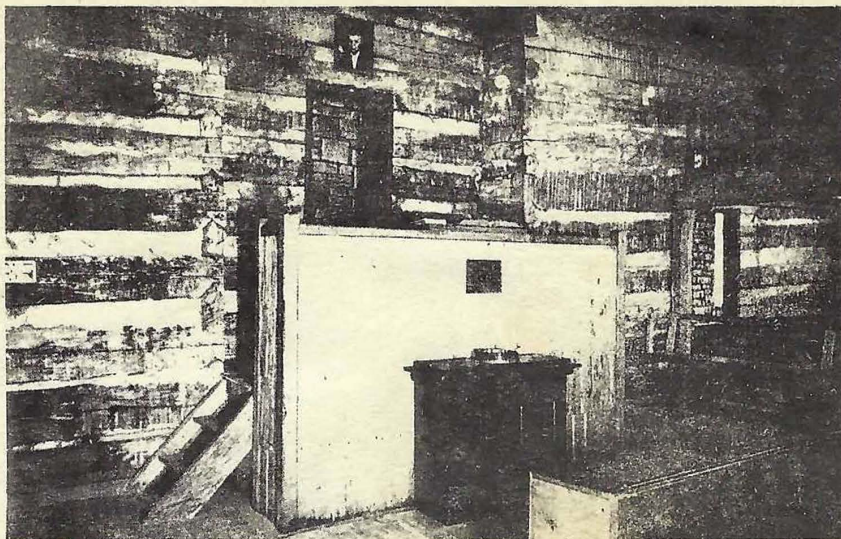


Old Paths Pulpit Series



Volume One

SERMONS THAT SAVE



ROBERT R. TAYLOR, JR.

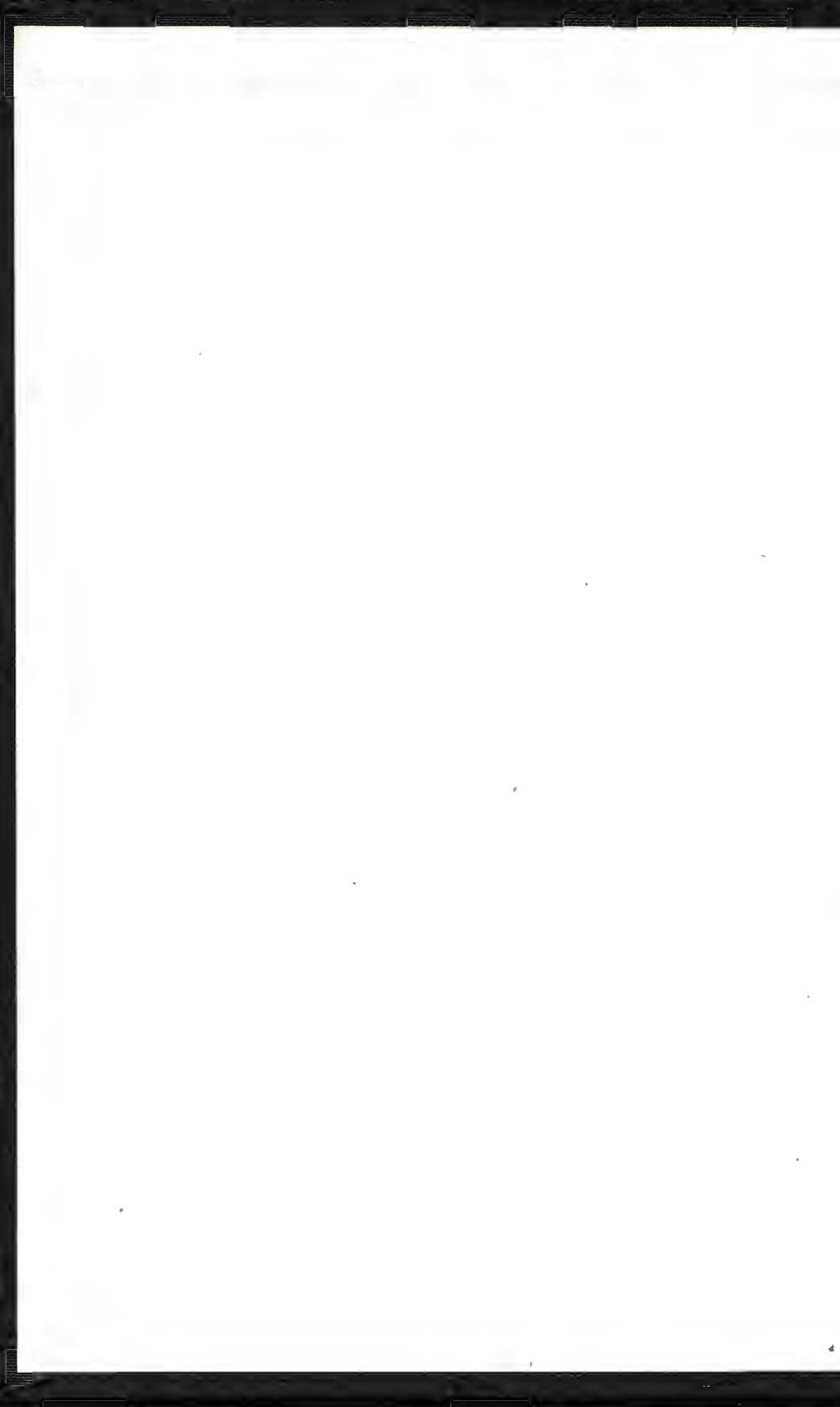
*“Old Paths Pulpit”
Series*

Presents

“SERMONS THAT SAVE”

Vol. One

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Old Paths Pulpit Series

Volume One

SERMONS THAT SAVE



ROBERT TAYLOR
of
Ripley, Tenn.



**FIRM
FOUNDATION**

WILLIAM S. CLINE, EDITOR
JOHN G. PRIOLA, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

P. O. BOX 17200, PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32522 / (904) 433-4258

Printed in the United States of America

Sain
Publications

LEBANON TN 37087

Old Paths Pulpit

William S. Cline, General Editor

We are very pleased to present to the reading public this series which we have entitled "OLD PATHS PULPIT." The men who are to author this series have been chosen because they—like thousands of others—strive to "preach the word" of God (II Timothy 4:2) rather than the doctrines of men. We have chosen these men because we are convinced that they truly are dedicated, devoted servants and soldiers of Jesus Christ. Even though we realize that no man can truly know the heart of another, we have selected these men because their fruit warrants our deduction that they deserve to be involved in such an enterprise as this series of books of sermons.

It is our conviction that this series will be truly representative of what God wishes preaching to be. God intends that those who preach will be men who love him and their fellow-men. God intends that those who preach will be men who strive not to please men, but God. God does not wish for those who preach, to be like reeds which bend in whatever direction the wind may be blowing. He does not wish for those who preach to "put their ears to the ground" in order to ascertain what the multitudes of people wish to have preached. We are convinced that the men who are to contribute to this series are men who are basically what God would have preachers to be.

There must be a balance in preaching. To be truly faithful as a preacher of the gospel, one must preach not only the goodness of Almighty God but also his severity. We believe the reader will find the balance which God demands in the sermons which will be included in this series.

Each author has been allowed the liberty of expressing his thoughts as he sees best, and is responsible for the way he has expressed himself.

We consider it an honor to present this first title, "SERMONS THAT SAVE" in the OLD PATHS PULPIT SERIES. Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. is a dedicated student of the Bible, a great and godly man, and a close and personal friend. We commend him for his work's sake.

— The Publishers

Foreword

It is a precious privilege and high honor to be invited by brother William S. Cline and *FIRM FOUNDATION* to author one of a select number of volumes of *OLD PATHS PULPIT* sermons preached during the last half of the twentieth century. The type of sermons in this book, *SERMONS THAT SAVE*, is what I have tried to present in local work, in gospel meetings, in lectures, over radio, and by television for thirty-five years. The material for these lessons has been drawn from a lifetime of listening to great sermons by my esteemed fellow workers in God's kingdom and my own study of the Bible, books about the Bible, and observations of a personal nature. I am richly indebted to all from whom I have learned. Originality has been described as "*forgetting where you got it.*" Perhaps that is my only claim for originality for these twelve sermons!

I continue to be grateful to my wife, Irene, the human inspiration behind all my books and other written productions, an understanding congregation of God's people who allows me the time to write, a great eldership of *C. Fred Faulk* and *Everett Presson* who insures such an arrangement, great publishers like brother Cline and *FIRM FOUNDATION* who are willing to invest so heavily in such a volume as this, those who later purchase and peruse such a work, and above all to the Glorious Godhead that supplies health of mind and energy of bodily strength to begin, continue, and conclude such a writing venture of faith, hope, and love. This book has been a pleasant "*work of faith*" and "*labor of love.*"

It is my prayerful petition that these Bible-based and gospel-oriented lessons will truly become *SERMONS THAT SAVE* to each person who reads them with spiritual relish.

— Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Ripley, Tennessee

July, 1984

Dedication

With Christian love, earnest esteem and ascending admiration this book is dedicated to Thomas B. Warren and Roy C. Deaver. Their minds are brilliant; their dedication to truth is deep; their steadfastness to the Saviour is unmovable; their talents are tremendous. They are equally able as Christians in general and as preachers, writers, editors, teachers, debaters, lecturers, advisors, husbands and fathers in particular. Like two gigantic stonewalls they have stood as spiritual twins of truth. Their friendship has been of the David-Jonathan type almost all of their preaching lives. Both have great and godly wives and families who back them one hundred per cent and enhance eloquently their great work for the Lord. In a positive and precious way they personify the very spirit of this volume. They have been and continue to be great preachers who preach *SERMONS THAT SAVE*.

Table Of Contents

1. <i>A Tribute To The Bible</i>	1
2. <i>“Rightly Dividing The Word Of Truth”</i>	13
3. <i>The Love Of The Cross</i>	27
4. <i>Who Is Jesus Christ?</i>	43
5. <i>The Bible Doctrine Of Pardon</i>	56
6. <i>The Church Of My Choice Or The Lord’s—Which?</i>	72
7. <i>Isms And Errors Threatening The Church</i>	86
8. <i>Marriage Insurance</i>	102
9. <i>Thy Will Be Done In Unity</i>	117
10. <i>Is There A Place For The Negative?</i>	137
11. <i>A Christian Just Like Paul</i>	164
12. <i>Where Shall We Be In Eternity?</i>	178

CHAPTER ONE

A Tribute To The Bible

There is a Book in our world today that is as far above humanly devised volumes as the high and holy heavens soar above lowly earth. That Book is God's Valiant Volume. It is our beautiful and beloved Bible—the Grand Old Book Divine. In the words of a moving, majestic hymn it is a book which surpasses the sages; it is a book which ascends the ages. There is no other book in all the world like it; there is indeed no other book which can duplicate it; there is indeed no other book which can supplant it. It has no superior; it has no close peer. Pious people of countless centuries have loved it. Multiplied millions have died for what it reveals. With their blood they have sealed their belief and trust in its courageous contents—the sublime story of redemptive mercy at work. Blatant infidels have hated it, burned it, mocked it, perverted it and poured unrelenting, voluminous contempt and deep disdain upon its militant messages of towering truth. Yet in spite of their ardent and adamant opposition it lives. Too many of its professing friends have ignored it or taken it for granted. Yet it lives. Too many have thought that it needed no one to defend it and have been silent on the sideline when its messages were mocked and its inspiration was impeached. Yet it lives. Its assailants go the way of all the earth one by one and soon the world forgets they ever existed. But the Book they fought lives on in vibrant and victorious fashion. Militantly and marvelously, it marches forth with an ever growing degree of reverence placed before its ascending authority.

PAUL'S BEAUTIFUL TRIBUTE TO THE BIBLE

It is commonly believed that II Timothy was Paul's final epistle. If Hebrews is a Pauline production, then the peerless veteran penned an even fourteen books of the twenty-seven in the New Testament and an even one hundred of its two hundred and sixty chapters. How

fitting that in his final two chapters, II Timothy 3 and 4, that he be permitted to paint in words of worth, weight and wisdom a stately tribute to the Bible. With becoming and ascending reverence we read,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Timothy 3:14-17; 4:1-8).

In comprehensive and benevolent beauty Paul informs us in precise fashion just what the Bible is. Note his attractive affirmations. (1) The Bible is a Book of *continued fidelity*. Timothy was never to waver or veer from its pristine precepts. (2) The Bible is a Book which can be *known*. Truth is attainable. Unless this is true, Jehovah wasted his time in having it written; we likewise waste our time in perusal of the same. (3) The Bible is a Book of *assurance*. It assures us of our origin, our purpose and our ultimate destiny (Gen. 1:26,27; 2:7,21-23, Eccles. 12:13,14; Matt. 25:46). (4) The Bible is a Book of *simplicity*. Timothy had known it from childhood. Its message can be taught all ages and with profit. The average word of the KJV contains five letters. Yet the so-called intellectuals assure us that no one today can

understand the KJV. They should speak for themselves - not *all* of us! (5) The Bible is a *holy* Book; it is filled with Sacred Scripture. The God of holiness gave it; it reveals the Saviour of holiness; it is inspired by the Spirit of holiness; it reveals the religion that is pure and holy; it depicts the holy city, the new Jerusalem. (6) The Bible is a Book of *knowledge* and *wisdom*. Answered therein are the twin queries; "*What must I do to be saved?*" and "*What must I do to keep saved?*" (7) Therefore the Bible is a Book of *salvation*. This is salvation from sin - not salvation from physical dangers. (8) The Bible is a Book of *faith*. Faithless people and Bible practitioners do not come wrapped up in the same personality packages. (9) The Bible is a Book about *Jesus Christ*. The Old Testaments predicts his coming. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John say he has come already and this is what he said, what he did and how he felt. The remnant of the New Testament affirms he is coming again at the end of the gospel dispensation. (10) The Bible is an *inspired* Book; it is *God-breathed*. (11) The Bible is a *profitable* Book. (12) The Bible is an *all-sufficient* Book. 13. The Bible is a Book replete with *courageous charges*. (14) The Bible is a beautiful *balance* between *positives* and *negatives*. (16) The Bible is a Book of *sound doctrine*. (17) The Bible is a Book to be *enjoyed*. Too many do not endure it because they do not enjoy it. (18) The Bible is a Book that *refutes false doctrine*. (19) The Bible is a Book about *gospel preachers* and *gospel preaching*. (20) The Bible is a Book that *prepares* people for the *heavenly hereafter*. This tribute from Paul is both stately and sublime. It honors the Book of God as only a deep lover of its precious pages can. The remnant of this sermon will borrow from Paul's approach as to how exalted and extolled the Bible should be in the attitudes and actions of all of us.

THE BIBLE IS A PROFITABLE BOOK

Paul so affirmed in II Timothy 3:16,17. He affirms its potent profit in a quartet of realms. (1) It is profitable for doctrine or teaching. (2) It is profitable for reproof. (3) It is profitable for correction. (4) It is profitable for instruction in righteousness or right-doing. The Bible is profitable in forming the beautiful basis for every

doctrinal discourse (and all the Bible is doctrinal since all of it is designed to teach) that is given. Frequently, there is need for the work of reproof and rebuke of those in error. The ever practical Bible is profitable in these necessary realms which are not always pleasant but must be done if we are to have unadulterated Christianity in our era. There must be a constant instruction within the realm of righteousness. There can be no righteous instruction without deriving such from the Righteous Volume. There can be no righteous speech and righteous conduct separate and apart from the righteous teaching that is deeply rooted and firmly grounded in God's word. The Bible is profitable in teaching man of his origin, his purpose upon this mundane sphere and relative to his ultimate destiny. The Bible is profitable from the standpoint of educating humanity relative to the real, basic needs of the soul. In the study, application and teaching of the Bible man finds his most profitable hours spent. Nothing is quite so profitable as the study of God's word. Then we can know how to live perfectly and to profit all others we may contact from time to time. To ignore Jehovah's Book, as countless millions do in our highly secular age, is to rob one of the most profitable experiences that can come to human beings. Truly the Bible is the Profitable Book of the ceaseless centuries. This should be the admirable attitude from *all* of us toward the Grand Old Book.

THE BIBLE IS A PRECIOUS BOOK

It was to Paul. That is why he exalted and extolled it so highly in his final two chapters. Paul was not alone in this. All Biblical penmen from Moses in the wilderness as he wrote the powerful and penetrating Pentateuch to John on rocky Patmos as he inscribed the panoramic book of Revelation lifted high the Bible. To them it was the Book of Books. Each page was precious. The Bible should be precious to each of us also.

The word precious in the Bible comes from a number of different words in the original. Preciousness is applied in the Bible to stones, ointment, riches, wisdom, Jehovah's attitude toward the death of his saints, the Christ, the promises of God, the blood of Christ, etc. This unique word in Hebrew and now in our faithful English rendering is employed rather eloquently in

Scripture to refer to the Lord's word. In I Samuel 3:1 we read, *"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision."* The ASV of 1901 also employs precious here. This meant it was rare in those days due to infrequent visions vouchsafed man by God. The promises of God constituted a most important portion of his word. Peter talked about the promises that a gracious God in heaven had bequeathed so benevolently and beautifully to children of the new covenant. To Peter these were precious promises. He wrote in II Peter 1:4, *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."* Israel's Sweet Singer was talking about how precious God's word is when he penned the moving tribute in the Bible's longest chapter,

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee...The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver...O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day...How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth!...Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold...Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word (Psalm 119:11,72,97,103,127,161).

Of all books known to the human family the Bible should be the most precious of all. It reveals a precious Heavenly Father. Portrayed therein is our precious Saviour. Revealed upon its precious pages is the precious Spirit of Holiness who inspired the entirety or whole of Sacred Scripture. It reveals to us the precious facts to be believed, precious commands to obey, precious promises to be enjoyed and that motivate us toward beautiful and blessed living and precious warnings that we are to heed. The Bible depicts to us the precious plan of redemption that, when obeyed, will usher us into the precious church for which the precious Son of God shed his life's blood. Delineated in the Grand Old Book is the precious blood of Christ that makes redemption a rich reality for Adam's lost, ruined and wrecked race. The Bible richly reveals to us the precious home of the soul that awaits the fearless and faithful in that fadeless day of eternity. Those who view the Bible as less than precious are pathetic

strangers to the real Book of Deity and the great God it gloriously declares and delineates to such precious perfection.

THE BIBLE IS A PURE BOOK

The Psalmist declared relative to this point in Psalm 12:6, "*The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*" As a further word of tribute of the Bible's pristine purity Israel's Sweet Singer wrote, "*Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it*" (Psalm 119:140). For the word *pure* in this passage the margin has "*tried, or refined.*" Purity is ascribed to all of Jehovah's words. The Bible says in Proverbs 30:5, "*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*" The Blessed Bible tells of a God of purity, a Saviour of purity, a Spirit of holiness or purity—the Holy Spirit—the pure and undefiled religion and a righteous realm of perfect purity in yonder's world. Relative to that righteous realm the Bible teaches in Revelation 21:27, "*And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*" The Sermon on the Mount contains this bright and beautiful beatitude, "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" (Matt. 5:8). Heaven is a place of purity for a people of purity who have obeyed a Book of purity in order to get there at last.

THE BIBLE IS A PROFOUND BOOK

The Bible is a very remarkable Book. It is so simple that children can wade amidst its shallow spots of elementary truths and find food for thought; it is so deep and profound that the most brilliant of minds can drown themselves in it. Totally unlike human books it is the never mastered volume. It is a Book that can challenge the deepest minds that have delved into its sacred pages and divine contents. It is a Book that requires a lifetime of meditation and yet at the end of that type of dedicated and lifelong study one will still be at the edge of this boundless ocean of truth with a little teaspoon dipping up just a tiny portion of its inexhaustible wealth of wisdom. This is the very illustration that Brethren T.

B. Larimore and Gus Nichols both used in describing their own search for truth. Brother Jesse L. Sewell once suggested that books written by men lose their challenge after perusing them a time or two. In essence he declared that he felt that he had learned all the human penmen were capable of imparting to him. Not so with the Bible. When concluding a reading of God's Book Brother Sewell felt he must start the process anew because of its inexhaustible riches. He ascribed this as a sure mark of Biblical inspiration.

The Bible reveals a Godhead of profound wisdom and knowledge. It reveals profoundly the way of real life or living. Its resounding themes of redemption are the most profound that can rise to challenge the human mind. Those who desire profound challenges placed before them should look no further than Jehovah's Beautiful Book—the Holy Bible. Truly, the Bible is the profound Book of the ages which surpasses the sages.

