Biographical Sketch



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Winfred Clark was reared in Munford, Alabama, baptized by the late Gus Nichols and is married to the former Edna Earl Stephens. The Clark's have one son and one daughter.

Brother Clark attended Alabama Christian College when it was known as Montgomery Bible College. Later he attended Jacksonville State and the Alabama Christian School of Religion where he earned the Master's degree. He has been preaching since 1946 and has served churches in La Grange, Georgia; Breman, Georgia; Oxford, Alabama; Talladega, Alabama; Austinville, Alabama and is presently with the Hobbs Street congregation in Athens, Alabama. Clark speaks on two to four lectureships per year and is in great demand as a preacher and lecturer.

Chapter Seventeen

The Saint In James

by Winfred Clark

I want us to take the time to look at a little five chapter book in the New Testament. It is called the Book of James. It was written by the half-brother of the Lord, as he referred to himself in James 1:1. He is identified in Matthew 13:55; Acts 12:17; 15:13, and Galatians 1:19. James opened the book and began the discussion, saying, "James the servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ." He did not say, "I am the half-brother of Jesus." He did not say, "We had the same fleshly mother." He said, "I am the servant of the God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." He emphasized his spiritual relationship to the Lord, not his fleshly tie.

When one looks at the Book of James, he must view it against the background of Acts Fifteen, because, after all, James was there. In the Acts Fifteen context, he began the epistle to the church at Antioch with the word "greeting," as he did in James One.

Tonight, I want us to look at the people to whom he wrote. They were the children of God, the servants of Christ. They were referred to by Paul in Colossians 1:2 as "saints"; therefore, I want to use that little word **saint** in describing the child of God and his various relationships as they appear in the Book of James.

In James 1:2-11, one finds **the saint and the storms of life**. Notice what he said beginning in verse two. "My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Trials and difficulties are going to come upon the saint. The attitude and disposition of heart which the saint should have under such circumstances is to count it all joy. The saint must not let situations and circumstances get the best of him.

The apostle Paul was one who did not allow circumstances to best him. In Philippians 1:12 he talked about the things which had happened unto him. Reading from Acts 19:21 through the rest of the Book of Acts one will find the difficulties through which Paul went, finally going to Jerusalem where he was incarcerated, carried over to Caecerea, and then later carried to Rome. Paul, however, said all of those "things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel."

Even the chains that bound him did not present situations and circumstances which could get the best of him. In fact, these things actually had helped him preach the Gospel. When Paul was in chains at Rome, he was bound to a soldier who guarded him. As often as the soldiers changed shifts (whether it occurred every two hours, every four hours, every six hours, or every twelve hours) did Paul have another

prospect to whom he could talk about the Gospel. In that way the Lord was heard throughout the palace or the pratorium guard. Imagine, the crack Roman soldiers of that day who were associated with the apostle Paul had an opportunity to hear the Gospel as a result of his relationship and association with them. Had I been in the apostles' place, I might have griped about all of the things which I had to suffer.

Respecting the prison epistles, have you ever stopped to consider who the first persons might have been who read the epistles prior to their delivery? One or more of those Roman soldiers, for instance, may have read the Philippian letter before the church at Philippi read it.

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" or trials. How is the saint to do that? "Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Out of trial comes patience, and patience is a thing which just takes time.

James continued, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Out of trials one can be made stronger. Let me illustrate this. How many of you have children? When you had the first child, if that child sniffled in the middle of the night, you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he had a case of double pneumonia. There wasn't any question about it. And so immediately, back during the days when you could call the doctor to make house calls, you would call and say, "Doctor, can you come over here?" It did not make any difference if snow was on the ground and ice was on the steps as long as you could get the doctor out of bed. You would have him come over and somehow take care of the child. As time went by, and another child came along, when one of them had the croup in the middle of the night, you ran your finger down into a Vicks salve jar and put it on the hole on the throat and waited for a day. How did you learn that? The trial of your faith worketh patience. "...Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James said that out of trials one can be made stronger.