THE BIBLE IS POWERFUL

Since it is the word of Almighty God this should not come as a surprise or shock to any person. The Bible is not a dead letter. It is not a cold, impersonal book as some have imagined. It is not outdated, outmoded or archaic in the least. It is a living Book. It is a vital Book. It is an imperative Book. It is a victorious Book. It is a Book of power and influence for the right and good. Several Scriptures come readily to mind relative to its great power. Relative to the power of Deity's word Jesus said, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31,32). Earlier in John's gospel record Jesus had stated in regard to his potent word, "*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63). In laying down the thrilling thesis for the profound epistle of Romans Paul wrote,

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 (Romans 1:16,17).

Does a decisive declaration like this sound like Paul considered the Bible to be a dead letter? Indeed not! Paul loved the word of God far too much to utter any such blasphemy against the Powerful Volume that came from heaven on high to man below. Hebrews 4:12 states, *“For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* In a duet of valiant verses James said,

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures...Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness (overflowing of wickedness - ASV), and receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted - ASV) word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:18,21 - parentheses added).

Those who contend the Bible is dead are dead wrong! They who say the Bible is impotent are grievously mistaken!

The Bible's great power is enhanced and illustrated in the following stories. There was a gospel preacher aboard an airplane flight. The airline stewardess was coming down the aisle asking people if they desired something to drink. Several were saying, *“Make mine a martini.”* Coming to the preacher she noted his perusal of the Bible. Somehow it seemed inappropriate to ask a Bible-reading passenger if he desired an alcoholic beverage. (It seems amazingly strange that some brethren do not realize that it is inconsistent for a professing Christian to hold the Bible in one hand and a cocktail in the other hand whether done at the same time or one on Saturday night at a drinking party and the other Sunday morning at Bible Study). Interestingly enough, she asked, *“Tomato juice, Sir?”* Such prompted the preacher later to reflect and observe, *“Now what other book could I have been reading that would change a martini into tomato juice?”* This was a good observation. A secular newspaper in hand would not have had this stunning effect. A book with a very sensual cover and filled with pornography would not have had that type of effect. The Bible made the difference. What a Book of tremendous power our beloved Bible is. It is power personified and then some!

An American skeptic once visited Africa. In his travels he noted one of the native Africans reading the Bible. He entered into a forced conversation with the African Bible reader. He told him that over in America where he lived that people no longer read this Book. He said the Americans had rejected that little black book the man was reading. Incidentally, that is largely why America has taken such a moral and spiritual dip in recent decades. We no longer hear and heed God's word for our lives. Until this time the native African had not spoken. Finally he responded by saying in his broken dialect, "*This Book teach me not to eat you!*" Then the American realized rather quickly and fearfully that he was conversing with a former cannibal and were it not for the black Book which he had long despised he might well be this African's next meal. He encouraged him to go right ahead with his reading! Does anyone really think that blatantly infidelic material turned out by Hume, Voltaire, Ingersoll, Paine, Bertrand Russell, Flew, Matson, Barnhart, O'Hare, etc., would have had that sort of ameliorative effect upon a former man eater? The man would have still been a cannibal had he possessed no reading material other than atheistic ravings and rantings.

In an early period of American history when the danger of warfare between the red man and the white man was still quite explosive there was a group of white settlers who were meeting for worship in a little church building on a very sultry Sunday. They had all windows and doors open in the little meetinghouse. An Indian chief and his aroused warriors were stationed nearby. They planned to attack the worshipping band of white settlers and massacre all of them. The scalping of them was to be entire. The plan called for the Indian Chief, Black Eagle, to creep closely and softly to the building and at a given signal from the chief, his warriors were to attack and execute all the white worshippers. As the Indian Chief drew closer and closer he heard the preacher's message. He understood the English language and this is what came to the ears of the Indian chief,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which

do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure of heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:3-12).

To the total surprise of his men who were ready for battle he crept away without giving the expected attack signal. He told his men that if this be the white men's doctrine, we will allow them to live. We will have them come and teach their doctrine to red men. What other book could have had this type of dynamic power? The Book saved their physical lives that dangerous day and possessed power to save their souls as well. What if the preacher had been the type who believed he would mess up his sermon if he injected any Scripture into it? What if he had spent ninety-nine percent of his talking time with secular matters and finally injected one or two verses at the end? The result no doubt would have been decisively different that day had the preacher preached everything that day except God's word. How powerful is God's word.

I once visited with a man who had made a tremendous change in his life style. In describing his past life of sin and now his renewed interest in Christianity he pointed to the family Bible lying before us on the coffee table and said, "*That Book has made the difference in my life.*" Books by atheists have never had this type of wholesome effect on man.

THE BIBLE IS A PRACTICAL BOOK

It deals with men in the here and now in order that it might take them ultimately into the there and then. The Bible deals with man as he is and seeks to make of him what the Almighty in heaven knows he has the definite potential to become. The Bible supplies us with all imperatives that pertain to life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3). It fully equips the man of God in his own personal

growth and development and supplies all he needs in his work for Christ as he touches others with the message of life (II Tim. 3:16,17). It teaches man how to *become* and *remain* a Christian. It points him to heaven on high. In essence it tells man to go to the next turn and take a *right*. Then he is to go *straight*. These are the twofold directions for going to heaven as given tersely in a great sermon I once heard the brilliant Roy Deaver give. Taking the next *right* is intensely inclusive of hearing, faith, repentance, confession of Christ's Deity and immersion in water for remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Going *straight* involved the ardent addition of the Christian graces to our lives (II Pet. 1:5-11). As Christians we watch, worship, wait and work (Mark 13:32-37; John 4:23,24; Luke 12:36ff; Phil. 2:12; I Cor. 15:58). The Bible is definitely designed to touch a man's heartstrings in his will, intellect and emotions. This is what the Psalmist calls the whole heart (Psalm 119:2,10,58,145). In a very real sense the Bible as God gave it is adapted to man as God made him. One of the grand and great tabernacle sermons preached in Nashville, Tennessee, by the princely N. B. Hardeman touched this very theme. Brother Hardeman knew, and so should all of us, that the August One who made man fully equipped the Book to fit man in his basic need for redemptive mercy. There is absolutely no book like the Bible; it enjoys a class all by itself.

THE BIBLE IS A PERPETUAL BOOK

Thousands of years ago Israel's Sweet Psalmist hymned the stately and striking sentiment that Jehovah's "*truth endureth to all generations*" (Psalm 100:5). It has! It shall! In the precious and powerful Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 the Christ conveyed with confidence this momentous message of predictive prophecy, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Matt. 24:35). They have not passed away in the nearly two thousand years since these historic words were initially enunciated by the Messiah across Kidron from Jerusalem. The great statesman prophet, Isaiah, declared that "*the word of our God shall*

stand for ever'' (Isa. 40:8). It has; it shall! From Simon Peter's powerful and practical pen we read,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever...But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you (I Peter 1:23,25).

Kingdoms rise, wane and fall. Men are born and soon go the way of all the earth. Leaders emerge and soon are cut down either by death or by others who forcefully rise to take their places. Humanly produced books are published only to be forgotten very soon. Best sellers of one decade line library shelves of forgotten and ignored books the very next decade. The Book of the ceaseless centuries, in happy and marked contrast, will outlast the sun that now shines upon it and the earth on which it has been placed for the human family to learn it, live it, love it, preach it and defend it. May we drink deeply of it as the water of life. May we eat generously of it as the bread of life. Without question or quibble it is the Blessed Book of the ceaseless centuries.

CONCLUSION

Reader friend, are you a child of God? To become such you must hear Christ, believe in his Deity, repent of all sins, confess courageously faith in Christ as God's only betotten Son and be immersed in water to be saved (Matt. 17:5; John 1:12; Luke 13:3,5; Matt. 10:32; Acts 10:47; Acts 2:38). The Bible still says, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Lord will then add you to his church (Acts 2:41,47). Be faithful till death (Matt. 25:23) and heaven will surely be your eternal inheritance in the sweet by and by (Matt. 10:22). The Bible only makes Christians only.

CHAPTER TWO

Rightly Dividing The Word Of Truth

The words of Paul in II Timothy 2:15 form the Biblical hallmark for a proper division of the Bible in general and the major Biblical covenants and commands in particular. The treasured passage reads in the KJV, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" The ASV of 1901 renders this Pauline directive in these words of weight and wisdom, "*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.*" One gives proper diligence by studying to show himself approved to God; he studies in order that proper diligence might grace his efforts in God's kingdom. In the Goodpasture volume of *GREAT PREACHERS OF TODAY* this princely pulpiter has a great sermon on this tremendous text of Sacred Scripture. He affirms quite prudently that the gospel preacher should study the audience, the manner of his delivery and his motive for preaching.

MISHANDLING AND IMPROPER DIVISION OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

Another Goodpasture observation mixes and mingles the KJV and the ASV quite beautifully and prudently profitable. He affirms that the proper way to handle aright the word of truth is to divide it rightly. To divide it rightly is to handle it aright. Intensely implied in these expressions is the realization that the word of God can be handled wrongfully; the Bible can be wrongly divided. These are not new literary crimes waged against the logically produced and wisely organized Bible. These infamous roots sink deeply into antiquity. False prophets and rebellious leaders of the Old Testament such as Balaam, Korah, Dathan and Abiram in Moses' age, Zedekiah in Elijah's era, Hananiah in Jeremiah's time, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem in Nehemiah's day and a

host too large to mention specifically opposed God's true messengers, rejected God's truth and sought to circumvent it at every infamous opportunity. Throughout the personal ministry of our Lord he fought the traditions of Pharisees and the skepticism of Sadducees. Relative to the former group who mishandled Scripture he stated in Mark 7:7,9,13,

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...Full well ye reject (frustrate-margin) the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition...Making the word of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Relative to the latter group Jesus accused the skeptics of erring because they knew neither Scripture nor recognized the omnipotent power of Jehovah God (Matt. 22:29).

Paul faced with frequency those who handled the word of God improperly. The recently converted Galatians were troubled by a Judaizing element in their midst who sought to pervert God's gospel of grace and turn Christians into practitioners of abolished Judaism again (Gal. 1:6-9). Many, in Paul's day, sought to "*corrupt the word of God*" (II Cor. 2:17). The marginal reference in the ASV of 1901 says, "*making merchandise of the word of God.*" They did the same in Peter's range of apostate acquaintances (II Pet. 2:3). With force and fervency Paul wrote in II Corinthians 4:2, "*But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*" In Peter's day absolutely too many wrested or tortured the Scriptures. This was a mishandling of Scripture; it was a failure to cut the matter straight which is set forth in II Timothy 2:15 of the Greek text. There may well be an allusion to Paul's tentmaking skills. Unless the pieces of cloth were cut straight and according to the pattern for the anticipated tent of usefulness, none of the pieces later would fit. The way many handle (mishandle) the Scriptures, none of the parts fit when they finish! Improper division of the Scripture or a flagrant mishandling of the same constitutes one of the major literary crimes of our day.

But mishandling and improper division of Sacred

Scripture is not just an ancient literary crime. It has its sad and malicious counterparts in our era also. Multitudes of men in our day mishandle the Holy Bible. They do so by denying its divine derivation. They do so by referring to it as a dead letter; they do so by cruelly contending that one can prove anything and everything by the Bible; they do so by adamant affirmations that our beloved and beautiful Bible is filled with myths, legends, folklore and contains jarring disharmonies and clear contradictions. The same men who hurl these disdainful declarations at the Bible would resent someone's saying their words were dead, could be employed to prove anything and everything and contain mere myths, lifeless legends, false folklore, etc. Yet they will do such toward God's word and some who do so will claim, with amazing audacity, to be its loyal friends, promoters and proclaimers! Irreverent translators mishandle it in mass form by the perverted versions of our day in which they have added, subtracted, emended and substituted freely their own preferred theologies for what the original Hebrew and Greek actually set forth. This is the most grievous literary crime of our day; none else comes close to paralleling its far-reaching effects of injury and harm. Others mishandle it by never handling it at all! They ignore it; to them it becomes the forgotten volume and collects dust on a forgotten shelf of their library.

Through ceaseless centuries of the past men have failed to divide rightly Sacred Scripture. In Paul's day they desired to be teachers of the law but understood neither what they said nor wherof they affirmed (I Tim. 1:6,7). Judaizing teachers in Paul's day fought the peerless apostle wherever he went. They utterly failed to divide rightly the word of truth. They flagrantly failed to understand that the Mosaic Covenant was *never* intended to be God's final covenant with men (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:6-13). They failed, sadly failed to see in complete and comprehensive Christianity a new religion—not simply an annex tacked on to the dilapidated house, the fallen economy of abolished Judaism. Men make the same massive mistakes today in these vital areas. They fail to make a proper distinction between Moses and Christ as lawgivers. They could learn much from the Transfiguration account as God enjoined the trio of apostles—Peter,

James and John—to hear his son—Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:5). Yet these articulate, authoritative words were spoken in the very presence of the lawgiver Moses and the princely prophet Elijah. Such people need to read with care and profit the crystal clear import of James 4:12. Yet men by the masses today utterly fail to make proper division between what originated at Sinai with Moses and Israel and what began with might and majesty at Pentecost with Christ and Spiritual Israel or the Lord's unique and united church. Masses of religionists today make no distinction between what was applicable prior to Calvary and what applied this side of Calvary. Men today will take statements that applied exclusively to either the apostles and/or spirit-gifted men and will seek adamantly to make them apply today and always to them in particular! One arrogant religious leader affirmed recklessly that *everything* applicable to apostles in John, chapters 13-16, applied with equal force to him. His opponent in the religious discussion reminded him of Christ's words to the apostleship in John 15:27. Therein the Christ stated to the faithful eleven, "*And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*" Obviously, the twentieth century leader of religious error had not been with the Lord from the beginning of his personal ministry! This would have made him twice Methuselah's age and still living! In that same discussion the man in error was challenged to finish by memory the remainder of several verses quoted in part by the defender of the truth. He was totally unable to do so and did not even know where to go in the Bible to read such requested material. His balloon of equal apostolic power, rank and privilege burst with rapidity under the withering arsenal of potent truth. All such efforts as his but simply underscore the irreverent, improper and reckless ways men handle sacred Scripture today.

How should Sacred Scripture be handled? How should our bright, beautiful and blessed Bible be divided? The remnant of this sermon will give answer briefly and yet profitably, I trust.

RIGHT DIVISION BY THE TWO TESTAMENTS

The Bible may be divided by *testaments*. This is the

most familiar of Biblical divisions. Such is a natural division of Sacred Scripture. It is the most obvious division to a person who pages through the Bible in a surface sort of way. There is the Old Testament which contains thirty-nine books; there is the New Testament which contains twenty-seven books. The Bible speaks of these as the first (the old) and the second (the new) (Heb. 10:9). Hebrews 8:13 speaks of them as the old and the new. The first testament became old when the Lord pronounced it old, removed it and replaced it with the greatly superior new testament. Paul speaks of the new testament in II Corinthians 3:6. In that passage the old is the letter; the new is the spirit. Bible students should realize that the old was not old until God made it old. Man did not make it old; time did not make it old. God made it old and gave the new in its place.

RIGHT DIVISION BY THE THREE DISPENSATIONS

The Bible may be divided *dispensationally*. God has dealt with his human creation in three major periods or dispensations. Some object to calling these periods dispensations. However, Greek scholarship says that the Greek term for dispensation, *oikonomia*, means law, arrangement or administration. Hence, it is not a misuse of the term so to employ it. These three are the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaic Economy and the Christian Dispensation. The first of these was the rule of fathers. Patriarch means father. This was a family religion. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are patriarchal examples in the early morning of time. The Mosaic Economy was a national religion and as such encompassed Israel or Jacob's descendants. The verses in Deuteronomy 5:2-3 make it crystal clear just who were the recipients of this law. Note the repetition of *us* by Moses in these verses, "*The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*" The third is that of the Christian Dispensation. It is world-wide in scope and age-lasting in duration. Matthew 28:19 speaks of all nations; Mark 16:15 is inclusive of every creature. Therefore, it is inclusive of all and everyone since Calvary has been amenable to it. It began

at Pentecost in Acts 2 and ends with the Lord's second advent.

The Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian Dispensations were called respectively the bud, the blossom and the mature fruit by Alexander Campbell. The first of these has been called the Starlight Age, the second the Moonlight Age and the third the Sunlight Age. These definite and descriptive designations are reflective of the amount of light or truth each one presented. Just as earth receives more light (even though it is but reflected) from the moon than from the stars and far more from the sun than from the moon and stars, so each of these reflected an increase in the light (amount of truth) revealed and available for those under it.

RIGHT DIVISION BY MAJOR COVENANTS

The Bible may be divided according to its *major covenants*. Though there are numerous covenants set forth in the Bible yet we have only two that might be styled major covenants or agreements between God and man. The first is the one given to Israel through Moses on Sinai. The second is the one given all humanity through Christ and which began on that memorable Pentecost in Acts 2. The former was preparatory for the latter; the latter is built on the foundation provided by the former. Christianity is far greater and more glorious than was the Mosaic system. We enjoy far better and more beautiful blessings under Christ and Christianity than they did under Judaism. Better is the kingly keynote of the Hebrew epistle. It appears almost an average of once per chapter. The inspired scribe affirms that we have a better covenant, better mediator, better blood and better promises. How strange therefore that any redeemed Hebrew of that first century desired a return to abolished Judaism and its inferior offerings. Yet it is no stranger than the desire of many today who claim to be under Moses' law as well as under Christ's covenant. Far more strange is the premillennial contention that the millennial reign of Christ in literal Jerusalem will actually restore the Mosaic law as binding authority again. Such massive misconceptions as these but underscore the fundamental

fact that multitudes fail to divide rightly and reverently the word of God.

RIGHT DIVISION INTO FIFTEEN MAJOR PERIODS

This is a division of the Bible *periodically*. A debt of thanks is owed the brilliant Roy Deaver for this very practical and accurate division of Biblical history.

(1) The Antediluvian Period. This extends from creation to the flood. Diluvian relates to the Noahic flood and ante means before or prior to it.

(2) The Postdiluvian Period. This covers the era from the Noahic flood to the call of Abraham. Obviously, post means after or subsequent.

(3) The Great Patriarchal Period. This period extends from the Abrahamic call to the descent into Egypt. Other Patriarchs such as Enoch, Noah, etc., had preceded this period but much more is known relative to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the three founding fathers of the Hebrew people. This period also includes Joseph who became God's chosen instrument of physical salvation for the emerging race of his people—the Israelites. Fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises that ultimately consummated in Jesus Christ and the scheme of human redemption fully depended upon the physical survival of Jacob's posterity. This the just and judicious Joseph made sure.

(4) The Egyptian Period. This encompasses the era from the descent into Egypt to the crossing of the Red Sea at the time of the great exodus under Moses and Aaron.

(5) The Period of Wanderings. Covered in this period are the two famous crossings (miraculous in nature) of forbidding bodies of water—that of the Red Sea which released Israel from Egyptian tyranny and the swollen waters of the flooded Jordan some forty years later. The latter placed them into long promised and eagerly anticipated Canaan.

(6) The Period of Conquest. Encompassed in this Biblical period is the military conquest of Canaan which was held by seven pagan nations. It covers the period from the crossing of Jordan till the appointment of the first judge—Othniel. The Lord of hosts on high made possible these seemingly impossible military conquests.

(7) The Period of the Judges. This lengthy period covers the time from the appointment of the first judge—Othniel—to the establishment of the Israelite kingdom during the sunset years of Samuel, last of the fifteen judges and under the promising leadership of tall, stalwart Saul. Judges has been called "*The Dark Ages Of Hebrew History.*"

(8) The Period of the United Kingdom. This era covers the one hundred and twenty years of Saul, David and Solomon as kings respectively of the twelve tribes. Each reigned forty years. This period begins with the establishment of the united kingdom and ends with the division immediately subsequent to Solomon's apostate demise.

(9) The Period of the Dual Kingdom. This covers the ebb and flow years from the division of the kingdom to the fall of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom in 722 B. C. Each of the two kingdoms had nineteen kings. David's line retained the throne in Judah, save for Athaliah's short usurpation, while several dynasties emerged, reigned briefly and faded as touching monarchical leadership over Israel or the Northern Kingdom.

(10) The Period of Judah alone. This encompasses the turbulent era from Samaria's fall to the collapse of Judah and Jerusalem about one hundred thirty-six years later or in 586 B. C. The fall of Judah was at the determined hands of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon.

(11) The Period of the Captivity. This covers the humiliating era to Hebrew pride and yet to their ultimate profit spiritually from Jerusalem's fall to Cyrus' decree that permitted any and all willing Israelites to return to Palestine, rebuild their temple and re-establish their nation. This cured their idolatrous inclinations permanently.

(12) The Period of the Restoration. These are the years from the decree of Cyrus to the end of Nehemiah's work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and Malachi's penning of the final book of the Old Testament.

(13) The Inter-Testament Period. This era covers some four centuries plus from Nehemiah's work and Malachi's writing to the announced birth of John the Baptist. Many students of the Bible know but little of this era and yet knowledge of this period enhances a greater acquaintance

with numerous New Testament events. Many Bibles, in the section of Biblical aids, will cover this period. Time spent with such is prudently prosecuted.

(14) The Period of Christ's Incarnation. This covers from the births of John and Jesus, separated by only six months, to Pentecost. About one-third of a century encompasses this intently interesting era of signally significant events.

(15) The Period of the Lord's Church. This final Biblical period includes the years from Pentecost to the close of Revelation. The gospel of Christianity is God's final dispensation. There will not be other earthly dispensations as the visionary premillennialists seek to make out for their rapture of saints, tribulation for the wicked and then a full thousand year reign of Christ in literal Jerusalem on David's earthly throne.

Relative to these fifteen Biblical divisions Brother Roy Deaver has well said, "*These constitute the framework upon which is fastened every Biblical personage and every Biblical event*" (*HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE*, p. 9). This Deaver declaration is well stated!

RIGHT DIVISION ACCORDING TO THE BIBLICAL BOOKS

The Bible can be divided by its *books*. The Old Testament is first composed of *Law*. These books are Genesis through Deuteronomy, penned by the mighty Moses, and frequently styled the Pentateuch. The second section is *History*. There are twelve books in this section of Scripture and are inclusive of Joshua through Esther. Some one thousand years of significant events tone and tenor this period. *Poetry* is the third division and includes Job through Song of Solomon. There are five books in this lovely literary segment of the Old Testament. The fourth and fifth sections are *Major* and *Minor Prophets*. There are four major prophets and five books—Isaiah through Daniel. There are twelve minor prophets and twelve of their preserved books. These include Hosea through Malachi. The major are not more important than the minor but, as a rule, they prophesied much longer and their prophetic works are considerably longer. Either Isaiah or Jeremiah is considerably longer in actual pages

than are the combined twelve books of the minor prophets. Hence, the major and minor designations are quite definite and descriptive.

The New Testament books contain a quartet of basic and beautiful categories. The first four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are *biographical* in their noble nature. Vividly and concisely they describe the life and labors of the Lord while incarnated. They are designed to produce faith in Jesus' Deity. Acts is a thrilling account of *conversions*. It answers in commands and actual examples the basic query, "*What must I do to be saved?*" This book is inspired church history for a quarter of a century. Then we have the twenty-one *epistles* or *letters*. Fourteen are specific, i.e., written to specific peoples (congregations) or persons. Seven are general in nature. These books of Romans through Jude describe the comprehensive and courageous challenge of Christian living. They enjoin on each loyal Christian the need to watch, wait, worship and work (Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:36; John 4:23,24; Phil. 2:12; I Cor. 15:58; Eph. 2:10). The fourth and final section of the New Testament is Revelation. It exhibits the *conflict between error and truth* with the former's being put down and the latter's being triumphant in permanent fashion at last. The theme of Revelation says to tried and tested Christians, "*If you will overcome, then you may ultimately come over and live with God.*"

THE BASIC NEED AND RESPONSIBILITY TO DIVIDE RIGHTLY THE WORD OF TRUTH

Unless people rightly divide the word of truth, they will never understand the Bible. They will be like those in I Timothy 1:7 who understand "*neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*" They will be like those about whom Paul wrote in II Timothy 3:7, "*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" They will never be able to arrive at what they must do to be saved, how to remain saved, how to worship God under the Christian covenant and how to prepare for death, judgment and ultimately a vast eternity. They will never know how to distinguish statements in the New Testament that apply to the provisional (the miraculous period of revelation and confirmation of truth) and the permanent

(that applicable to all of us throughout the gospel dispensation). People who never learn how to divide rightly the word of truth will never be in position to teach the truth with accuracy to others. They will be like the denominational preacher who was once taught the distinction between the Mosaic Economy and Christianity. In response he told his teacher, a faithful Christian, "*I have preached for forty years and never realized this truth till today.*" How utterly pathetic and immeasurably sad!

THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW HAS BEEN ABROGATED

Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets and then remove this system (Matt. 5:17; Heb. 10:9). In Romans 7:1-4 Paul taught deadness to the old law and marriage to Christ and Christianity. People can no more be subject to two lawgivers—Moses and Christ—than could the woman of verses two and three be married to two men simultaneously and with God's approval. The woman would be in physical adultery; the religious subject would be in spiritual adultery. James affirms one lawgiver—not two (James 4:12).

In Roman 7:6 Paul affirms a discharge or release from the law of Moses. We, he contends, are under newness of spirit (Christianity) and not oldness of letter (Judaism).

In II Corinthians 3:6 he affirms, "*Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*"

In clear, concise and courageous fashion Paul affirms in Galatians 5:2,4 that a return to old, abolished Judaism by any or all Galatian Christians subtracted all profit in Christ from their redeemed souls. Christ might as well have never died for their sins if they return to Judaism. Furthermore, such a return to the abrogated system of bondage equated a falling away from Christ (Gal. 5:4—ASV). Galatians 5:4, all by itself, is a thorough refutation of the impossibility of apostasy as taught adamantly by cold, cruel and calloused Calvinism.

In Ephesians 2:14-16 Paul affirms the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile—the law of Moses—in order that heaven might

make of twain one new man in Christ by reconciliation of both to God in one body—the church of Christ. If the law of Moses is still in effect, then reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Christ and his church is not yet possible and will not be possible as long as Moses' system remains in effect!

In the fervency of crystal clear language Paul affirms that the law has been nailed to Calvary. To Christians at Colosse he wrote, "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;...*" (Col. 2:14). In the subsequent context Paul enjoins the Colossian Christians not to allow any man to bind on them the abolished relics of the Mosaic Economy. Note his decisive contrast between Judaism and Christianity, "*Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*" (Col. 2:17). Judaism is the shadow; Christianity is the body. It is sad, immeasurably sad that many today actually prefer the shadow (the law of Moses) to the body (the church of Christ or Christianity). This is somewhat like a husband who has been away from home a long time and comes in during the latter part of the day. His wife meets him on the driveway but falls upon the concrete to embrace his shadow instead of him who casts the shadow—her husband. Colossians 2:14-17 teaches that Christ blotted out or removed the law of Moses. Obviously then, that which is blotted out—the *whole* Mosaic Economy—is *not now* in effect almost the whole religious world to the contrary notwithstanding.

The entire epistle of Hebrews was written to show the superiority of Christ over Moses as lawgiver, his priesthood over the Aaronic priesthood, his covenant over the fleshly covenant of Moses, of Christianity over Judaism and to keep fickle, veering and wavering Hebrews from going back to old abolished Judaism.

Though we are not under Moses and the Sinaitic Dispensation yet there is a precious and pre-eminent profitableness of the Old Testament. The new can be neither understood nor properly appreciated minus the old. The old is the new concealed; the new is the old revealed. We can observe by Old Testament perusal how the gracious God of glory patiently and perfectly prepared the scheme of human redemption through a people (the

Hebrews), a place (Canaan) and a person (the Messiah). The New Testament complements and completes what is begun in the Old Testament. We can learn patience and hope from Old Testament examples (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:1ff).

WE CANNOT BE UNDER BOTH OLD TESTAMENT LAW AND NEW TESTAMENT LAW

Were we amenable to both it would necessitate being under two lawgivers and this James clearly negates by affirming our being under one lawgiver and one only (James 4:12). One of the great lessons of the transfiguration is that Moses has had his day as deliverer and lawgiver. Elijah has had his day as prophet to be heard and heeded. Now it is imperative to hear and heed Jesus Christ—God's Son (Matt. 17:1ff). The opening chapters of Hebrews affirm that God now speaks to us by Jesus Christ his Son—not his servant—Moses (Heb. 1:1; 3:5). We are to make sure that we refuse not him that spake from heaven (Heb. 12:25). Moses commanded that when Christ came *he* (the Christ—not *both* of them) and *he alone* was to be heard (Deut. 18:15-19; Cf. Acts 3:22,23). Jesus took away the first in order that he might establish the second (Heb. 10:9,10). Paul makes clear in Romans 7:1-4 that just as the woman who is married to two men simultaneously is guilty of physical adultery, so the person who seeks to be married to both Moses and his law and to Christ and his law simultaneously is guilty of spiritual adultery. In clear, courageous and concise apostolic argument Paul exhibits the fundamental fact in Galatians 3:22ff that we are no longer under the schoolmaster or tutor (Mosaic mandates) but have been baptized *into* Christ and in him alone we have salvation.

The law of Christ went into effect when people were first commanded to hear and heed the commands of the newly coronated King of kings and Lord of lords. This is Acts 2; this is that memorable Pentecost—the beautiful birthday of God's church on earth.

WHAT ABOUT THE INTERIM BETWEEN THE CRUCIFIXION AND PENTECOST?

This is a frequently asked question. It has reference to

a short interval of some fifty days. Let it be kept firmly and fully fixed in mind as a matter of simple judicial procedure that the provisions of a repealed law extend to the time the new law that succeeds it becomes operative. When the Jewish Passover was offered, its provisions lasted till the next Passover or, in this case of transition, till Pentecost. The benefits of Judaism lasted for the Jew until Christianity began. It has long been my personal understanding and deep conviction that the benefits of Patriarchy lasted for the uncircumcised (Gentiles) until they became amenable to the law of Christ beginning in Acts 10 at the time of Cornelius' conversion. Neither of these groups has ever been under more than one law simultaneously.

In reality no Jew on earth during this short interval of fifty days—not even the apostles themselves—realized that the Christ had nailed Judaism to Calvary. Remember that the women (disciples of Jesus) on the sabbath (the day subsequent to Calvary) rested according to the commandment (Luke 23:56). They refused to violate the sabbath day, technically nailed to Calvary the very day before, to complete the final anointing of the Lord's body subsequent to his death on galling Golgotha. The sad task of his total anointing was only partially completed on Friday afternoon due to the coming so quickly of the sabbath.

CONCLUSION

How very vital and fundamental that religious people know how to divide rightly and handle aright God's precious word of saving truth.

Reader friend, remember it was Jesus who commanded belief and baptism in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). It was Peter who commanded repentance and baptism for (unto) the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Today is the day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7,8). Today, will you not hear Christ, believe in his Deity, repent of your sins, confess Christ and be immersed in water for or unto the remission of your sins? Then be faithful till dying breath and heaven's door will surely stand ajar for you in yonder's world (Matt. 10:22; Rev. 22:14). The Bible only makes Christians only.

CHAPTER THREE

The Love Of The Cross

Christ, Christianity and the Cross of Calvary all begin with the same letter in our English alphabet or that of C. However, this thrilling trio of majestic terms has far more in common than alphabetical affinity. There also is a mutual dependence among these stately terms. Had there been no Christ there would have been no cross and obviously no Christianity. Had there been the Christ but no cross Christianity would have never been translated from its heavenly pattern to its earthly reality of spiritual wealth. Christ and the cross made possible Christianity's establishment and spread in the book of Acts.

Since love is the holy heartbeat of Christianity, there obviously also is a loyal link between love and the cross. Elaborating on this lovely link will be the beautiful burden of this Scriptural sermon.

LAYING A SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

John, the apostle of love, had Calvary, the Christ and the love of God on his magnanimous mind when he penned these words of weight and wisdom in John 3:14-17,

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

In John 15:13 the soon-to-be-crucified captain of our salvation laid down this precious principle, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" Jehovah's Son of love would not only do

this for his friends but even for his enemies. The Bible says in that profound epistle directed to the Romans,

For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

In his preaching and teaching Paul never strayed far from the cross of Christ. It was that in which he found glory (Gal. 6:14). Calvary was the heartbeat of what he wrote in Colossians 1:20, which states, "*And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*"

THE DUAL INTENT OF OUR STUDY

Before Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God, went to Calvary and faced brutal Golgotha, there was no conceivable connection between the kingly term of love and a rugged, humiliating and deeply despised cross of cold, cruel, calloused and uninviting wood reared in infamy and with a condemned man nailed thereupon. Yet since Calvary and the Christ who died thereupon, the cross has become the greatest single symbol of Deity's remarkable love and matchless affection for lost, ruined and wrecked humanity. This sermon has as its beautiful burden the heroic effort to link love and Calvary. Hence, a duet of primary concepts will be impressed upon our minds. (1) The first touches *DEITY, THE CROSS AND REAL LOVE*. (2) The other encompasses *HUMANITY, THE CROSS AND REAL LOVE*. Reverential logic demands a discussion of Deity's viewpoint first and foremost.

DEITY, CALVARY AND GENUINE LOVE

Calvary was no afterthought with God the Father and Christ the Son pernicious premillennialism to the contrary notwithstanding. The millennial mania that has hit our country and other nations of the wide world *never* has had any real love, genuine respect and deep concern for Calvary. The cross just will not fit their idolatrous worship of crass and gross materialism. Materialism is the

system in which this malicious movement finds its chief glory and continual delight. In fact materialism is an accurate alias of both historic premillennialism and the newer and more popular facet today of dispensational premillennialism.

Predictive prophecy pointed to the cross. Psalm 22, if written by the Shepherd King as the striking inscription so attributes it, was written a full millennium before Calvary became a reality for God's Son. Yet this amazing, predictive Psalm is written as though one were an actual eye and ear witness to what was seen and heard on Execution Hill just outside a Jerusalem wall that fateful Friday. The Psalm actually opens with one of the precise pronouncements God's Prince of peace and the Atoning Redeemer of the race would utter on the hill of his execution that dark and gloomy Friday, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Psalm 22:1; Cf. Mark 15:34). Furthermore, this psalm contains some words that the insensitive passers-by would hurl into the mangled face and form of the crucified Christ during his six hours on Calvary such as making fun of his tremendous trust in God and illogically inferring that if God *really* loved the dying one on the central cross and claimed him as Son, that he would intervene and mercifully lift him promptly out of his pain and humiliation (Psalm 22:6-8; Cf. Matt. 27:39-44). This psalm portrays a piercing of both hands and feet, a point the New Testament does not mention directly (Psalm 22:16). This precious psalm depicts the parting of his garments and the cheap gambling process by which future ownership of his vesture (the seamless coat) would be determined (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23,24). Writing some centuries later the Messianic prophet Isaiah said of his predicted crucifixion,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6).

Please observe and note carefully that Isaiah describes scenes centuries ahead and yet employs past tense again

and again! This well might be called the "*prophetic*" or "*predictive*" past! Predictive prophecy in the Bible is so certain that it is spoken of as already fulfilled when yet far in the future. This is amazingly amazing!

Jesus Christ recognized the valiant validity of these and other predictive prophecies of the Old Testament. He knew that they would be fulfilled in him. Hence we read,

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled (Matt. 26:52-56).

This probing passage speaks clearly and concisely relative to his death on Calvary. Yet twice therein mention is made toward fulfillment of Scriptures. Jesus again recognized this just subsequent to his mighty resurrection as he declares,

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:... (Luke 24:44-46).

The cross was in Deity's plans and purposes all along; the Jews, by rejecting the Christ and crucifying their own Messiah, did not catch the Godhead off guard as pernicious premillennialism has long contended. In fact the God and Christ which materialistic premillennialism has carved out for its acceptance are *not* the Father and Son of Holy Scriptures by any stretch of truth.

Do you wish to know in a crystal clear way just how much God the Father loves you and all humanity? Then take a long, lingering look at Calvary. Calvary is Jehovah's greatest sermon on how deep is his affection and how far-reaching is his majestic love for ruined and

wrecked mankind. "*The Golden Text of the Bible,*" to which we have already alluded in this lesson, states so sublimely, "*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). Paul connects love and Calvary in the profound passage of Romans 5:5-8. So does the statesman prophet in Isaiah 53:6. The person who keeps his eyes glued to and riveted on Calvary and his ear in continuous tune with the message of redemption that flowed therefrom will never forget how rich and deep is the Father's love for us.

Just how much does Christ love our race, a race that has fallen by sin and transgression into ruin? Do not forget Calvary in seeking the answer for this question. The cross of Calvary is Christ's greatest sermon on how deep his love for us really is. But the Scriptures portray it far more excellently and eloquently than can uninspired, mortal man. John the Baptist said of the Christ in John 1:29, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" John 1:36 also styles him as God's Lamb. Sacrifice is in the forefront of this graphic expression and this means Calvary. John 3:16 not only tells us how much the Father loved the world but also how much the Son likewise loved the world. The Father gave; the Son was the *given* one or the *gift*. The Father sent; the Son was the *sent* one. Both Father and Son deeply desired to keep man from perishing. Both desired heavenly redemption for man. John 3:17 so attests. John 15:13 stresses, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"

Paul had much to say relative to Christ and the love he exhibited at Calvary. He wrote,

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father...I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 1:4; 2:20).

Paul penned a strikingly similar sentiment to the faithful gospel preacher Titus by declaring, "*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good*

works” (Tit. 2:14). Another sweeping statement to the same effect occurs in Hebrews 2:9. Therein we read, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* Later in this same treatise of truth we read, *“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate”* (Heb. 13:12).

The aged apostle John joined the ascending chorus of this same great group of apostolic voices in connecting Calvary and Deity’s love and what that exhibition of unmatched and unparalleled love has done for the sons and daughters of men. He wrote in his first epistle, frequently called *“The Epistle of Love,”*

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And 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 (I John 2:1,2).

In Revelation 1:5 the Banished Prophet on rocky Patmos wrote, *“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”* There is no conceivable way of severing Christ’s love for humanity from his amazing sacrifice on Calvary. It truly is his greatest sermon on love. The mixed-up world of our day relative to love could learn much about this king of all emotions from Calvary.

The cross likewise is the Spirit’s greatest revelation of just how deep Deity’s love for lost man really is. All we know factually about Calvary and the Christ who died thereupon comes from Sacred Scripture. The Holy Spirit is Revealer of all inspired truth. Paul wrote, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (II Tim. 3:16,17). The Divine Agent for this inspiration is the third member of the Godhead, i.e., the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:13, *“Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words”* (ASV). Peter joins Paul by expressing the same

basic and beautiful sentiment. He wrote in II Peter 1:21 how holy men of God spake being moved (or borne along) by the Holy Spirit. Each prediction of Calvary in the Old Testament was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Each vital fact relative to Calvary about which we read in the New Testament has been recorded by the inspiration and infallibility of that infinite Spirit of Holiness—the third member of the Sublime Three. Each apostolic allusion to the cross in the sermons in Acts and the recorded messages in the twenty-one epistles are there by the inspiration of the Spirit of truth. What it means to preach Christ and him crucified is spelled out in clear and concise detail by the Holy Spirit within Sacred Scripture. Within the Bible the Spirit of God has revealed many things to us. There is no greater truth that he has revealed than the love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as eloquently exhibited in the supreme sacrifice on Calvary of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. Registering attention toward and emphasis upon Calvary is of precious priority to the Spirit of Jehovah God.

Germane to this point is what Jesus Christ has done for the cross. Jesus truly made the cross what it is in our minds; the cross did not make Jesus Christ what he is. He was already God's Son and God was with us in human flesh before either hand or either foot was spiked to the old rugged cross. Look at what the lovely Jesus has done for the once unlovely cross. Look at what the glorious Christ has done for the once inglorious cross. The cross is suggestive of Jesus and Jesus alone. How is it when we observe the word cross, hear someone employ that word or see a picture of one in a religious book or periodical that we think of Jesus and Jesus alone? We do not think of either thief that shared his right and left hands on Golgotha's hill of execution that long, gloomy Friday. We do not think of any of the unfortunate victims that died on Roman crosses prior to Christ's crucifixion or those who died thereupon subsequent to his demise on Execution Hill just outside a Jerusalem wall. Mention the cross and only one person comes to mind and that is Jesus our Blessed Lord and Saviour.