Next, James addressed some of the difficulties and the circumstances which those people might face. He told them how they ought to react. He said that "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." He further told them how to ask. What is meant by wisdom? It means that one ought to come to want to see a thing from God's vantage point. The saint is able to look at trials as God sees them. The saint does not really have the wisdom he ought (divine wisdom) until he has perceived things from God's perspective. That is the only wise man about whom I know anything from the Bible. The man who looks at things from the human standpoint is called a fool, but the man

who sees things from the standpoint of God is wise. James said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not..."

Then James went on to talk about some situations and circumstances which might occur. He said, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted..." Here may be a man who will go from rags to riches. That is what Joseph did when he went from prison to Pharaoh's side. But, what about the man who was a rich man and was made low? Let that same man rejoice in those trials, knowing out of those trials he can be made stronger. You say, "I don't know how on earth a man can possibly do that." Out of these trials can come some good. Read verse twelve. He said, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (or trial). To see somebody who successfully endured trials, all one has to do is read the Book of Job. There is a man who went through the fires of affliction and came out of the fires of affliction a stronger man because of them. What Job did, others can do. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life..." (if he is victorious). The apostles, too, emerged from a situation in Acts Five wherein they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:32). Throughout this context James talked about the storms of life.

James also talked about **the saint and sin** (verses thirteen through sixteen). He anticipated the possibility that one in the midst of trial might sin. That is always a possibility. Looking at the book of Job, one finds Job passing through the furnace of fire victoriously on the one hand, and on the other hand there was his wife who said, "Do you hold on to your integrity? Why don't you curse God and die?" She went through part of the trials Job went through. This never really occurred to me until last year when a brother asked me, "Has your wife ever asked you to quit preaching?" The thought never dawned on me that anybody would have a wife who would discourage him from doing what is right. But that was not true of Job. "Do you hold on to your integrity? Why don't you curse God and die?"

There is a possibility that one might sin when tried. James said in verse thirteen, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God..." If one allows himself to be tempted to do evil by trials, he may get the idea that the temptation came from God and that God is at fault in the matter. Such a conception is wrong. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." One should never think that when he sins under whatsoever circumstances that God is at fault. One might say nobody has ever made that mistake. Turn to Genesis 3:11-12 and see whether or not

Adam accused God of giving him the woman, and as a result of it, he sinned. "The woman that you gave me didst give to me and I did eat." In other words, "If she never had given it to me, I never would have eaten it." In reality he was blaming God.

Looking at the rest of the verses in this context, one can find exactly how man comes to be a sinner. James wrote, "...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust" (his evil desires) "and enticed." When lust is conceived it joins the will. When it conceives and formulates in the mind, the action comes forth as sin, which when it is finished, it bringeth forth death. Regardless of what the circumstances of life may be, one cannot blame God for sin. Verse sixteen reads, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Hence, do we see the saint and sin in verses thirteen through sixteen.

The saint and the Scripture appears in verses seventeen through twenty-five. Note that in verse seventeen the context does begin to address different people. Dealt with are circumstances and situations. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." One cannot say that whatever comes to him which causes him to do wrong comes from God, for every good gift comes from God. How is the saint to control his life? Look at verse eighteen. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Verse twenty-one continues, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Backing up a little, the man who could deny that he is a sinner by his own fault and would say that God is at fault would never admit that he had any filthiness or superfluity of naughtiness. Such an individual would never apply verse twenty-one to himself and admit that he needs the Word of God. He would not receive with meekness the Word of God which is able to save his soul. He would say, "I'm not lost because I didn't sin. If I committed any sin at all, it was because God made me do it."

In verse twenty-one, James said, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." What word? The word by which we are begotten, verse eighteen. That is what causes a man to become a doer of the Word, verse twenty-two. "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Such a man who has come

through the storms of life (verses two through eleven) sees sin for what it is, accepts God's Word, and puts away filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.