Have you considered the fact that Jesus is not the

only leader of men who suffered and suffered greatly and even to the point of death by the evil contemporaries of his era? Yet any and all of such sufferers and the means by which they were plunged into death are nowhere comparable to Christ and Calvary. Socrates, the great Greek philosopher and renowned teacher some four centuries before Christianity came to earth, was put to death by the drinking of the fatal cup of hemlock poisoning. Yet when we see poison today our minds do not revert automatically and only to Socrates. Why? He was not God's only begotten Son; he did not die for the redemption of the race. Bullits from guns of arrogant and amoral assassins took the lives of Presidents Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy. All four occurred in one century or from 1865 to 1963. Yet when you and I see a gun, a bullet or pictures of such, we do not think of Lincoln at Ford's theater in Washington or of Kennedy on a heavily crowded street in Dallas, Texas, in November of 1963. Why? Because these men were not the only begotten Sons of God. Their deaths, though tragic, demoralizing and very sad to a touched and concerned nation and world that respected them and honored the high office they held, did not atone for humanity's sins. Not that first one of them was Immanuel or God with us. John Brown was an American of the nineteenth century who possessed a burning determination to rid our land of infamous slavery. To hasten about such he attacked a Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry in Virginia. For this he was arrested later and ultimately hanged for it. Many viewed his death as martyrdom for a cause. Ralph Waldo Emerson said Brown had made "*the gallows glorious as the cross.*" But in this Emerson was wrong—glaringly and grievously so!! John Brown was not Jesus Christ; the gallows on which he perished did not equate Calvary and the Christ who died for an entire world's sins. The gallows have never been nor will they ever be glorious as the cross. It is nothing short of blasphemy to contend for such.

By his great love and his sacrifice for sins Jesus transformed the cross into the stately symbol of his great love for ruined, lost and wrecked humanity. Such is Deity's link of love with Calvary.

HUMANITY, CALVARY AND REAL LOVE

A gospel preacher once observed a cross as a steeple on a church building and asked his small children what it was. One child said it looked like a plus. In a deep sense the cross is the greatest plus ever made for hopeless, hapless and helpless man. It is sad—immeasurably sad—that many view the cross of Christ as a meaningless minus and not as a powerful, profitable and precious plus. The latter is our firmly entrenched position in this sermon.

Near the end of his earthly ministry our blessed Lord set forth his deep design for the drawing power of Calvary. What he would accomplish on Calvary's brow would serve as a marvelous means of motivating people to be drawn to him and his way of life. The Bible declares in John 12:32-34,

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

Look at the magnetic power that Jesus possessed before Calvary. He drew to himself fishermen, a tax collector and a former zealot. Attracted to him were the social outcasts and the reputed sinners of that day. Mary Magdalene was attracted to the one who cast out the seven demons that formerly inhabited her. The rich young ruler was drawn to him. Nicodemus came to pay him a visit by night. He had been deeply impressed by this acknowledged Teacher who had come from God and had performed miraculously in the Holy City area.

However, the number who were drawn to him subsequent to Calvary are even more impressive. There were the three thousand of Pentecost. The number came to be about five thousand a short time later. An Ethiopian nobleman obeyed the gospel in Acts 8. Earlier in Acts 8 we read of Simon, the former sorcerer in Samaria, who believed and was baptized. The brilliant young Pharisee by the name of Saul was drawn into the ranks of the militant discipleship of the Messiah in Acts 9. Cornelius, a Roman military man and leader of some

one hundred men, became his convert in Acts 10. Sergius Paulus, a ruling official on the isle of Cyprus in Acts 13, became a believer and stood in amazement at the doctrine or teaching of the Lord. Lydia, a successful business woman from Thyatira but who was merchandising in Phillippi, became a Christian in Acts 16. In that very same chapter the jailor of Philippi and his entire family became converts to the crucified Christ. So many had obeyed the gospel in Rome, the capital of the Empire, that they possessed a faith which was spoken of admirably throughout the whole world. Felix, a Roman governor of Judaea, desired to hear about the faith in Christ though he failed to obey the gospel when he did hear Paul preach it. King Agrippa listened to an imprisoned apostle in Acts 26 and was almost persuaded to become a Christian as the KJV renders Acts 26:28. There were saints in Caesar's household according to the declaration of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:22. Truly Calvary and the Christ who died thereupon have exerted great drawing power upon the heartstrings of humanity. All classes of men and women and boys and girls have been drawn to him and his way of dedicated discipleship and holy living. Such has been the noble nature of their devotion when they once knew him that they have lived for him, defended him against any and all enemies and died rather than recant the religion of their Redeemer—the Christ.

But what about us in more modern times? Have we been drawn to him? Have we been obediently moved by the tug of Calvary and its drawing power upon our heartstrings? Do we really love the cross? This is the question in a nutshell. How about you? On the surface you might answer with a quick affirmation. But let us drive a little more deeply into the momentous matter. Are you a Christian? Have you ever obeyed the gospel? If you have not, how can you really affirm any love for Calvary and him who died thereupon? Can one be said to love Calvary who refuses to hear him who died thereupon (Rom. 10:17; Matt. 17:5)? Can one really be said to love the cross if he refuses adamantly to accept the overwhelmingly and abundantly proved Deity of the one who died thereupon (John 8:24)? Can one really be said to be an admirer of the cross and of him who died

thereupon if he has *never* paid any heed to what Jesus actually said in Luke 13:3,5 relative to repentance? If one has never sweetened his lips with the courageous confession of Jesus Christ and his Sonship to Jehovah God, can it really be the case that he has any real affection for Calvary? If one has never paid any attention at all to what the authoritative Jesus declared relative to baptism in Mark 16:16, what Peter uttered in Acts 2:38 and wrote later in I Peter 3:21 and what Paul taught relative to Great Commission immersion in Romans 6:3,4 and Galatians 3:27, can it really be the case that he loves Calvary and the Christ who died thereupon? If so, how?

But words of weight and wisdom need also to be addressed to all who have obeyed the gospel in the past and now consider themselves Christians. Can it really be said that any of us loves the cross unless we are faithful and fervent in our Christianity, unless we are zealous for his holy cause? Remember what Jesus said about being faithful till death and even to the point of death? Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 10:22, "*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*" To both faithful and good servants in the parable of the talents the Lord said, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*" (Matt. 25:21,23). To suffering saints in Smyrna the Great Examiner of the seven Asiatic churches declared, "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). Quite literally, this Revelation charge means even to the point of dying as a martyr for the Messiah.

Regardless of what you have been and done in the past as a Christian, if you have allowed your light to be extinguished as a Christian disciple, then your love for Calvary likewise is gone. It is imperative that you revive that love for Calvary and for him who died thereupon? You surely will be glad in eternity that you did and so will all your redeemed colleagues in the heavenly hereafter.

Can it really be the case with any of us that we love Calvary and the Christ who died thereupon if we are not doing all we can to win souls for his blessed cause? Solomon, Wisest of the Ages, in Proverbs 11:30 termed as wise the winner of souls. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19,20 charges us to take the message of the Messiah to all nations. Those taught are to be baptized into the name of the Sublime Three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Mark 16:15 charges the disciples of Jesus to go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. According to the divine dictates of Luke 24:47 repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Winning souls is a part of fruit-bearing. Jesus said his mission was to seek and save that which is lost (Luke 19:10). His mission of seeking and saving the lost—by the gospel of course—becomes our mission. We read in John 15:8, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”* Soul winning is part of fruit bearing but not all that is comprehended therein by any means. The alien sinner, the one who has never obeyed the gospel, needs to be won initially for Christ. The erring Christian, the one who has obeyed but has forsaken his first love and has gone back into the world, needs to be brought back to the Lord the second time under the auspices of Jehovah’s second law of pardon. James had this very type person in mind when he wrote, *“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (James 5:19,20). So did Paul when he wrote, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1). One’s love for Calvary is linked very intimately with his passion for lost souls. How does our love line up with this as the measuring stick?

We cannot love Calvary unless we love that which is linked to the cross. First and foremost this would include the Lord Jesus Christ himself for it was he who died upon that old rugged cross more than nineteen centuries ago. Just how serious is it to fail to love the Lord Jesus

Christ? It is very serious according to Paul's inspired judgment. He wrote in I Corinthians 16:22, "*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathama Maranatha.*" That anathema here is the same word Paul used in Galatians 1:8 where the man who dares to preach any other gospel is to be anathema (ASV) or accursed (KJV). The Maranatha seemingly refers to the coming of the Lord. What if Jesus comes the second time and finds your *hating* him instead of *loving* him and *working* for that blessed cause that sent him to Calvary initially? In such a case as that it would have been better for you never to have been born than to be found in that miserable, immeasurably sad and unprepared condition. The producer of this volume and its publisher love your soul and pray that you will not allow this to happen to you. It is deadly serious business to fail to love Calvary and him who died thereupon.

Calvary also is linked to the new covenant or testament of Jesus Christ. What is our assurance of this lovely link? The Bible! Jesus himself stated, "*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26:28). The Bible says in Hebrews 13:20, "*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.*" Tell me your feelings, your real feelings about the entire New Testament and I know your real feelings relative to Calvary. You cannot have any respect and reverence for Calvary unless you love, revere and help defend the New Testament with every fervent fiber of your being. There is no way we can divorce Calvary from the blood that was shed thereupon. Paul connects blood and Calvary by saying, "*And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven*" (Col. 1:20). Calvary was surely at the very forefront of Peter's inspired statement when he wrote to Christians in the five provinces of Asia Minor and declared with force and finality,

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (I Pet. 1:18-19).

How you feel about the blood is really an accurate index as to how you really feel about the cross of Calvary. Unless we love and revere his blood we cannot love and revere Calvary and him who died thereupon.

The Bible associates Calvary and the church. Paul told the eldership of Ephesus at Miletus in 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*" (ASV). The precious, purchased price of the church was the blood shed at Calvary. Some years later Paul wrote the Ephesians and said,

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

How do you really feel about the Lord's church? This query does not concern man-made churches but does pertain to the one that Christ established and the only one he has ever had any connection with at all. Unless you love and cherish that church that is portrayed upon the pages of the New Testament, you cannot love Calvary.

Calvary and baptism are connected. Paul states in Romans 6:3,4,

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Those who think that baptism is unessential have to conclude that Calvary likewise is unessential. Those who poke fun at the essentiality of baptism in Jehovah's plan of redemption likewise poke fun at Calvary and its essentiality to salvation. Regardless of what denominational preachers say to the contrary, no one, absolutely no one can have *right* feelings about Calvary and *wrong* feelings relative to baptism (immersion in water) which connects the obeying sinner with Christ's blood.

Calvary and the Lord's Supper are linked with each

other by the Lord. In Matthew 26:27,28 he said, "*Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*" Paul proclaims in I Corinthians 11:25,26,

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

People who have little or no time and appreciation for the Lord's Supper really have little or no time for Calvary; in fact they have *no* appreciation for either Calvary or him who died thereupon nearly twenty centuries ago.

There is no conceivable way of separating Calvary from God's initial and continuous system of forgiveness. Jesus linked Calvary, his blood and remission of sins in Matthew 26:28. John also writes,

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

Despise Calvary and one despises Jehovah's system of salvation for every sin that has blotted his record in God's infinite mind.

Calvary is connected with our going to heaven. The Aged Prophet of Patmos wrote,

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:13,14).

Despise going to heaven and you despise Calvary; despise Calvary and you despise the heavenly hereafter.

CONCLUSION

How exceedingly deep and broadly comprehensive is Deity's rich love for the cross of Calvary and our rich response to that eloquent and exhibited love. Truly, this forms the holy heartbeat of Christianity.

If you are not *now* a Christian, will you not hear Christ, believe in his Deity, repent of your sins, confess faith in Jesus Christ as God's only begotten Son and be immersed for remission of sins (Matt. 17:5; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16)? Then be faithful the remnant of your life and heaven's door will surely stand ajar for you in that eternal world yet to be (Matt. 25:21,23). But remember that it was Jesus who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

Who Is Jesus Christ?

As indicated in the title of this sermon we shall be contemplating the noble nature of our blessed Lord. Our approach will be both negative and positive. Misconceptions will be refuted relative to him; accurate concepts of him will be given an ascending emphasis. Too frequently he is the *Misunderstood* Jesus. Brother H. Leo Boles, one of our greatest preachers, writers, educators the first half of the twentieth century, used to preach a great sermon on "*The Misunderstood Christ.*" Desperately, our world in general and the religious society in particular need the *Understood* Jesus Christ in their hearts, upon their lips and in their lives.

We ask who he was not and who he was. Many no doubt will think it strange that an inquiry is made at all relative to his identity. They perhaps would ask in response, "*Why raise a query like this? Does not everyone of our day know who Jesus was, who the Christ is?*" But quite factually and frankly he was not understood while here; he has not been understood during the twenty centuries since his departure from Olivet to the Palace of the Universe and David's throne in high and holy heaven above (Acts 1 and 2); he is not understood now; future citizens on earth will continue to misunderstand his nature, misapply his teaching and mishandle his will and way for men on earth as past and present people have and do.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE MESSIAH IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Men of the first century did not really know who he was. Three crystal clear passages exhibit the proof of this and many more could be given. The colorful and courageous conversation between the Christ and his apostles in the midst of rock-founded and rock-ribbed Caesarea Philippi is our first case in point. In Matthew 16:13 Jesus inquired of his disciples relative to his

identity. As rendered in the ASV of 1901 the question was, "*Who do men say that the Son of man is?*" His apostolic colleagues were in perfect position to know what the masses were saying relative to the emerging prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. They had been sent out on the Limited or Restricted Commission in Matthew 10. During those travels they came face to face with the opinion levels throughout the land of the Jews. Their response is, "*Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets*" (Matt. 16:14—ASV). Simply because people give a surface answer off the top of their heads relative to a religious issue does not mean that it is a right answer. All these were wrong, grievously wrong responses on the part of the Palestinian people at large. Those who said he was John the Baptist were wrong; he was not John risen from the dead with his head back on his shoulders again (Cf. Matt. 14:1ff; Mark 6:14ff). He was not Elijah, the courageous and colorful Tishbite who was contemporary with wicked Ahab and notorious Jezebel. Those who so contended placed him in the wrong category. He was not the weeping prophet Jeremiah, a seventh and sixth century prophet from Anathoth of Judah. Those who so contended were sadly misinformed about the Messiah. Others were less sure but were equally misinformed also. They simply viewed him as an unnamed prophet. Some people feel there is spiritual safety in seeking out several opinions in the realm of religion. However, it did not work that way in this serious situation. All answers were wrong. All combined were still wrong! When Jesus became more personal and inquired what the apostolic consensus was Peter acted as the quickly spoken representative. He declared, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:16). This constituted the good, the great and the glorious confession of Christ's Deity that millions have made subsequently in conversion to this Jesus. With this answer Jesus was pleased. By implication we know the foregoing answers displeased him. He placed a beautiful benediction upon Peter by declaring, "*Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 16:17). Jesus pronounced no blessing and extended no benediction upon those who misjudged him to be

John, Jeremiah, Elijah or simply a returned but unnamed prophet of the remote past.

A second Scripture that comes to mind is Matthew 22:41-45 wherein we read,

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

The Lord's question was an appropriate one indeed. Their answer is interesting to analyze. In fact their answer that Christ was David's Son was not nearly as comprehensive as truth demanded. That only explained his humanity which they willingly acknowledged. It said nothing relative to his Deity which is meant by the Lord's reference to his being David's Lord. This was the part they stoutly refused to acknowledge. The only way that Jesus could have been both David's Son and David's Lord is found in the rich realization that he is both divine and human, both Deity and humanity. He was both Son of man and Son of God while he tabernacled here for one third of a century. This dual nature of perfect Deity and perfect humanity all merged into one great, good and glorious personality was a fundamental point his enemies refused either to consider or acknowledge. They really did not know the answer to the Lord's query, "*What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?*" No Jew on earth can answer that question either unless he acknowledges Jesus Christ as both divine and human—as both Son of God and Son of man.

A third Scripture comes to mind. The Bible says in John 12:32-34,

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

In their dilemma they had ignored two very vital facts. The Scriptures not only told of the Messiah's death but that he would be raised which would permit his

continuing reign on the Messianic throne throughout the gospel dispensation. The people depicted in this conversation with the Lord really did not know the correct answer to the query that Jesus posed in Matthew 22:42, "*What think ye of Christ?*" No infidelic Jew on earth today can answer the very dilemma these people faced in John 12:32-34 as to how Old Testament Scripture taught that the Messiah would indeed abide forever and yet die. His resurrection is the key, the kingly key to the dilemma and this, infidelic Judaism, either ancient or modern, is unwilling to concede for even a moment of time.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE MESSIAH IN CURRENT TIMES

Who is Jesus Christ? He was misunderstood in the first century while he tabernacled in human flesh; he is widely misunderstood today. There is the Christ who has been created in the mind of modernism or religious theological liberalism. Proponents of these poisonous philosophies deny that any predictive prophecy of the Old Testament speaks of him. They deny his virgin birth, his being "*God with us*" and the mighty miracles he performed while here on earth. They reject his atoning death and the blessed benefits of his precious blood. They adamantly deny the triumph of his resurrection from the borrowed tomb early that Sunday morning (Mark 16:9). They reject his reign now on David's throne over his spiritual kingdom of heaven on earth. They blatantly reject the entire scope of Bible finals such as his second advent, his raising all the dead, the final judgment and the two eternal destinies of heaven and hell. When finished they have our lovely Lord robbed of his Deity and leave him nothing but a man—even a man of colossal but unproved claims.

There is the picture of Jesus by those who deny that he is God and is simply a created angel. When they knock on your door as the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses you can just mark it down that they do not accept the Christ of the Bible. They have their own manufactured Messiah backed up by their own perverted version—NEW WORLD TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES—and he is not God Incarnate as the four gospel records

present him to be. They have Christ a little "god" in John 1:1ff. The apostolic record of Jesus' Deity is confirmed by the remainder of God's Book—the Holy Bible.

There is the Jesus imagined by our Catholic friends who have him so impotent in heaven that he has to have a Vicar on earth to represent his cause. They have him so remote in heaven that accessibility to him is through Mary or the invocation of some long departed saint. They have his truth so deficient that it has to be appended by Catholic canon law, Papal edicts, church council decisions and a mammoth system of silly, senseless tradition that contradicts Biblical truth going and coming. They have destroyed the simple and spiritual aspect of New Testament worship in song, sermon, prayer, communion and contribution that he authorized. A short time back I was in St. Louis for a gospel meeting. While there the local preacher, Brother Willard Cooper, showed me the sites of St. Louis. Near the famed Arch on the western bank of the mighty Mississippi is an old Catholic church building that many dignitaries have visited while in this Missouri metropolis. We went through it. The candles, the paintings, the conspicuous crucifix, the gigantic organ and a host of other things all geared to the physical senses of touch, taste and sight all exhibit how foreign such is from the simplicity of our Saviour and New Testament Christianity. Romanism has invented its own Christ and he is not a forty-second cousin to the Christ of Scripture.

Protestants are little or no better relative to their manufactured Messiah. The Christ they have invented or imagined is supposedly pleased with every institution that calls itself a church regardless of what they teach or do not teach. They have him head of everything that is religious in so-called Christendom. In fact they have him as head of literally hundreds of religious bodies that contradict each other coming and going and all in hopeless, helpless and hapless contradiction of Christ's blueprint in the New Testament. His Book—the Holy Bible—has him only the head of his church—the one he promised to build in Matthew 16:18 and the one he did establish in regal splendor in Acts 2. Protestants have manufactured their own Messiah—one who is constantly

pliable, ever changeable and always eager to fit all their whims and wishes, their delights and desires.

Some years back we were introduced to Jesus Christ Superstar. When finished they not only had robbed him of his Deity but left him just a mere man and a very poor specimen of manhood at that. They attributed attitudes to him, linked actions with him and placed words in his mouth that have no support in Scripture and no warrant in God's word. They had invented a Jesus that no one acquainted with his portrait in the Bible could relate to or project any admiration for him at all. They tampered with the New Testament pattern of him and tampered greatly.

Not long ago we heard a great deal about the Jesus Movement. It was just a fad and has but all fluttered and faded from religious prominence. This movement had simply accepted another Jesus rather than the one set forth in New Testament Scripture. A young man of that movement traveled across the southern part of the United States during the heyday of this movement. He was an itinerant preacher. He stopped amidst his travels to visit briefly with a fine and faithful preacher of the gospel. He identified himself and told of his link with the Jesus Movement. Furthermore, he declared that he had thrown away his Bible and was just traveling across the country preaching Jesus! This is worse than a carpenter who throws away his hammer, square, saw, nails, etc., and goes forth to build houses. It is worse than a doctor who throws away all his medical instruments and goes forth to treat the sick, infirm and diseased. The Jesus Movement had a Jesus of its own concoction.

Perhaps the dominant religious philosophy in so-called Christendom today is premillennialism in general and the dispensational aspect of it in particular. It projects a Christ who came to establish the kingdom the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament predicted in preciousness and yet who became so impotent when faced with Jewish obstinacy that he and the Heavenly Father had to table divine intentions, revamp kingdom establishment plans, substitute the church age for what was to be the kingdom period and be brought back to heaven as a Spineless Saviour with a miserable track record for thirty-three miscalculated years spent on earth. Premillennialism has

had him without a throne and minus a kingdom for more than nineteen centuries. Rapture, tribulation and premillennial advocates seemingly think he is their puppet on a string which they dangle here on earth and reaches where he is in heaven. They envision him as a future Materialistic Messiah on a literal throne in Jerusalem and for a full thousand years. At least no one can successfully accuse the premillennial camp of being short on imagination! This is their major. In it they are more than proficient! When through with their visionary scheme of what is yet to be they have a Jesus who is as far from his Scriptural portrait in the New Testament as the North Pole is from the South Pole and then some!

There are only two Christs possible for men to accept. One is fanciful; the other is factual. One is traditional; the other is the truthful one. One is the imagined or concocted Christ; the other is the genuine, Scriptural Christ.

Up to this point we have dealt with the Misunderstood Christ. Now we present the positive side and seek to set forth the factual, truthful, genuine and Scriptural Christ. Who is Jesus Christ?

HE IS DIVINE

The Bible sets him forth as much more than a man. That is why those who thought he was John, Elijah, Jeremiah, an unnamed prophet or David's Son only in Matthew 16:14 and 22:42ff respectively greatly erred. They had him nothing but a man. From the divine contemplation we say he is God; he is Deity; he is the Son of God; he is the Second Person of the Godhead. Predictive prophecy indicated that he would be God. Israel's Sweet Singer has the First Person of the Godhead to say to the Second Person,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Psalm 45:6,7).

The writer of Hebrews 1:8,9 shows conclusively and forcefully that the Psalmist had Jesus Christ in mind. Yet when the RSV finished with this passage they had robbed Jesus of his Deity and left him only with a divine throne.

But David and Solomon ruled from a divine throne. Their throne was the Lord's throne as we learn from two great verses in I Kings and I Chronicles,

Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly...Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him (I Kings 2:12; I Chron. 29:23).

The RSV modernism exhibited itself quite adamantly and very strongly.

Isaiah said he would be virgin-conceived, virgin-born and Immanuel or God with us (Isa. 7:14). The unnamed angel in Matthew 1:22,23 declared that the coming birth of Mary's Son was the fulfillment of Isaiah's predictive prophecy and his clear enunciation. This is an exclusive, straightline Messianic prophecy with a one time fulfillment and one time only! There was *NOT ANY* type of fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 in a woman and her son in the era of Isaiah or the age of Ahaz every dual, double prophetic proponent on earth to the contrary notwithstanding.

In Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter confessed Jesus as Christ, God's Son. John 3:16 has him as God's "*only begotten Son*." In the Great Commission according to Matthew we read how the taught ones of all nations are to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

In a part of his powerful, precious prologue John, the apostle of love and loyalty wrote,

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. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father) full of grace and truth...No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:1-3, 14,18).

Of the great, good and glorious Son of God Paul writes with unparalleled beauty,

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of

no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 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. 2:5-11).

That precious passage in Hebrews 1:8,9 refers back to Psalm 45:6 and has the Father's referring to the second member of the Godhead as God. In II Corinthians 13:14 the entire Godhead is portrayed and Christ heads the list as Paul writes, "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*"

The Second Person of the Godhead has always existed. Micah 5:2 refers to him as the one that was from of old, from everlasting or from the days of eternity. The Bethlehem birth was not his beginning; he is as eternal as his fellow members of the Divine Three. John 1:15,30 has John's referring to Christ as being before him (John) yet Jesus, physically or humanly speaking, was six months younger. But from the standpoint of Deity he was eternal and hence was truly before John the Baptist. Omit his being God and John 1:15,30 is robbed of all intelligence, sense and sanity. If Jesus were mortal man only as certain Gnostics would later contend and as modernism still adamantly advocates, then John the Baptist simply falsified in these twin statements. His being God is why the Christ could and did say, "*Before Abraham was, I am*" (John 8:58). Infidelic Gnostics of the era of John the apostle and blatant modernists can never, never give an intelligent exegesis or analysis of John 8:58. But those of us who accept both his Deity and humanity can explain its majestic meaning with considerable ease and spiritual pleasure! It is in this sense that he is both David's Son (his humanity) and David's Lord (his Deity) in Matthew 22:42-46. It is in this sense that he existed before John the Baptist, a crystal clear reference to his Deity, and yet was younger physically than John as touching his humanity. Truly,

significantly and marvelously, he is both divine and human.

But again we ask our query, Who is Jesus Christ?

HE IS SON OF MAN

This refers to his Incarnation of being "*God with us.*" He was God; he was God with *us* as a man. Some eighty or more times in the New Testament Jesus called himself the Son of man. He called himself Son of man in Matthew 16:13, the introductory statement of the colorful conversation at Caesarea Philippi already alluded to in this study of the nature of Christ. In Matthew 20:28 we read, "*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*" Jesus stated in Luke 9:58, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*" In Luke 19:10 he gave the reason for the Messianic mission by stating, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost.*" In the gentleness of Gethsemane Jesus said in Luke 22:48 to the bold, brazen traitor, "*Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*" Stephen, just prior to his becoming the first martyr, said, "*Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts 7:56).

Again in Hebrews we read,

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted...For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15).

Since he was once a man upon earth and faced all sorts of temptations, then we may the more easily relate and identify with him as we pass along the journey of life. One religion of our day, Roman Catholicism, has made an egregious error in seeking to make Jesus very remote and one who has to be approached through someone else like Mary or a departed saint. Not so! He is very near the

humble of heart, the obedient of spirit and the sincere of mind at all times. His accessibility is one of the truly great themes of Holy Writ.

But again we ask, Who is Jesus Christ?

HE IS THE STRIKING FULFILLMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

As prominent as Peter, James, John and Paul are in the early church, yet not that first one of this quartet of New Testament greats is the specific object of Old Testament prophecy. John the Baptist is mentioned briefly in prophetic prophecy of Isaiah and Malachi (Isa. 40:3ff; Matt. 3:3; John 1:23; Mal. 4:4,5; Luke 1:17; Matt. 17:10ff). Yet the Christ is portrayed by prophetic prophecy over three hundred times in the Old Testament. This is truly remarkable and absolutely amazing.

But again we ask, Who is Jesus Christ?

HE IS PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

Jesus uniquely fills all three of these royal roles. No other in the Bible does so. There are many prophets, many priests and many kings. Most filled only one of these strategic roles. Some filled two. Abraham was both a patriarchal priest and a prophet but was not a king. David was both a prophet and a king but not a priest. Samuel was a prophet and priest but was not a king. In Jesus all three of these meet and merge with superb perfection. The opening three verses of Hebrews 1 set him forth in these royal roles of spiritual service to the world he came to seek and save. The inspired scribe states,

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken (as Prophet) unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins (as Priest), sat down (as King) on the right hand of the Majesty on high;...(Heb. 1:1-3—Parentheses supplied).

As Prophet he speaks God's message to us; as Priest he has atoned for our sins; as King he rules our lives. His

being Prophet, Priest and King is one of the most precious portraits we have of our lovely Lord. These three regal roles say much relative to the noble nature of our Comprehensive Christ.

But again we ask, Who is Jesus Christ?

HE IS LORD AND SAVIOUR

The angel told the perplexed Joseph in Matthew 1:21 that the name of Mary's Son was to be Jesus "*for he shall save his people from their sins.*" The very day of his birth angelic testimony declared this of him to shepherds on Judaeen hills near Bethlehem, "*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*" (Luke 2:10,11). Peter said of him on Pentecost, "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:36). Somewhat later in Acts Peter again declared, "*Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*" (Acts 5:31). Paul says of him in Galatians,

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father...But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, (Gal. 1:4; 4:4,5).

Paul writes in Titus 2:14, "*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*"

It is becoming quite fashionable now for people to claim that they accepted Jesus as Saviour years ago but have only recently accepted him as Lord or King. Jesus does not come in piecemeal fashion. We accept the comprehensive Christ inclusive of him as both Saviour and Lord or we accept none of him. How can he be accepted as Saviour without gospel obedience? How can he be accepted as King minus gospel obedience? If one accepts him by gospel obedience as Saviour but later accepts him

as King quite subjectively (that is, just decides in mind that Jesus is now his King) and without objective obedience, then what is to keep another from accepting him subjectively the first time as Saviour? This false error of trying to make a distinction between Christ as Saviour and Christ as King is fraught with grievous dangers. Those on the Lordship baptism bandwagon need to take a long, lingering look at the implications of their egregious error and flagrant falsehood.

CONCLUSION

Warm reader friends, I wonder if you and I have proper appreciation of and sufficient gratitude for the infinite worth of the Christ of Calvary? If so, what have we done to exhibit such gratitude? Allow me to illustrate. In our country there used to be a law about how a man could serve militarily. When about to be conscripted or inducted he had one of three options: (1) go himself; (2) pay government a certain amount if rich enough or could borrow enough and be deferred; or (3) send a substitute in his place. During the War Between the States, 1861-1865, there was a man about to be inducted. He was twenty-eight years old, was married and had several children to support. A teen-age boy in that community who had no such obligations learned of this and begged the man to allow him to go in the father's place. The older man was understandably reluctant at first. It struck a blow at his own manhood and deeply felt obligation. Later he gave in and allowed the young man to go in his place. Four months later he was slain in battle. His body was brought home for burial. Marking his grave was a monument erected by the man in whose place he had gone. It read, "*He died in my place.*" The application is very obvious. Jesus died in our place. Have we exhibited our gratitude by gospel obedience and by daily living for him? We obey by hearing, faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Then a life of faithfulness is required. Remember though that it was our Lord who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

The Bible Doctrine Of Pardon

Perhaps there is no more wonderful word to a person who faces a life sentence in prison than that of pardon. That is his only hope for cherished liberty forfeited by crime and for which he hungers day and night to be his prized possession again.

Likewise to the person enslaved to sin and is in its prison-house there should be no more important term than pardon. Yet relative to pardon there is an abundance of misconceptions. We aim toward refuting the errors relative to Biblical pardon and the instilling of sunlit truths into impressionable hearts and pliable minds.

A DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is usually wise in a Bible discourse to make sure that the terms employed are accurately understood. The definite article *the* and the preposition *of* need no definition. The remaining three words do and especially the latter two. By Bible we have reference to God's Word—the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Combined they form God's Divine Library. The Bible is the *only* revelation we have from God Almighty and to it all appeals for religious or spiritual authority must be made. Though some statements from the Old Testament will be made yet the majority of Scriptures will be drawn from the New Testament. We are amenable neither to patriarchal precepts nor to Mosaic mandates. We are amenable to the covenant of Christ. In it will be found Jehovah's law of pardon for all people subsequent to Calvary.

By doctrine is meant teaching or instruction. The KJV uses the word doctrine in a number of places where the ASV of 1901 employs teaching. Inspired men never made a distinction between what is doctrinal and what is practical as many seek to do today. Since doctrine is teaching and teaching is doctrine it all is doctrinal, it all

is practical. If one dissents, just which part of God's Word is not teaching? Which part is not practical? Specifically, in this study we shall be taking note of God's doctrine, teaching or instruction relative to pardon.

Pardon means remission of sins or forgiveness. It refers to the blotting out of sins, their cancellation. It is the proper way to hide or cover our sins.

A SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION UPON WHICH TO BUILD

Pardon does not occur in the KJV of the New Testament but occurs with frequency in the Old Testament. Its equivalents—forgiveness, remission, hiding sins, blotting out of sins, etc.,—do occur in the New Testament and with stirring frequency. From usage of the term pardon in the Old Testament three great verses are chosen. We read in Nehemiah 9:17 that "*thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.*" Israel's Sweet Singer stressed this stately sentiment in Psalm 25:11, "*For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great.*" Many years later Isaiah wrote, "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*" (Isa. 55:7).

Though pardon is not used in the New Testament in our beloved KJV yet the idea is there and with powerful prominence. Peter talked of remission of sins in Acts 2:38 and 10:43. On Solomon's porch in Acts 3:19 he mentioned the blotting out of sins. Again he spoke of forgiveness in Acts 5:31. So did Paul in Ephesians 4:32. John spoke of Jesus who "*washed us from our sins in his own blood*" in Revelation 1:5. All these are stately and superb synonyms for pardon. Pardon is present in each of them without debate or doubt.

WHERE PARDON DOES NOT OCCUR

Relative to the pardon of sins there is a great deal of misunderstanding. Misconceptions certainly exist relative to the *where* and *how* of pardon. Many people do not know the *where* of pardon. We can be a bit more

comprehensive by viewing the *where* both negatively and positively.

Pardon does not occur in the heart or feelings of the sinner. Yet most people are convinced this is its *where* of occurrence. It never occurs to such people to look any other place for such to transpire. Such deluded people will often pat over the place of the blood pump, the physical heart, which is not the Bible heart at all and affirm with each pat that pardon has occurred within that physical organ. They aver personal feelings of it in the very heart they are patting so militantly. Apparently, a very simple illustration has never occurred to such people. It concerns a prisoner in one of our state or federal penitentiaries. Suppose such a convict were to send word to the warden to release him in the next five minutes. The warden sends for the man and inquires into the why of the request. The man informs him that he has been pardoned! The warden has had no word from the Governor, if it be a state institution, or the President, if it be a Federal institution. He then asks the man relative to the how of his feeling that he now possesses a pardon of his crime. The man immediately appeals to the ardency of his feelings. He pats his physical blood pump and assures the warden that down deep in his heart he knows he is a pardoned man. Just how many wardens would buy that story and turn such men loose? Not that first one we may be assured. If one did, he would be looking for new employment promptly! The warden would explain that a pardon comes from the chief executive of either the state or nation who acts as an authoritative representative for all the people. Pardon occurs in the Executive's mind first. Then word of pardon has to be sent the prison officials and the prisoner. The same principle works relative to the pardon of sins as we shall spell out later in this vital lesson.

The power to pardon does not reside in a man who claims authority to forgive any sin and all sins. Roman Catholicism has been notorious in this colossal claim, in this arrogant action for centuries. They misunderstand John 20:23 and vainly imagine they are included in their own interpretation of the passage. Jesus said in this interesting verse, "*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain,*

they are retained.” Jesus was not placing powers to pardon on any ground of apostolic choice. Quite to the contrary he informs them that they will announce terms of pardon that heaven has already chosen and that the Holy Spirit will reveal to them. Their miraculous reception of the Spirit is alluded to in John 20:22. Matthew 16:19 is an excellent commentary on this passage in John 20:23. The Greek construction of Matthew 16:19 means that whatever they bind on earth will have been bound already in heaven and whatever they loose on earth will have been loosed already in heaven. They would echo—not choose and convey what they decided—what heaven had already decreed. John 16:13ff is another passage that confirms the accuracy of this analysis. Hence, John 20:23 does not say what Roman Catholics claim it says. In the next place John 20:23 was not spoken to the Roman Catholic hierarchy in any sense of the term; it was spoken to the band of authoritative apostles.

Just how far will this Roman arrogance go? The following is a case in point. A Roman Catholic priest in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, once declared publicly that if a Catholic came to him in the confessional booth, that he forgave his sins if convinced the person was sincere. However, if not convinced he stated, *“I just put down my foot and refuse to forgive!”* How would you like for pardoning power to be placed in the mind of a finite person who arbitrarily damned or saved you by his determination of your sincerity or lack of it? Such a silly, ridiculous system makes pardon a pawn upon the chessboard of another’s flimsy and finite appraisal of us.

As arrogant as were Pharisees in the first century Judaism yet they *never* assumed to themselves such august powers. Indicative of this are their two questions to Jesus in Mark 2:7, *“Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?”* They recognized nothing in Jesus but his humanity and they knew that only Deity possesses powers of pardon. Roman Catholic priests are not Deity—not even close to being Deity—but are mere men. Hence, they do not have power to test a man’s sincerity and forgive if he has such and refuse forgiveness if they deduce the lack of sincerity on the part of a confessor.

Pardon does not take place at a bonfire where

emotionally stirred youth are convinced by high powered speakers that sins should be confessed upon a stick of wood and then thrown into the fire. Such is inexcusable on the part of those who profess to know anything about the Bible in general and how God pardons sins in particular.

Pardon does not take place subsequent to death. A man does not die in sin, rebellion to God and as a total renegade from Jehovah's just government and be pardoned five minutes after death or during a denominational preacher's funeral eulogy pronounced over his mortal remains. Jesus makes crystal clear in John 8:24,21 that those who die in sin can never come where he is. But we know that he is in heaven. Since they cannot come where he is there is only one other destiny—torments in Tartarus prior to judgment and eternal Gehenna subsequent to judgment. Denominational preachers seek to override this as they preach *all* into heaven in their funeral messages. Proponents of pergratory also seek to override it in thinking that *paying* patrons and *praying* priests can obtain pardon for a dead relative who is still detained in the purgatorial realm for sins committed in life. Some years back my wife and I came to know a wealthy lawyer who was high in his profession and associated regularly with governors and other political dignitaries. He was a devout Catholic. He was still paying the Catholic Church huge amounts of money on a regular basis to get a dear relative out of purgatory. More than once he shared this information with us. If pardon demands our meeting certain conditions, and it most assuredly does, then one has to obtain this pardon while yet alive and while conditions can be met and obeyed personally—not by proxy plus pay! Though the doctrine of a second chance permeates numerous religious bodies, there is not a shred of Scriptural support for it. It is totally void of any warrant whatsoever from the word of God.

WHERE PARDON DOES OCCUR

This is the positive side of the issue. There needs to be a keen recognition on the part of all that sin is a transgression of God's law (I John 3:4) and hence *every*

sin, *all* sin is against God. In the sinful, sensual liaison that Potiphar's morally abandoned wife sought to initiate with the just Joseph he responded by saying in Genesis 39:9,10,

There is none greater in this house than I: neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

Joseph knew that any sin and all sin was against God.

David recognized this crucial truth sometime subsequent to his sinful interlude with beautiful Bathsheba. In a precious, penitential psalm he penned the piercing words,

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest (Psalm 51:2-4).

David sinned against his own soul and better interests; he sinned both with and against Bathsheba; he sinned against her husband—Uriah the Hittite—who was absent from the scene and actually on a battlefield fighting for his king back home who was taking sinful advantage of his absence; he sinned against all his family; he sinned against the nation of which he was the Shepherd Monarch. Yet so enormous is sin against the real object of its committal that David confessed that it was against God and God alone that he had committed this glaring, grievous transgression.

In the precious parable of the prodigal son (called by Brother B. C. Goodpasture the "*Parable of the Wonderful Father*") the wayward boy confessed upon his penitent return home, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*" (Luke 15:21).

Since sin is against God then it is Scripturally logical that sin is forgiven by God. Pardon takes place therefore in the mind of the Chief Executive of the Universe—not in the mind or heart of a sinner on earth. This is why

the guilty David sought pardon from God—not a human contemporary such as a family member, Nathan or someone of like quality. He confessed his sin in Psalm 51:3,4. He prayed for God to wash and cleanse him in Psalm 51:2. In this penitential psalm he besought Jehovah to,

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit (Psalm 51:7-12).

David knew only too well that pardon occurred in God's mind—not his, not Bathsheba's, not Nathan's, not his family's and not his nation's.

Jesus knew that pardon occurred in God's mind. In the Model Prayer that he gave his disciples in the famed discourse on the Galilean Mount he stated relative to sin and its forgiveness, "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (Matt. 6:12). From his anguish and humiliation on Calvary he prayed so intensely, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). Jesus knew that pardon occurs in the mind of Deity; he knew that it did not and could not occur in the hearts of his calloused executioners. The pardon included here did not occur the day Jesus pronounced this petition most surface Bible readers to the contrary notwithstanding! If he did, it occurred before there was any semblance of sorrow or projection of penitence on the part of his malicious murderers. Pardon occurred later, as in Acts 2, when those guilty of putting to death the Prince of Glory obeyed the gospel. That is when God answered the prayer of Luke 23:34; that is when God pardoned their sins. They knew it by the apostolic assurance given in Acts 2:38ff.

Stephen knew well where pardon occurs. For his insensitive murderers in Acts 7:60 he petitioned this sentiment, "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" Saul of Tarsus was inclusive of that prayer (Acts 7:58; Cf. 22:19,20). Saul was not pardoned of this murderous deed

until he obeyed the gospel in Syria as we learn from Acts 9, 22, 26. Then pardon did not take place in the mind of the former persecutor but in the mind of Saul's Maker on high.