Look at verse twenty-seven. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Herein we find **the saint in service**. The saint in service of verse twenty-seven is the saint with Scripture of verses seventeen through twenty-five. What is the pure religion? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." How can one keep himself unspotted? Go back to verse twenty-one. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness..." Thereby does the saint clean up his life. "...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

In Chapter One the saint is found to be the saved, allied with the Scripture, opposed to sin, passing through the storms of life, and serving God as he ought to serve him. If this could ever be incorporated into the lives of every member of a local church, I guarantee it would revolutionize that congregation.

In the first few verses of the second chapter, we discover **the saint and snobbery** (the first thirteen verses). "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ..." The "faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" is what saints are to be practicing from the first chapter. "...have not faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." What is meant by that? James proceeded to illustrate. "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment..." Such a standard says the clothes make the man; that is the way some measure the man, by the cut of the cloth and not by his character. One just simply cannot measure the man by his clothing. Some may say, "Show me a man in a fine suit of clothes, and I know he's a man of upstanding character." Have you ever seen a man in a casket? I have never seen one yet in rags. Al Capone, I guess, had on one of the best suits money could buy, but one cannot measure a man by that. Two men come into the assembly. One has the good ring and goodly apparel. The other is a poor man in vile raiment. What are we likely to do?

"And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing" (and gay is a bad word now), "and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou here, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not

then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" What motives would prompt men to so act? Evidently, when a rich man comes in, we begin to pamper him for what we can get out of him or for what he can do for us.

The poor man who may come in does not have much of this world's material things to give, and as a result, we just give him any place. You may say, "But we don't practice that." Don't we? Have you ever known some prominent man in a congregation to die who had a whole lot of money? One could not get into the church house at his funeral. Everybody wants to be the pallbearer and honorary pallbearer. Have you ever known some dedicated old saint of God, who did not have much of this world's goods, pass out of this life, having lived a noble life? One could not get enough of a crowd together to say **Amen**. You tell me what that is. Tell me the difference in the situations.

Have you ever known somebody who is prominent in a congregation to whom the brethren cater to preserve their jobs? So, we are at the hospital every time they have even a stitch put in a toe. Let some dedicated old saint of God who does not have much input in the congregation lie in the hospital with open-heart surgery, and he will barely receive a get-well card.

The man who starts picking the kind of people to whom he is going to show prominence in the church is the man who will become partial in his attitude toward the Bible. It is not accidental. James continued, "But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called? If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself...But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill..." If an individual becomes partial and starts picking the kind of individual to whom he wants to show favor, if he is not careful, using the wrong standard, he will pick out which passages he wants to obey. So do we find the saint and snobbery; it simply just must not exist.

The next context is from fourteen through twenty-six, **the saint and saving faith**. Watch what he says in verse fourteen. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith..." Well, who might say he has faith?

If the doctrine of **faith only** were really the subject of which the apostle taught and James taught, then James was asking a question which was absolutely superfluous. Can faith save him? What is the obvious answer?

Is faith only the sole thing by which men are saved? James said if a man "hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" He then illustrated this. "If a brother or sister be naked..." What kind of person did he talk about coming into the assembly? This is where faith is tested, by doing something for somebody who cannot do anything in return. Faith is tested when something is done for which one is not going to receive any prominence.

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food..." Have you ever seen one like that? Have you ever seen a brother or sister who was naked or destitute of daily food, who absolutely did not have enough from one meal to another? Would one of you simply say unto them, "I have faith." "And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" Not a bit.

I am glad my wife does not operate that way. When she told me to come to breakfast this morning, she said, "Be filled," but she helped me. When she said, "Be filled," she also said, "Do you want some eggs this morning?" She went to the stove and cooked the eggs. That is the way to get a job done. However, often when someone comes to us with a problem, we are ready with our advice. Go be "...warmed and filled; not withstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body..."