Paul knew where pardon occurred. Among his final words and in his final chapter he penned the words, "*At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge*" (II Tim. 4:16). If pardon occurred in the hearts or minds of men, then Paul should have directed this petition to those who forsook him in his great hour of need—not to the God of heaven above.

There is obviously a sense in which pardon takes place in our hearts but this specifically is for sins committed against us and for which we have been implored to forgive sins by the transgressor now penitent and wishing to make proper amends. The Lord Jesus had this in mind when he stated, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (Matt. 6:14,15). These are trespasses committed against us personally. Transgressors are obligated to obtain forgiveness from us but also from God since every sin, all sin is ultimately against him.

Paul recognized this in the instructions he gave the Corinthians relative to the incestuous man of I Corinthians 5 but now changed and penitent in II Corinthians 2. Paul wrote,

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him...To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgive any thing, to whom I forgive it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person (in the sight—margin) of Christ;...(II Cor. 2:6-8,10).

The former fornicator needed forgiveness, both from God, which he already had by his penitence, and also from his brethren which Paul now commands that it be extended.

To both Ephesians and Colossians Paul wrote,

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake

hath forgiven you...Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Eph. 4:32; Col 3:13).

It should be clear from this section of our study that all sin is against God and that he alone can forgive such. Our pardoning powers are restricted to those who sin against us, then repent and implore our forgiveness.

As points of frequent inquiry and quickening interest it should be obvious to all of us that we cannot forgive another in the absence of his repentance. God does not do such in the realm of remission. To do so is to make a mockery of repentance and pardon and to harden or crystalize a person in his sin. Jesus stresses,

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him (Luke 17:3,4).

Note the intimate link that Jesus makes of repentance and forgiveness with the former first and the latter next. There is *no* Biblical exception to this. If so, where?

GOD'S LAW OF PARDON FOR ALIEN SINNERS

In a contemplation of this aspect of our study it is imperative that we recognize what an alien really is. Paul answers in Ephesians 2:12, *"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:..."* Descriptive of aliens in the opening verses of Ephesians 2 is this Pauline declaration,

And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

An alien is: (1) without Christ; (2) totally disassociated with the commonwealth of Israel; (3) a stranger from the

covenants of promise; (4) a person void of all hope; (5) one who is without God in this world; (6) one who is spiritually dead in his trespasses and sins; (7) a worldly person; (8) one who is allied with Satan; (9) a child of disobedience; (10) one guilty of sins of flesh and sins of the disposition; and (11) one who by habitual, entrenched practice has become a child of wrath. This is the Biblical portrait of every accountable person who has not obeyed the gospel of God's Son. One in this condition should be properly motivated to learn of God's first law of pardon or what one must do to be saved. This question is found in Acts 2:37; 9:6; 22:10; 16:30. Two of these, 9:6 and 22:10, are parallel and hence are listed side by side in the citations. "*What must I do to be saved?*" We allow the Bible to answer for itself.

It is imperative that one hear Jesus Christ. We read in Matthew 17:5, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" The words of Christ in Mark 4:23 are, "*If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*" In Mark 4:24 and Luke 8:18 we are told respectively, "*Take heed what ye hear:...Take heed therefore how ye hear.*" In John 6:44,45, Jesus stressed,

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Paul is rather comprehensive in relating hearing to its obedient colleagues in God's plan of pardon. He wrote,

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!....So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:13-15,17).

One must hear but not just hear anything. It truly makes a difference what one hears. One cannot hear error and falsehood and be saved; he must hear and then heed truth. One cannot hear the words of Satan and his crowd

and be saved; he must hear God's word.

Belief is a beautiful must, an intense imperative. Jesus coupled belief and baptism together in Mark 16:16 and made both essential before salvation could be attained. In John 1:11,12 we note, "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power (the right, or privilege—margin) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:...*" If the believer is a son of God at the emerging point or incipiency of faith, then he could not be given power, right or privilege to become God's Son. One does not become what he already is! Jesus stresses,

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins...and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come (John 8:24,21).

In Acts 16:30 the Philippian jailor inquired into what he must do. Paul answered, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*" (Acts 16:31). Hebrews 11:6 says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*". Not any of these passages promise pardon by faith only. If they did, they would stand in open contradiction and daring defiance of James 2:24 which says, "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*" Belief is *one*—not *all*—of the stipulations of salvation, the conditions of conversion. It is not the *only* one much of the religious world to the contrary notwithstanding! Biblical faith is well-grounded. It is *not* a leap in the dark venture in the absence of credible evidence to sustain it and uphold it even as some of our misguided preachers have begun to affirm and quite foolishly.

Repentance is imperative. It is a change of mind preceded by godly sorrow and resulting in an amended life. Involved therein is an abhorrence of sin as Thayer observes in his rather comprehensive definition. Jesus placed before humanity the two great alternatives of repent or else perish in Luke 13:3,5. In the Great Commission according to Luke he stated, "*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in*

his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). In Acts 2:38 Peter told inquiring believers relative to salvation they were (must) to repent and be baptized in order to receive remission of sins. On Solomon's porch in Acts 3:19 he couples repentance and conversion (turning again or the equivalent of baptism) in order that their sins might be blotted out. Acts 17:30 enjoins God's command to repent upon all men everywhere. The goodness of God prompts repentance (Rom. 2:4). So does the terror of the Lord (II Cor. 5:10,11). Impenitent people are not on their way to heaven.

One must confess faith in Christ. If we confess him in the here and now, he promises to confess us in the there and then (Matt. 10:32). The converse is also true. If we fail to confess him in the here and now, i.e., deny him, then he will not confess us in the there and then. Acts 8:26-39 contains the conversion account of the eunuch from Ethiopia. He requested baptism in Acts 8:36 if nothing hindered. Philip said nothing did hinder if he believed in Christ's Deity with wholeness of heart. He said, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" (Acts 8:37). The KJV is eminently correct in the retention of this disputed text; versions which omit it or simply place it in the margin are derelict at this point. If verse 37 lacks genuineness, then the inquiring sinner did not even receive an answer to his important question. An uninspired man who is zealously interested in converting sinners surely would not leave a question like this up in the air. Clearly, cogently and concisely Paul stresses relative to the confession.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9,10).

Note that it is not the denominational confession that "*God for Christ's sake has forgiven my sins*" but is a confession of Jesus' Deity. It is, in essence, what Peter confessed in Matthew 16:16, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" To it Paul alludes in I Timothy 6:12,13.

One is not in Christ at the point of hearing, belief, repentance and confession. These are crystal clear conditions or stipulations *unto* Christ. There must be a final step as we come *into* Christ in order that from that moment onward we may be considered as being *in* Christ. That step of transition is baptism.

The Great Commission according to Matthew 28:19,20 reads,

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (ASV)

The Greek participles here inform us how disciples are made—teaching and baptism. There is no other way for such to be made. If so, how? Mark 16:16 says, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" Two conditions are imposed before salvation is attained—not just one. Just as two plus two equals four so belief plus baptism equals salvation.

Peter promised remission of sins to believers who repented and were baptized in Acts 2:38. In Acts 8:35-39 Philip taught the studious eunuch about the Christ and baptized him upon his making the good confession. Note that the Ethiopian nobleman rejoiced after baptism and not prior to it. Simon Peter commanded the household of Cornelius to be baptized in water in the Lord's name or by his authority (Acts 10:47,48). Many of the Corinthians were baptized subsequent to their hearing and belief as we learn from Acts 18:8. Ananias told the believing, penitent Saul, "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). Paul writes,

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3,4).

Paul also teaches that baptism is a burial (Colossians 2:12.) Neither sprinkling nor pouring can fill the demands for Bible baptism. We are baptized into the body (the

church) of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). In a crystal clear passage Paul affirms, "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ*" (Gal. 3:27—ASV). Note the cogent Pauline logic exhibited here. You did if you were! Did what? Put on Christ. Were what? Baptized into Christ! The converse would read, "*For as many of you as were not baptized into Christ did not put on Christ.*" Since we are baptized into Christ it should be obvious that we do not hear *into*, believe *into*, repent *into* or confess *into* him. But we are baptized *into* him as both Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 so attest. Paul stresses there is one baptism (Eph. 4:5). This is the baptism of the Great Commission. Its element is water. Its action is a burial. Its candidates are sinners who are taught, who believe, who repent and who confess a wholehearted faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son. Its purpose is salvation. The final mention of baptism is I Peter 3:21 where Peter affirmed that baptism now saves. How dare interfering and meddlesome denominational preachers to come along and deny that it saves when Peter says it saves!

A correct understanding of baptism enables us to know how we contact the blood Jesus shed in his death (John 19:34). Somehow we must get into his blood before the point of contact is made. Romans 6:3 affirms that we are baptized into his death. We do not hear *into*, believe *into*, repent *into* or confess *into* his death but we are baptized *into* his death. There we contact the blood that saves.

Jesus shed his blood in order to purchase the church (Acts 20:28). To realize any profit or value from that blood we must be where the blood went or in his church. But we obtain entrance into the church by baptism (I Cor. 12:13). Hence, both baptism and the Lord's church are proved to be essential to salvation since both are blood-linked!

At the point of baptism pardon is extended the alien sinner in his obedience to the gospel of God's Son. The Lord, at this precious point, adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). From that moment on he is considered as being *in* Christ. Faithfulness is then required (Matt. 25:21,23). The daily challenge of walking in the light as the Lord is in the light is before him (I John 1:7). How great, good and grand it is to be a Christian (I John 3:1,2).

GOD'S SECOND LAW OF PARDON

The Bible teaches that all sin and come short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). To deny such is to deceive oneself, call God a liar and to prove that truth...(God's word) is not in us (I John 1:8,10; 2:1,2). Provisions have been made for God's children who err. Prayer and repentance are linked in Acts 8:22. Confession is enjoined in I John 1:9. Confession and prayer are linked in James 5:16. This is the prescribed way we can stay cleansed according to I John 1:7. Spelled out in the lovely language of Scripture God's second law of pardon reads,

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee...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...If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (Acts 8:22; I John 1:7,9; James 5:16).

CONCLUSION

How grateful we all should be that God provides a way of escape for alien sinners and later for the sins we commit as his erring children. This twofold blessing is very precious. The final stanza of "*Softly and Tenderly*" contains these moving, majestic words,

Oh, for the wonderful love He has promised,
Promised for you and for me;
Tho' we have sinned He has mercy and pardon,
Pardon for you and for me

If right now you are not a Christian, will you not obey the gospel this very day by hearing Christ, believing his Deity, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ and being baptized into Christ? A neighboring New Testament Christian will be glad to aid in your conversion to the Lord. When you have done this you will have obeyed God's first law of pardon. Then aim at a life of faithfulness. When sin does occur in your life appeal ardently to God's second law of pardon which consists of repentance, confession and prayer. These are God's two

gracious and precious laws of pardon for you and for me. Remember that it was Jesus Christ who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

CHAPTER SIX

The Church Of My Choice Or The Lord's—Which?

Have you ever wondered just how many of your fellow Americans are connected with some religious body? I became interested in this religious query some twenty or more years ago and by means of newspaper accounts at regular intervals, drawn largely from the ANNUAL YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN CHURCHES, have kept up with such released information. THE COMMERCIAL-APPEAL, Memphis, Tennessee, had an article relative to the latest released statistics on June, 1981. The report was entitled, "*Church Growth Nearly Stagnant,*" and contained this paragraph, "*The 1982 YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN CHURCHES, says church growth was almost stagnant during 1979 with total membership increasing by 80,914 to 133.4 million.*" This is slightly in excess of sixty per cent of our population. Over the past twenty years the percentage has been around sixty-two to sixty-four per cent. In early Colonial American history perhaps not more than ten to fifteen percent of Americans were affiliated with a religious body.

FACTORS OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

As interesting as total membership in America and the accompanying percentages are yet a more practical and germane question has to do with the WHY of religious affiliations. Why have these multiplied millions become what they are religiously? It *should* be the case that all have obeyed the truth as set forth in Holy Writ and *God* has made them what they are. There should be a unique uniformity in this momentous matter but alas there is not. False factors and conflicting criteria have produced a hodgepodge of religious bodies in our nation.

Church building proximity has prompted many people to become what they are religiously. They are just whatever they are closest to in point of distance. Several years back I called on a couple who had just moved to town. In inquiring about their religious affinities the man told me his and the woman, in essence, declared, "*I am what is closest.*" Their conversation revealed that they had moved frequently across the years and what she might be in one community, due to church building proximity, she might not be in the next town at all. The building where I preached at the time was not the closest to her. Hence, she never attended our services a single time. Something as important as church membership should rest on a foundation substantially stronger than church building proximity!

The church in town that one believes to contain the community's elite has been another deciding factor. Such people are out for Number One and they wish to mix and mingle with the VIPS in town who will aid in their climbing the success ladder. A preacher friend once told of knowing a lady of this very disposition. She lived for a number of years in a community and prided herself in belonging to the church in town where the elite, at least in her judgment, held membership. It became necessary for her to move to a new city. She promptly sought out the same religious group but discovered, much to her dismay, that these were not the most important people in town. These people met on the other side of society's tracks as it were. She quickly changed to a more fashionable, prestigious denomination where the elite, at least in her judgment, attended. Should not church membership rest on something more substantial than just where the supposed VIPS meet?

Some are what they are due to no active choice of their own but one made for them while they were infants. It is true that some in this category later exercise religious volition and make a religious choice all their own. But countless others do not and remain what their parents, grandparents or guardians chose for them while they were helpless infants. As much as parents mean to all of us yet we should recognize quite keenly that church

affiliation should have a more logical validity than parental choice. This is nothing but a proxy system of religious preference. Do you not agree?

Some make a choice on which religious group has the most beautiful building in town, the softest padded pews, the most convenient parking facilities anywhere or the building that is easiest to enter. Not any of these is really a valid basis for establishing church membership preference.

Countless others choose on a different—and yet no sounder or more sensible—basis. Some want to be where the best educated people attend. This has long been one of the drawing cards of the infidelic Unitarian group. Others are very emotional in nature and vocal Pentecostalism is made to order for them. Others are impressed by numbers hence the majority complex is their drawing card. Those climbing the social, political and economic ladders look for religious affiliations that will enhance their future dreams and rising aspirations. The *“hostess [church] with the mostest”* thus appeals to their inflated egos. Some look for religious affiliations that are very convenient. The religious groups which promise Christ with three simple words, *“Lord, save me,”* and then assure the person that he can never, Never, NEVER lose what has come so conveniently are especially appealing to people with little or no inclination toward dedication as a disciple, steadfastness as a saint and real consecration as a Christian. Should not something as important as church membership rest upon bases stronger and more sturdy than any of the foregoing? Indeed it should! Indeed it must!

THE REAL WHY OF THE FOREGOING

Without exception there is a most dominant motive that runs throughout *all* the foregoing and likewise there is a missing element most conspicuous by its amazing absence. The dominant motive so firmly fixed in all the foregoing is the pleasing of either self or some other human being. The missing ingredient is the Lord's will and wishes in the matter. Underlying all the foregoing is the generally accepted and highly hailed principle of *“Join the church of your choice”* or *“Attend the church or synagogue of your choice.”* Matthew wrote one New

Testament book of twenty-eight chapters. Nowhere therein did the former publican and now an inspired apostle ever charge anyone at anytime to join or attend the church or synagogue of his choice. Mark penned one New Testament book of sixteen chapters. At no time did this inspired man ever advise anyone at anytime to join or attend the church or synagogue of his own deliberate choice. Luke, the beloved physician, penned two books of the New Testament—Luke and Acts. Combined they contain fifty-two chapters. Neither in his gospel record nor in depicting many, many conversion accounts in Acts of the Apostles did the lovable Luke ever counsel anybody at anytime to join or attend the church or synagogue of his own choice. John wrote five New Testament books—Gospel of John, I, II and III John and Revelation. They contain an even fifty chapters. Yet the apostle of love, that disciple whom Jesus loved, at no time ever commanded or charged anybody to join or attend the church or synagogue of his own choice. Paul, if Hebrews be a Pauline production as I believe it is, wrote fourteen New Testament books and they sum up to an even one hundred chapters. Yet at no time did Paul ever charge anybody to join or attend the church of synagogue of his choice. Peter wrote two New Testament epistles consisting of eight chapters. He who initially was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven (the Lord's church) in Matthew 16:19 never told anybody at anytime to join or attend the church of his own choice. James and Jude, half-brothers to our Lord in the flesh, each wrote a New Testament epistle. James' work has five chapters; Jude's terse work has one chapter with twenty-five verses. At no time in either epistle did either of these inspired men advise anybody to choose, join and attend the church of his own choice. This lengthy summation of a totally unbiblical principle has been deliberately chosen to underscore how utterly lacking in Scriptural sanction a most popular sentiment of our time really is.

The masses of religionists in our day are thinking only of what pleases self. This is the total basis of their religious preference and choices. What the Lord's choice may be is the totally ignored ingredient or the forgotten factor in all their religious choices. This is sad; it is immeasurably sad and yet so very true as an apt

appraisal of religious people in general.

The remnant of this sermon will explore the almost unknown truth and largely forgotten factor that Jesus Christ has a choice and making *his* choice *our* choice is the only wise and sensible one. It is the *only* one that offers spiritual safety and heavenly security. No one who believes and respects the Bible will question or quibble at this obvious point.

CHRIST'S CHOICE OF A BUILDER WAS HE HIMSELF

In the famed and familiar conversation in colorful Caesarea Philippi of Matthew 16:13-20 Jesus drew answers from the apostles relative to what the Palestinian masses were saying relative to his real identity. The "*peoples' choice*" placed him in such categories as a returned John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or simply an unknown and unnamed prophet from the ancient past. Each of these was wrong. Jesus quizzed the apostles as to what position they sustained toward this very critical and crucial question. Peter acted as a prompt spokesman. He confessed, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:16). With this answer Jesus was profoundly pleased and said so (Matt. 16:17). By implication we know he was displeased with those who depicted him as only a man and nothing more. Jesus seized this as the golden opportunity and the appropriate occasion to announce in crystal clear terms his church building intentions. He says in Matthew 16:18, "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [Hades—ASV] shall not prevail against it.*" Neither here nor any other place in the gospel records did Jesus convene the apostles together and say, "*Brethren, I am thinking of establishing my church but am at a total loss as to the one who should be its builder. Should I raise up Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Elisha, David, Daniel or call back to earth the translated Enoch or Elijah and allow for its builder a powerful patriarch, a loyal lawgiver like Moses, a faithful prophet or a renowned king? Or would it be best to build it on one of you, upon all of you as a collective foundation of apostolic solidity or upon all my disciples in general? Tell me what you think for I am unsure at this point!*" No such

conversation as this occurred! Had such occurred it would have simply been the case that the Lord left superior divine wisdom and was his in superb perfection and he would have descended to inferior human wisdom. At this time the apostles did not even understand the spiritual scope of the church. The Lord was in the driver's seat in this matter all the way. He proposed its building. He chose the founder. Of course the Father's will was the same. The choice was Jesus Christ as builder. Jesus never authorized any other builder either in the first century or any century subsequent to it. Surely he did not authorize the Roman Catholics to build one or take his into apostasy as ultimately they did. Neither did he authorize all the Protestant reformers to build a multiplicity of churches and connect such to him in any fashion.

Making the choice of Jesus our choice as the builder of his own church which he promised in Matthew 16:18 and fulfilled in Acts 2 is the only one that offers hope now and heavenly felicity at last. All this beautifully fits the predictive prophesy of Zechariah 6:12,13,

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

CHRIST CHOSE JERUSALEM TO BE ITS BEGINNING SITE

At no time in his personal ministry did Jesus call the apostles into session and say, "*Brethren, the time dawns for the building of my church and I need your combined counsel about the exact site. Should I build it in Bethlehem, the city of my birth more than thirty years ago? Should I build it in Nazareth, the city of my boyhood and early manhood? Should I build it in Capernaum, the headquarters for my Galilean ministry? Should I build it in Jerusalem, long our holy city and the center of Jewish worship? Or would it be wiser to leave Palestinian cities and seek out Rome to the west, Alexandria of Egypt to the southwest, Antioch to the*

northeast or Athens of Greece also to the west? Tell me your thinking brethren!" No such conversation as this ever occurred and had such transpired it would have been a clear case of the Lord's vacating divine wisdom for human wisdom so finite in nature and so liable to error. The great statesman prophet, Isaiah, predicted in Isaiah 2:2,3,

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Predictive prophecy therefore set forth what Deity's choice was relative to the geographical site of the church's beginning. The Great Commission, according to Luke, voiced the same sentiment, "*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:47). A subsequent verse charges them to tarry "*in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24:49). Jerusalem is designated as the beginning spot for full gospel proclamation in Acts 1:8. Acts 2 has the apostles in Jerusalem. There they received Holy Spirit baptism. There the church had its august origin, its beautiful beginning. Any church that has begun in another city and country other than Jerusalem in Palestine is wrong as a geographical site. No other city and country will meet the noble norm of Sacred Scripture.