There are two illustrations of the right kind of faith in the latter part of this chapter. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (or complete)? If a saint's faith is ever going to be complete, it will be exemplified or developed through something which he does.

Let's move to the third chapter and look at **the saint and his speech**. This chapter is prominent among the five chapters of the book. Though the Bible was not divided into chapters and verses to begin with, have you ever stopped to think about where James put the discourse concerning the tongue? After Chapters One and Two and before Chapters Four and Five, right in the middle of the book, Chapter Three is where James placed teaching about the tongue. Why put the tongue in the middle of it, because it is in the middle of everything. With nearly every problem which arises, the tongue is right in the middle of it. Let us see what James had to say in the third chapter.

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." Remember the false teachers who had left Jerusalem and went to Antioch and caused trouble. Remember that those

fellows who left Jerusalem said, "Except ye be circumcized after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." What did they want to be? They wanted to be teachers. James had seen an abundance of fellows wanting to be teachers. But James wrote, "...be not many masters..." (**Masters** is the **King James** rendering of what the **American Standard** translates **teachers**.) In John 3:10 Jesus asked Nicodemus, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

Chapter Three begins by considering the way in which the teacher uses his tongue. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body." In other words, the use of the tongue shows maturity. One can tell whether or not a man is mature by the way that individual communicates, by the way he talks. One may say, "I don't know about that." Well, how did you talk when you were a baby? It was goo, goo, goo. Then finally it got to where you could communicate a little better because you could use and manipulate the tongue better. That shows maturity. Well, this is what James talked about here. The use of the tongue indicates maturity and development; the saint and his speech is the item reviewed within this context.

A grown Christian ought to be able to use his tongue in a constructive fashion rather than in a destructive manner. James illustrated how this can be done. "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths..." Why, to control the horses. There is a rudder which controls the ship. "Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth." That is, they are under control, and that is what James addressed concerning one's manner of speech.

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" One can start a little fire, and the next thing anyone knows there is a whole lot of trouble. I heard somebody give an illustration wherein some guides in the Alps had cautioned some climbers. They said that when moving around in certain parts of those mountains the vibrations of even a whisper could cause an avalanche from above which would send everyone down into the valley. Brethren, let me tell you something. If I were over there, I'd check the list of brethren who were on the mountain with me. Yes, sir! And just to put in a good plug, there are some sisters that just couldn't go. No way in the world! The whole crowd would be down there, for right in the moment that nothing should be said, the telephone would ring, and right on the other end of that gossip stick the whole mountain side would go down. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

There is the false teacher. There are the fellows who evidently left Jerusalem, went off to Antioch, and caused trouble and difficulties there.

Now look at verse thirteen. Therein is **the saint and superior wisdom**. James raised the question in verse thirteen, "Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you?" If that question had been asked in Jerusalem, who would have raised his hand? Why, the Judaizing teachers. He would say, "I have all the answers that anybody needs. I can tell you what the Gentiles ought to do." Such men are convinced that they can tell anyone exactly what he needs to know. They have every answer. "Who is wise man and endowed with knowledge among you?" That is the kind of fellow we are viewing. Just imagine that kind of person. Have you heard anything lately about people being sent around the country to indoctrinate people with the **Crossroad philosophy**? They can tell the wise how to better serve the Lord.

Remember that Judaizing teachers had left Jerusalem, had gone to Antioch, and had caused trouble in the midst of that congregation. Suppose that they had gone, not only to Antioch, but to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, and had established **campus ministries** all over the Roman Empire. These Judaizing teachers were going and saying, "We come from Jerusalem." What would happen? How is one going to determine whether a person is a wise man? In Acts Fifteen the Judaizing teachers purported to have certain wisdom. James further penned, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." That kind of wisdom is not from above. He continued, "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." What will one find in the wake of that kind of thing? The fruit of it will show what kind of wisdom it is.

If one were to follow behind the fellows who left Jerusalem and went to Antioch, what would he find? One would discover divided churches. In our part of the country in the 1950's there were those who were opposing the orphan homes. There are divided churches all over the county as a result of it. They are the wise ones. The Crossroad ministers are doing the same identical thing scattered around the country today. There is not a particle of difference in it.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." Can you find an illustration of that? I believe I can. If you will turn back to Acts Fifteen, you will find the apostles with the elders as they met in Jerusalem. They decided what ought to be said, and they sent out an epistle. Whenever that epistle was

read, the result was the same. "Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation" (verse thirty-one).

When people listen to wisdom which is from above, their problems are settled. Turn to Acts 16:5. "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." Why, because men went out and delivered the wisdom which they had received at Jerusalem in Acts Fifteen. Does that not pretty well describe James Chapter Three?

Now look at the fourth chapter. The fourth chapter deals with **the saint and selfishness**. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Well, how did it start over there in Jerusalem and Antioch? It had to come from there. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Suppose Paul or James were to write to Antioch, "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" The Judaizing teachers are right in the middle of it. "Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (your evil desires). "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." Such men will not ask for wisdom; they think they have all of the answers.

James said, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Look closely at this fourth verse, for this fourth verse disturbs me. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." We have wondered why so much worldliness has gotten into the church in the last few years, haven't we? Have you stopped to think about the liberal thrust and all of the ideas which have been brought up which cause people all kinds of unrest? As a result of it some people in the church just simply decided it just was not worth it. Many of them turned to the world and the devil, thus worldliness. Such individuals are described in these first twelve verses. Herein is depicted the selfish individual which a saint just cannot afford to be. The real answer to the idea of selfishness is found in verses eleven and twelve. James taught that the saint is to submit himself unto the hand of God.

In verses thirteen through seventeen, is portrayed **the saint and self will**. It could well be that an individual could be under the influence of a false teacher. A person may become worldly because he sees churches divided. Look at verse thirteen. "Go to now, ye that say, To day or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." Herein referred to is the materialistic man who turned to the world in verse four. He has become a materialist in verse thirteen. There is the danger which has developed. The materialist said,

“We’ll go into that city, and we will buy and sell and get gain.” What kind of fellow is he apt to become? See verse seventeen. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

Also there is **the saint who has to suffer under the suppression of the rich** who take advantage of him. There are people in the world who do take advantage of others.

Then dropping down to verses seven through twelve, one finds **the saint and steadfastness** in the face of the suppression found in the first six verses. What should the saint do under such circumstances? Notice verse six, where James said, “Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.” That is what brethren are to do regardless of what others do, even if brethren are the oppressed.

What kind of an example did James use? He said, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.” Do not let somebody who is doing wrong be your example. Take for your example those individuals who set the right example even under affliction and persecution. He further said, “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.” One can perceive the consequences. That is the example he said we are to follow.

The next few verses deal with **the saint and supplication**. Whenever afflicted, he should pray. When he is merry, he should sing songs. In the suppression and difficulties in which one may find himself, one may violate God’s law. It is possible. So verse sixteen reads, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” That is the answer which God gives the child of God who struggles through this world trying to do what is right.

Looking at the last two verses, one sees **the saint and soul saving**. No individual, regardless of whatever happens to him, is ever to forget that he is in the soul-saving business.

That is **the saint in the book of James**, who starts in the midst of storms, who sees sin for what it is, keeps the right relationship with God and his Word, serves as he ought to, is not partial in his practice, and has the kind of faith which will cause him to operate and control his tongue. He gets his wisdom from above, never allowing it to lead him into a conflict which would cause the body of Christ to be divided and distorted, and he keeps his eyes from materialism. He serves in spite of what others do, and if he makes a mistake, on his knees he confesses those faults. He

keeps as the objective before him that souls are to be saved.

Notice what James said, If a brother be taken in a fault, or err from the truth, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

There is the saint in the Book of James. If we had more of that kind of people (and I am sure we still have some of them) scattered throughout the churches of our Lord in this land, we would be a better people.



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