Does the beginning place of the church with which you are affiliated coincide with the Lord's choice of Jerusalem? If not, you can know by this one factor that you are in the wrong one. Make no mistake at this crucial and critical point.

Remember that the making of Christ's choice our choice is the only one that offers hope now and heavenly security in tomorrow's world.

***CHRIST CHOSE PENTECOST IN ACTS 2 AS THE
RIGHT TIME FOR BEGINNING HIS CHURCH***

There is nothing, as per the inspired record, that

indicates Christ's calling for a conference among the twelve with words like this, "*Fellow-apostles, it is almost the right season for the establishment of my church upon earth. Yet I am totally unsure in my own mind just when it should be established. Would Passover be better? How about Pentecost? What about the Feast of Tabernacles in the early autumn season? Or would another day or season be best? Give me your collective wisdom.*" It is preposterous to think that such a conference as that was called or such a conversation as that actually transpired. Had such occurred the Lord would have vacated the divine wisdom that was his superb possession and descended to inferior, fallible human wisdom. This the Lord never did. He was always in the driver's seat in matters like this. Infinite wisdom ever directed and dominated all his choices.

We can pinpoint the very day and hour when his church began. Jesus said 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.*" Please observe that kingdom (the church) and power were to be simultaneous in coming. Just prior to his ascension Jesus stated, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Spirit and power were to come together. Mark 9:1 and Acts 1:8 sum up these cardinal facts—the kingdom, the Spirit and power were to come together. If we can find when any one of these came, then we will know when the other two came. The opening quartet of verses in Acts 2 states,

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

Here the Spirit came. This is when the power descended. This is when the prepared material under John's preaching and Christ's preparatory work constituted the

Lord's kingdom or church on earth. Peter identified the time as the third hour of the day (Acts 2:15). This made it 9:00 o'clock in the morning. This was the beginning time of the Lord's church on earth. Is this when the church with which you are affiliated was begun? If not, you know what truth demands—get out of the wrong one and come into the right one. Remember that making the Lord's choice our choice is the only one that offers hope now and the heavenly inheritance at last.

CHRIST CHOSE THE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR HIS CHURCH

The Lord never convened an apostolic conference with a message of desperation that said in essence, "*Apostolic brethren, I am about ready to establish my church but am in a dilemma pertaining to what entrance requirements should be imposed. Give me the benefits of your combined wisdom.*" Had such as that transpired the Lord would have vacated his own divine wisdom for the poor substitute of accepting human wisdom which is so fickle and subject to error. This he *never* did! He chose the entrance requirements. In Mark 4:23 he said, "*If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*" He closed heaven's door to any who refused to have faith in his Deity (John 8:24,21). In Luke 13:3 he stated, "*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" Matthew 10:32 says in essence, "*If you do not confess me in the here and now, I will not confess you in the there and then.*" Jesus links belief and baptism in Mark 16:16 and declares, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" When all these commands are obeyed one is added to the church. Man does not join; the Lord adds. Is this what you did initially? If not, then you know what stern, unbending truth demands of you right now. Making the Lord's choice our choice is the only one that offers hope now and heaven at last.

CHRIST CHOSE THE KIND OF LIFE HIS PEOPLE ARE TO LIVE

The Lord never called a conference of the twelve and depended upon them to establish the tone and tenor of

Christian living. Had he done so, he would have forsaken divine wisdom in order to follow human wisdom. This he never did. He was always in the driver's seat touching all these beautiful basics. After all he was to head the church and not vice versa.

Jesus delineated the character of kingdom citizens in Matthew 5:3-16. His people will be poor in spirit, mourners, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (right-doing), the merciful, the pure in heart, peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Faithfulness is the key word in Matthew 25:21,23. Doers of good is the theme of Matthew 25:34ff. Paul sums up Christianity as a denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts and sober, righteous and godly living in Titus 2:11,12. Paul thus inculcates a noble negative and a powerful positive. Timothy is charged to be an "*example of the believers, in word, in conversation (manner of life), in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*" (I Timothy 4:12). Peter enumerates the Christian graces to adorn the souls of the saved in II Peter 1:5ff. To foundational faith is to be added or supplied virtue, knowledge, temperance (self-control), patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity or love. Diligence in such assures one of an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom of glory (II Peter 1:8-11).

Does your choice of how the Christian life should be lived coincide with the Lord's? If not, why not? Remember that making his choice our choice is the only one that offers hope in this life and heaven in the sweet by and by.

CHRIST CHOSE THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS CHURCH

The Lord never interrogated the apostles relative to the worship, the work or mission, the organization or the extents and limits of Christian fellowship therein. He needed no such counsel; he was in the driver's seat in these vastly important realms of divine intents.

Relative to worship he stressed that God is the right object and that it must be composed of spirit and truth (John 4:23,24). Specifically he enjoined singing (Eph. 5:19;

Col. 3:16), praying (Acts 2:42), giving (I Cor. 16:1,2), preaching or teaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7) and the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:20ff). Making his choice of worship ours is the only sane and sensible choice for any of us.

Relative to the mission of his church he did not make it political in scope or recreational in outlook. The mission of Christ's church is a continuation of his mission as stated in these words of weight and wisdom, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). The mission of the church is to preach the gospel, aid the needy and edify or keep saved the redeemed (Mark 16:15; James 1:27; Gal. 6:10; Jude 20,21). The church is in the *preaching* business—not the *playing* business. The church is in the business of *redemption*—not *recreation*. Too many in our day prefer entertainment to edification but people will never laugh themselves into heaven or avoid hell by funny jokes. Humor has a place but its place is not a substitute for holiness. Remember that the making of his choice our choice is the only one that offers hope for the here and now and heaven for the there and then.

The Lord has chosen elders to oversee, deacons to serve, preachers to preach, teachers to teach and all as members to work (Phil. 1:1; Acts 20:28; I Tim. 3:1-13; II Tim. 4:2; 2:2; I Cor. 15:58). Any other organization is not his choice. Any other means a departure or deviation has been made. Remember that making his choice our choice is the only one that offers hope now and eternal felicity in heaven in the ceaseless ages of eternity.

The Lord has established the extent of Christian fellowship and has imposed its limitations. We may only fellowship those who are in Christ or who do God's will which requires gospel obedience in the past and who right now walk in the light as he is in the light (Matt. 12:46-50; Acts 2:41,42; I John 1:7). Fellowship may be extended to such; its limits are prescribed by those two vastly important concepts.

Do our choices in the foregoing cardinal characteristics coincide with the Lord's? If not, we have made poor, unwise and unsafe religious choices. Remember that making the Lord's choice our choice is the only one that offers hope now and heaven later.

*CHRIST HAS CHOSEN THE NAMES
INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY*

At no time in his personal ministry did the Lord convene his apostles and say, "*Brethren, I am at a total loss as to what my people should be called individually and collectively. I am open for your suggestions and need desperately your counsel at this strategic point.*" The Lord never left divine wisdom only to proceed to what finite, human wisdom might propose. He was in the driver's seat all the way. He acted as head—not a puppet to be moved or manipulated by human whims and wishes. Yet the masses of men today in the realm of religion pay little or no heed to Biblical designations for God's people. Glibly, they say in a quickly conceived sort of justification, "*One name is as good as another*" or "*There is nothing in a name.*" They do not believe a word of such! Baptists are unwilling to give up their name and be known as Episcopalians. Methodists are unwilling to be called Mormons. Presbyterians are not willing to be called Seventh Day Adventists. If there is nothing in a name, then they concede that the name they wear and nothing are synonymous! Who will concede the point? Furthermore, they often grow angry and are filled with deep resentment when a gospel preacher calls them by the very names they wear, put upon their church buildings and as letterheads on their sent-out stationary. Call one of them by another religious designation and he quickly will correct you.

Names are necessary to avoid chaos in our day. Intelligent communication could not occur in the absence of names for people, places and things. Even a little child knows better than to accept the idle propaganda put out by these false teachers that contend that "*one name is as good as another.*" Call a little child by the wrong name and witness the rapidity with which you are promptly corrected. It has often happened to me! Call one of these denominational preachers by the name of the most notorious and immoral man in town and see how silent he remains with the misplaced appellation. His correction will be quick and definite. Consternation may cross his countenance in his correction. Men in business know that names mean something. They want a name of

honesty and integrity on the checks they receive as payments of bills owed; they do not want a name of a man there who is notorious for writing worthless checks. Names are precious and meaningful.

Jesus Christ chose what his people would be called either directly or through apostolic authority. His people are brethren (Matt. 12:49; 23:8-11). James refers to Christians as brethren some fifteen times in his short epistle. His people are his sheep and belong to his fold (John 10:16). His people are children of God (Gal 3:26; . His people are disciples (John 8:31; Acts 9:1). His people are priests (I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). His people are Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Pet. 4:16). His people are saints (Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 3:8; Philemon 7). Those who belong to Christ are the people of God (Heb. 4:9; I Pet. 2:10). These are great, good, golden and glorious names by which God's people are known to the New Testament.

Collectively, they are churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16). If all are churches of Christ, then any one of them logically would have to be a local church of Christ. If not, why not? Paul refers to "*the church of God which is at Corinth*" (II Cor. 1:1). The writer of Hebrews refers to God's people as the "*church of the firstborn*" (Heb. 12:23). Paul designates God's people as the church in Ephesians 1:22,23 and Colossians 1:18. He calls them the body or the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:27). The saved are called the kingdom of heaven many times in Matthew. Kingdom of God is used in John 3:3,5. Kingdom of Christ and of God is employed so eloquently in Ephesians 5:5. The house or family of God is used in I Timothy 3:15 and Ephesians 3:15. Temple is employed as an attractive designation in Ephesians 2:21. Vineyard is employed in Matthew 20:1. Church of the Lord appears in the ASV of Acts 20:28.

Is your choice in the name department the same as the Lord's? If not, why not? Remember that making the Lord's choice our choice is the only one that offers hope now and heaven at last.

IN JUDGMENT JESUS WILL CHOOSE
THOSE TO GO TO HEAVEN

On that day he will not stage a voting process among those present to decide who should be saved in heaven and who should be lost in hell. He will choose to save his people—his church who has been faithful and loyal to him. Ephesians 5:23 so attests! In that fateful day, will it be better that we have followed *our* choices or *his* choice? No one will argue for the former in that day of days. All will concede that the latter was the only wise one to have followed while on earth.

CONCLUSION

If not now a member of the church of Christ's choice—his—not man's, will you not hear Christ, believe in his Deity, repent of your sins, confess Christ and be baptized for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3,5; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38)? This is Christ's choice for you. What is your choice by way of response? Then be faithful till death. Again this is his choice for you (Matt. 10:22; 25:23). In judgment his choice for you will be heaven just as it will be your choice. But remember it was Christ who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christian only.

Isms And Errors Threatening The Church

Two of the greatest challenges facing today's church are the conversion of aliens and the retention of the saved. Brother R. V. Cawthon, a great preacher of the past and a member of the Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, congregation where I preached from 1955-61 and have held meetings since, frequently told me that there is only one book in the New Testament that stresses conversion—Acts but there are twenty-one epistles which have as their ardent aim Christian edification or what to do in order to remain saved. We cannot afford to neglect either category if our preaching is to have a beautiful and basic balance between first principles to save people initially and Christian living principles to keep the saved in their first love. Hence, lessons from Acts and from the epistles are absolutely essential if we expect to convert the lost and retain the saved. We are not doing nearly enough in the former; success is frequently not our actual lot in the latter as we witness more and more of the saved digress from duty and slide back into sin as a way of life.

Conversion and edification are both thwarted by the poisonous presence of fatal falsehoods. The religious world abounds in such. Many of them are seeking an invasion into churches of Christ. *"To be forewarned is to be forearmed."* This is prudence personified in meeting, opposing, exposing and defeating of any error, of all error. A quartet of practical points will be discussed briefly in this needed sermon. Too many of our preachers are preaching watered-down lessons that would create no ripple of resentment or degree of dissatisfaction in most any denomination in America. This sermon is not of that spineless variety or indistinctive type of soothing sermonizing.

**CRITICAL AND CRUCIAL ISMS AND
ERRORS OF THE PAST**

John the Baptist and Jesus Christ faced the two main Jewish sects of their era—the Pharisees and Sadducees, John faced a courageous confrontation with both groups in Matthew 3. His initial words to both groups were, “*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*” (Matt. 3:7,8). Jesus warned his disciples in Matthew 16:6-12 of the leaven (doctrine or teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Christ confronted both groups in Matthew 22; Mark 12 and Luke 20. The most scathing sermon our Lord ever gave, as per the Biblical record, is Matthew 23. It is a relentless exposure of hypocrisy and pretense in religion. This was the stock-in-trade of the first century Phariseeism. The Pharisees believed in angels, in the existence of the soul, accepted the reality of the resurrection and stressed there was a future life. Yet they were bound by traditionalism. They were the separatists of their day. They were much better, they thought, than the rank and file of contemporary Jews. They numbered some six thousand in the first century and were a powerful force in Jewish life in the time of John and the Christ. They valued tradition over truth and did not hesitate in the least to negate God’s law if it conflicted with the traditions of the elders. Of them the Christ declared,

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do...Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition...Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do (Mark 7:7-9,13).

The Sadducees were the modernists, the materialists and the theological liberals of the first century. With ease they could have been charter members of the German rationalist movement of the nineteenth century, the Neo-Orthodox movement of the twentieth century or current members in good standing of the existential philosophers. They denied angels, disavowed the spirit or soul in man and declared this life as the only one man will ever have. Luke sums up their blatant disbelief by

penning, "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). Much earlier Jesus tersely appraised them by saying, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). The Sadducees are on the wrong side of truth in every New Testament mention of them. At least the Pharisees were on the right side of truth at times but the Sadducees were consistently wrong. They opposed John the Baptist. They fought Jesus every step of the way and finally helped to crucify him. Infidelic Sadduceeism was the first force to persecute the early church. In Acts 2:47 the newly begun church enjoyed the favor of the people. However, that changes as we read in Acts 4:1,2,

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Phariseeism and Sadduceeism were early errors and intense isms with which soldiers of truth had to do valiant battle. These forces of falsehood never invited stalwart soldiers to come among them to teach a seminar on how Phariseeism can prosper and how Sadduceeism can flourish. Some of our preachers now would not receive such invitations from the modern counterparts of Pharisees and Sadducees—the denominations—if they were more like New Testament preachers and less like denominational pastors whose posture they practice and whose fads they follow spinelessly.

Paul's entire life as a stalwart soldier and disciplined warrior placed him in battles (in reality at constant warfare) with Judaism, paganism, apathy among brethren, etc. Judaizing elements were persistently determined to undo Paul's work and to fasten the law of Moses on every Christian convert. Paul fought them in nearly every place he preached. In such great cities as Antioch, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome he fought the intense influences and impact produced by idolatry and the pagan, promiscuous, degenerative practices the sinful system engendered. Colossians 2 is an entire chapter where Paul meets head-on the Colossian heresy or error. This emerging and already entrenched error denied completeness in Christ and spiritual sufficiency in the Saviour. The Colossian fallacy was a subtle effort to blend

paganism, worldly wisdom, human philosophy and asceticism in large doses into small measures of Christianity. Roman Catholicism currently is a counterpart as that apostate religion has sought to mix and mingle much of paganism and Judaism into a tiny bit of Christianity. In a striking warning Paul says,

And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words...Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Col. 2:4,8).

Modern man who is succumbing to human philosophy needs to take a long, lingering look at Colossians 2. Therein he can see his delineation and also his ultimate destiny.

Gnosticism confronted John the apostle in the latter part of his illustrious life. The Gnostics claimed a monopoly on superior knowledge and wisdom for the initiated. This was a sensual club filled with spiritual snobbery. The Docetic Gnostics denied that Jesus came in the flesh. The Cerinthian Gnostics sought to distinguish between the man Jesus and the Christ. As per their Gnostic claim, the Christ supposedly descended Jesus at his baptism by John's hands in the waters of the Jordan and ascended from him at Calvary. Hence, Jesus was a mere man till thirty years of age and died as a mere man according to this snobbishism and degrading error. Much of what John wrote in his three epistles was aimed at Gnostics. There were the Ebionites who denied that Jesus was anything but a man. They would have been in the very forefront of modernism had they lived in our day. The Nicolaitans are mentioned in Revelation 2:6,15. Ephesian Christians hated their deeds but the Pergamos congregation tolerated the doctrine to be held by some in that Asian metropolis. The Lord hated their deeds. It is quite probable they claimed that giving in to fleshly appetites does no harm to the souls of the redeemed. This is cheap, irresponsible grace gone to seed and then some. Jude 4 refers to certain men who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and even deny both Father and Son. Apparently, this is what the Nicolaitans did. They have an exceptionally large counterpart in corrupted religious circles today. Jude and II Peter 2 are militant

chapters relative to various isms, errors and the men who propagated them. Along with Matthew 23 they constitute an arsenal of usable ammunition against false teachers with their isms.

Arianism arose in subsequent centuries of Christianity which denied quite vehemently that Jesus Christ was Deity or God. Roman Catholicism emerged out of a full fledged apostasy from truth and right and has been a dominant force for falsehood now for about fifteen centuries. This mammoth system is a mixture of Judaism, paganism, imagination and a small amount of Christianity. Like the Pharisees in Christ's era on earth the Catholics place far greater value and deeper allegiance for their cherished traditions than for New Testament truth. Protestant denominationalism is an offshoot of valiant but unsuccessful efforts to reform corrupt, incorrigible Catholicism. It was a mighty courageous religious endeavor to straighten out what had gone wrong, to make palatable to spiritual taste what had gone sour in the realm of religion. Like the mother from which it sprang nearly five centuries ago it has deviated and deviated greatly from the pristine principles of bonafide New Testament Christianity. Present day Protestantism calls for lords many, gods many, spirits many, faiths many, baptisms many, hopes many and bodies almost beyond accurate calculation. Protestantism makes shambles of Ephesians 4:4-6, the inspired Pauline plan of beautiful, wise, workable and profitable unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. No two Protestant bodies are alike in all fundamental aspects and not that first one is a forty-second cousin to the Lord's church about which we read in the New Testament. Quite obviously, our compromising brethren who speak in their church growth seminars do not tell them such evident truths about their current condition and present plight. How immeasurably sad this is!

The Restoration Movement of nearly two centuries ago enjoyed great spiritual prosperity in our country until brethren became enamored with the Missionary Society and the popular and demanded mechanical music innovation into Christian worship. Biblical authority was the central crux of the whole innovative spirit of the times. In a capsule question the brethren asked in

essence, "Will we remain with just what the Good Book authorizes or will we cut loose from Scriptural moorings and do what we want to in worship, what will make us popular with the people around us and what will make us comfortable?" The masses favored the latter and frowned upon the former that had made them the people of the Book, the captives of the word as Louis and Bess White Cockran called them by way of a literary book title some years back. Digression of the deepest dye was the end result. Apostasy occurred in congregations almost beyond human calculation. How sad, how immeasurably sad it all was. Yet the same signs and identical symptoms are strongly at work among us currently. Multitudes of brethren are blind to the flashing red lights of impending apostasy and wholesale digression from Deity, Deity's Book and Deity's church.

These have been some, not all by any means, of the critical and crucial issues that have confronted the people of God from Pentecost to the beginning of the twentieth century. This projects the momentous matter up to the century in which we live and the problems we have faced and continue to face. This will be our next focal point of emphasis in the subsequent section of study and contemplation.

CRITICAL AND CRUCIAL ISSUES OF THE PRESENT

Three of the momentous battles that have loomed before the church in our century have been premillennialism, anti-ism and liberalism. We still face these deadly dangers.

Premillennialism is a system of mounting materialism. It is a flareback to Judaism and calls for a revival of what the Christ nailed to Calvary nearly two thousand years ago. It is a total rejection of spiritual Christianity. It denies the kingdom as our present possession and says such will only be set up at the second coming of Christ. They make his first coming a deeply humiliating flop and a total miscalculation on the part of the Godhead. In fact premillennialists hold to a totally different Godhead than Christians claim, honor and glorify. Pernicious premillennialism denies that Jesus Christ currently reigns on David's throne. David's throne is power, authority,

supremacy, right to rule, etc. This Materialistic system denies *all* these to the Christ. This infidelic system calls for a thousand year reign of Christ on earth with his totally materialistic throne situated in literal Jerusalem. If they are right, they have Christ in a position where he could not prosper in his earthly reign at all. Combine Jeremiah 22:30 and Matthew 1:12 and one sees that no one of the royal family line of David will ever again rule in Judah on David's throne with any kind of prosperity. This fleshly system demands an interval of a full thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and wicked. Jesus has them resurrected the same *hour* in John 5:28,29. By premillennial computation that hour stretches into a thousand years, into twelve thousand months, into fifty-two thousand weeks, into three hundred sixty-five thousand days and nearly nine million hours!! What an hour! If the President and Congress could stretch governmental dollars in the hard pressed budget like they stretch just one hour, we could go from the red to the black more quickly than it takes to write about such! Premillennialism provides endless fodder upon which the National Israel mania feeds to the fullest. Premillennialism provides the comprehensive sweep in which the rapture, the tribulation, a series of various judgments, etc., all find spacious room for inclusion. Most of so-called Christendom now accepts premillennialism; it looms as another battle we must face.

Anti-ism is an attempt to legislate for God in the realms of generic law and expediency. It binds where God has loosed. It makes laws where God has made none. It proposes to speak for God where he has not spoken. Its golden calf is the congregational treasury and what may or may not be done with the money therein. It has taken many forms across the years but two of the most familiar deal with how mission work can be done by co-operating congregations and the care of homeless children. A burning issue now has to do with the "*saint only*" position as touching congregational benevolence. Some of its earliest leaders have done an about face on what they formerly preached and practiced and what they now preach and practice. Other forms of this general movement touch Bible classes, the one container on the Lord's Table, located preachers, Bible colleges and the

use of Bible aids in religious instruction.

Liberalism is to the left just as anti-ism is a movement to the right from the straight road of right, the real position of truth. Liberalism tampers with the specifics of God's word. This movement looses what God has bound. It takes liberties with God's word.

In one of my books, *THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP* published by Lambert Book House in Shreveport, Louisiana, I deal in some detail and depth with both anti-ism and liberalism. Anti-ism has within its system the power to destroy the *work* of the church; liberalism would destroy the very *church* of our Blessed Lord.

An endless rash of other issues now confronts us. Cults, long a blight to the religious world in general, have begun to invade us with one man or an elite group who seeks to stand between people and their atoning Lord on high. Successful but sad are the frequent attempts to brainwash all subjects to the thinking of the cultic leader. We have various forms of the occult with astrology, spiritualism, supposed messages brought back from those who have experienced what they call clinical deaths, reincarnation, demon possession today, etc. These are making a greater impact upon some of our members than we would like to think. Many times I have found it necessary in my preaching, lecturing and writing to refute various of the foregoing. This has been done with even members of the church—not just outsiders. Crossroadism has hit us in full force with a mini cultic establishment in Gainesville, Florida, prayer partners, soul talks, quiet times, by-passing eldership authority if they hinder the take-over of congregations for what they now call the *restoring* (the rest of us are just mainstream) churches, the total commitment philosophy to an adopted methodology, the absolute domination of a person's personal life even to the number of hours he may spend with his family, dating choices, etc., have divided congregations all over this country. Yet a preaching brother recently wrote me that he had heard a great many accusations and various innuendoes against Crossroads but nothing he could put his finger upon! I wrote him back relative to all the divided congregations caused by this ism and suggested that here was

something he could put his finger upon and try on for size. What this brother wrote sounds a great deal like some of my brethren who say there is nothing wrong with Billy Graham's preaching until he gets to the invitation. And yet he may have filled the very sermon they heard with denominationalism, premillennialism and some other infamous ism. Biblical ignorance among us is absolutely shameful and pathetic.

We have those who are rewriting God's Manual for Marriage—the Holy Bible. They intend to make the Scriptures fit *all* mixed up and messed up marriage situations today. It is no trouble at all to list many errors held among us by some relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage. These include: (1) a denial that Matthew 19:9 even applies to the Christian Age; (2) a denial that anybody can ever remarry even if fornication is present with one innocent and the other guilty; (3) a growing toleration for remarriage regardless of what ground the first marriage ended; (4) that the world is only under civil law; (5) that Matthew 19:9 is covenant legislation and does not apply unless both husband and wife are Christians; (6) that the guilty party is as free to marry in a case of fornication as is the innocent party; (7) that baptism makes right a formerly adulterous union, etc.

We have those who contend that for the Christian there is *no* law—only grace. One brother made that statement while preaching a series on Galatians. One is made to wonder what exegesis he gave Galatians 6:2 which states, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ"* (Emphasis added). Their umbrella of grace covers just about anything and everybody except those of us who contend for law in Christianity and responsible grace and apparently room runs out under the gigantic umbrella for us! One man claims that Christians are the only ones who can sin all they want to. This man needs a refresher course in what Paul wrote in the latter part of Romans 5 and the opening verses of Romans 6. Another reportedly claims he could die while in the very act of fornication and the grace of God would still save him. Such a person knows little or nothing about New Testament grace. Such statements should cause us all to weep as we read such! Preachers talk glibly about grace which extends law. If that is so, God's plan of

redemption as set out in Holy Writ means nothing!

We have a growing number who deny there is any authority in the eldership except by way of example. They need to understand the very meanings given to the eldership and its work.

Today's church in large measure has forgotten redemption and has gotten on the popular bandwagon of recreation. Entertainment is preferred over edification. Gimmicks are more appealing than the gospel. Things precede in importance the truth that makes men free. Gold soars much higher in members' hearts than does God. The Saviour has to take a constant backseat to silver. Conversations about sex, especially the illicit brand, are more thrilling to the sensual among us than the salvation of their souls in the heavenly hereafter at last.

C. S. Lewis is quoted in some sermons more than is the Lord. Peale is preferred to Paul. Dobson, a Nazarene preacher, is hailed in advertisements sent out by some of our brethren (one lies before me as this sermon is written) as "*America's leading Christian authority on the family.*" Someone recently said that certain of the Nazarenes have voiced the wish that churches of Christ would cut down on showing the Dobson "*Focus on The Family Film Series*" in order that they (the Nazarenes) might use them when needed. What a sad commentary upon us that we actually use material that refers to a man as "*America's leading Christian authority on the family*" when apparently he does not even know how to become a Christian and therefore does not know even the beautiful basics of what composes a true Christian home and how to attain and then maintain such. Numerous congregations among us are using his "*Focus on The Family Film Series*" on Wednesday nights to inject a more fervent interest into Mid-week Bible Study. What happened to the Bible as the drawing interest for Mid-Week services? Is it now obsolete and outdated for such a motivational purpose? If so, we are worse off spiritually than some of us have imagined we are. Are *Dobson* and his *films* more attractive to supposed members of the body of Christ than are *Deity* and the *faith* (the gospel of Christ)? Something is definitely wrong in Spiritual Israel if we have members who will attend a Dobson film on Wednesday nights for a couple months

but will miss the next two months because all that is offered is *Bible Study!*

Family Life Centers at congregational expense are springing up all over and some of them cost a million dollars plus! Yet preparation of preachers, mission works, care of homeless children and helping those who are really down and out due to a loss of health or the loss of their jobs, etc., go begging and are persistently handicapped due to insufficient funds while gymnasiums, dressing rooms, etc., are built and with gaudy elaboration. What ever happened to God's family life center that began in Eden—marriage and a godly home? Good homes and sound churches or congregations who major in spiritual pursuits constitute the finest ways available to keep families together. Proponents of the Family Life Centers say one of the prime purposes of such is to keep the family together in these complex times that actually implement family fragmentation. Yet amazingly amazing is the thought that some congregations who build their Family Life Centers to *keep families together* have the Divided Assembly that *keeps* them *apart* in worship and are *never* together in what the Bible demands for a local congregation—the assembly of worship (I Cor. 11:20; Heb. 10:25).

Worldiness rocks us to the very center of supposed concern for Christ. Yet the Bible is replete with weighty warnings to avoid it (Matt. 13:22; 19:16-22; Luke 12:16-21; II Tim. 4:10; James 1:27; 4:4; I John 2:15-17). Apathy fills entirely too many hearts that should be on fire for the faith. We never seem to learn from the classic case of indifference, listlessness, heartlessness and loathsome lukewarmness in the Bible—the Laodiceans of Revelation 3:14-22. Immorality spreads as a prairie fire among us. We pay no heed to such crystal clear exhortations as Matthew 5:8; I Timothy 4:12; 5:1,2,22; II Timothy 2:22; I Cor. 6:9-20; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:15,16; I John 3:3. Plain emotionalism is appealed to in order to get the finest of Christians to the front seat in a meeting where into the scores or hundreds of responses (seldom any or many baptisms included at all) may be reported. Humanism, the sophisticated form of deadly atheism, is having a heyday throughout the world generally and in our country particularly. Practical atheism has invaded us as many

members think, speak and act daily, as though no God actually existed. Agnosticism appears in the penned works of some of our best known preachers as they claim there is *no* way we can know God exists or that the Bible is his word. It is just a *leap in the dark*" kind of thing with them. I pity such an unfounded and ungrounded faith. Perverted Bibles destroy the integrity of the treasured text that has brought the truth to us. Ad infinitum the problems arise and reel us back on our heels.

CRITICAL AND CRUCIAL ISMS AND ERRORS OF THE FUTURE

Material presented up to this point has focused on isms and errors that have been critical and crucial threats to New Testament Christianity in both ancient and modern times. Now we turn with a telescope aimed at the future in this realm of isms and errors.

The secularization of the Lord's church is an *ominous* threat now on our threshold and it poses dangers that are alarming and frightening to every reverent respecter of the old paths. This tremendous threat is designed to turn the church from its redemptive mission to a recreational mission, from its great work of edification to an extension of entertainment and from the gospel of soul salvation to the social gospel of meeting the secular needs of people and that only. Hence, we are being conditioned right now, and in ever widening circles, toward being sidetracked from truth to the sidelines of the secular. Secularization of saving faith, that faith the Lord's church is to *major* in at all times, will not fit what Jesus declared as his main, majestic, Messianic mission to earth as depicted in Luke 19:10, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" The church's mission is an extension of that majestic mission that belongs to the Mighty Messiah.

Secularization of New Testament Christianity will not fit Matthew 28:18-20 which issues the authoritative charge of teaching truth to all nations and baptizing the taught in the discipling process. Secularization of the Lord's

church will not fit the fundamental framework of Mark 16:15,16 which inculcates gospel proclamation to every creature and the subsequent belief and baptism of those who receive the proclaimed tidings of good, great and glorious news. Secularizing the church will not fit the picture set forth of New Testament Christianity in ardent action either in Acts or the twenty-one epistles. Yet many, many of our once great and good congregations are now on the bandwagon to secularize the Lord's church. Read it and be a modern Jeremiah crying over the apostasy of God's people in the twentieth century. We have no business, NO business at all in making *secular* that which the Lord has made *spiritual*. Yet the Lord's will in the matter will have a backseat in order that the secular thinkers and operators may be in the driver's seat in the secularizing drive. But their success in this secularization will be over every protest and practice that the "old guard" can muster to impede their plans, defeat their purposes and deflate their balloons!

We face the definite threat to denominationalize the Lord's church. Far too many have left us to go into man-made institutions—counterfeit and competing organizations. Others are staying but it is their open, intended and avowed intent to turn the Lord's church into just another denomination among the ones currently here. Their persistent propaganda is that we cease "*peddling our traditions*" that divide us from mainstream Protestant denominationalism. (That word is longer by one letter than premillennialism. It is no wonder that neither is an employed term in a Book that majors in short, simple terms!). But what traditions do they have in mind? If totally honest, and their new theology does not demand integrity, they will have to say that we need to cease our uncompromising emphasis upon Biblical names, the singularity of the Lord's church, the necessity of immersion for the remission of sins, observance of the Lord's Supper *every* Lord's Day and on Sunday only, any and all opposition to mechanical music in worship, proper organization as authorized in Holy Writ, the *one* way to heaven, the Bible as the *only* directive to heaven and our intense insistence that the Scriptures be rightly divided or handled aright relative to the Sinaitic and Christian covenants respectively. When pressed or interrogated on

such issues they usually seek to evade plain, definite and decisive answers. Most of us know why! We have men now appearing on denominational workshops and in sectarian seminars instructing them how to grow and flourish! Jesus never told Sadduceeism how to grow in its infidelity. Peter was never invited to instruct Phariseeism how to flourish. Paul the apostle was never invited by Judaism to help them gain members and grow in influence. John was never invited by the Docetic Gnostics, the Cerinthian Gnostics, the Ebionites or the Nicolaitans on how they might flourish in their snobbish, sensual philosophies. If such men as are invited to such today would go and preach on what is *wrong* with denominationalism and what is *right* with the Lord's church, future invitations would be as scarce as artesian wells are in the middle of the scorching sands of the burning Sahara Desert in North Africa. Will any deny it? If so, upon what reasonable foundation? Mention was made in the early part of this lesson of Brother R. V. Cawthon. He had an experience in early life that illustrates the very thing now conveyed in this section of our study. He frequently related this experience to me in recounting the days of his active ministry as a great and good preacher. The latter is my appraisal of him—not his. One of the Christian churches in Nashville invited him to come and speak for them around the turn of the century. He was not quite sure what he ought to do since he was a very young gospel preacher. He had gone to school to Brother David Lipscomb at the Nashville Bible School and Brother Lipscomb performed his and his wife's marriage ceremony. He went to Brother Lipscomb and told him of the invitation and inquired what course he should take. Brother Lipscomb told him, "*Brother Cawthon, go and preach the gospel to them. You will not be invited back.*" He went and was not! He went and preached the gospel to them; he was not invited back a second time! There is a lesson of much practical value to some of our preachers today if they are listening and reading closely.

We face the ominous threat of being less and less distinctive. This is seen among an increasing number of brethren in playing down the fundamentals of the faith. It is seen in preaching less and less gospel and more and more of Barth, Brunner, Trueblood, Dobson, Peale,

Francis A. Schaeffer, C. S. Lewis, etc. Peale is preferred to Paul; C. S. Lewis is preferred to Jesus Christ. Gospel preachers who have not sold out to the enemy and are yet on the firing line and with as many or more bullets coming from straying brethren as from the outside know deeply in their concerned minds and sincere souls that the Lord's church is distinctive from atheism, paganism, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, modernism, Humanism, liberalism, anti-ism and all the fads and gimmicks that have recently come among us as poisonous innovations.

In the future we can expect more and more attacks on God's existence, Christ's Deity, the Spirit's real work in conversion and sanctification and the Bible's divinely derived origin. We can expect more and more ungodliness, immorality, amorality (no morals at all) and disbelief among us as the world invades deeper and deeper our attitudes and actions. Emotionalism will become a deeper threat. So will proud, defiant, sophisticated and optimistic Humanism. So will the World Religions as they convert more Americans than we convert of them. Atheism with a raw, uncouth, cruel, armed, determined and experienced hand (all the Communist world) will become more and more a threat to the Lord's church. Organic evolution is having a heyday in capturing minds and dehumanizing men into nothing but evolved animals from slime. If monkeys and apes produced us, then we are their children. If the same earthly ancestor, regardless of what it was, produced us as well as monkeys and apes, then we are their brothers or cousins. I would as soon be a son of a monkey or ape as be a brother or cousin to one! The difference between the two would be the same as between tweedledum and tweedledee!

WORDS OF CAUTION

Let us not forget that the battle is not ours alone. If on the side of right and truth, God is our helper. He and one always constitute a majority in any battle. The powerful gist of Revelation teaches that the conflict between truth and error is long and rages relentlessly but truth will ultimately triumph. It did for the early pioneers

of piety; it shall for us also.

In fighting battles against error let us ever keep an essential balance between negatives and positives. Let us never lose sight of stressing the powerful positives of truth. These must be intently and intensely inculcated. We are not fighters only *against error*; we are fighters *for truth*. Let us never be derelict in stressing what is right with the Lord's church. The divine side of the church is perfect; let us work with all diligence and determination to improve greatly the human side of the church. That is you; that is I; that is all who have obeyed the gospel and are right now walking in the light as the Lord is in the light.

THE INVITATION

Have you been converted to Christ? Necessary are changes of heart, life and state or relationship. These changes occur when we hear, believe, repent, confess Christ and are immersed for remission of sins. Why not obey the gospel today and be faithful till death? In eternity you will be glad you did. Remember it was Jesus who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

Marriage Insurance

(Note: For the title and some of the major points in this lesson I am indebted to a warm, loyal friend of long standing—Brother Gentry M. Stults of Daytona Beach, Fla. I heard him give a masterful lesson on this topic at a Training For Service Series in Florence, Alabama, in which he and I were fellow participants in March of 1979. Both of us spoke on various aspects of marriage and the home.)

Almost all of us have some type of insurance. It would be the case with many of us that we have a number of insurance policies. Some say they are insurance poor—they have more and need more than they can pay the premiums on from time to time. We have policies to cover houses and furnishings; we have policies to cover land and barns; we have policies to cover cars, trucks, vans, trailers, etc. We have medical policies to cover us while sick and in desperate need of hospitalization, doctors and out patient services. We have policies to cover our lives and provide a measure of income in case we, the breadwinners, should die suddenly; we have insurance to cover us in case of unemployment, etc. The basic concept underlying all this insurance is protection against some type of loss. Insurance is simply a way, a most practical and prudent way, to do things decently and in order. Most people currently are sold on this prudent plan for guaranteed protection.

“MARRIAGE INSURANCE”

This is not to be a sermon on insurance to cover houses, lands, crops, transportation vehicles, sickness, unemployment, survivors after we are gone with material benefits etc. It is a sermon that touches marital majesty and home happiness. It is a sermon that touches first and

foremost husbands and wives and of course ultimately fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and in-laws when they live in the family situation with a son and his family or a daughter and her family.

Sometime back there appeared a provoking article in the *GETWELL REMINDER* from the great and good Getwell congregation in Memphis, Tennessee. It bore the eye-catching title that heads this sermon, "*Marriage Insurance.*" It is a terse but very truthful article. It noted, "*A recent advertisement in the DALLAS MORNING NEWS, sponsored by a local furniture company read, 'Marriage Insurance,' and went on to say, 'At the national average, one out of every two and one-half marriages end in divorce, but where both husband and wife are Christians, read the Bible and pray together in daily family devotionals, one out of every one-thousand fifteen marriages end in divorce.'* It closed with this question: '*Can you afford not to have this insurance?*' "

Divorce has reached epidemic proportions in immoral America where morals dip lower and lower year by year, month by month, day by day and even hour by hour! When my late father was born around the turn of the century, January 11, 1901, there were about seven hundred and fifty thousand new marriages contracted annually in America. At that time there were about fifty-five to sixty-five thousand divorces in the country as a whole. When he died seventy years later, December 18, 1971, there were slightly more than two million new marriages annually with about seven hundred thousand divorces each year. In one man's lifetime marriages had increased three times what they were the day of his birth but divorce was nearly twelve times higher. By 1975 we registered for the first time in American history one million plus divorces. Also that same year we had another one million separations. The latter is sometimes called "*the poor man's divorce system.*" It, like more expensive, sophisticated and permanent divorce, also means violated vows, broken homes and handicapped children. Together these twin enemies of happy, permanent marriages number about as many as new marriages actually contracted. I realize that statistics relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage can be misleading and at times deceptive. Some of this is due to the fact that many of the same

people are divorcing and getting married two, three, four or five times in a relatively short period. However, any way we look at the American marital community the problem is an acute one, an alarming one, an ascending one in marital failures and home collapses. On Sunday, May 23, 1982, the ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, carried a revealing UPI release that was entitled, "*Marriages, Divorces Up, Statistics Show.*" The information was derived from the Census Bureau's Statistical Abstract of the United States and is the latest information available at the time of this writing. "*The report shows marriages were up in 1980, but not as much as divorces;...There were 2,413,000 marriages in 1980, up from 2,159,000 in 1970, but there were 1,182,000 divorces in 1980, compared to 708,000 in 1970.*"

Satan is now highly successful in shattering millions of lives annually by violated vows, broken homes, adulterous remarriages and untold numbers of precious children who will be emotionally, spiritually, socially and physically scarred and handicapped the remnant of their days on earth. The arch fiend of humanity has some definite, deadly D's that he employs very effectively in marital destruction and family failures. Divorce and desertion are two of them. Drinking and dope play well into his diabolical hands. So does the modern dance. So does deviation where husband turns out to be a homosexual or man lover and wife is straight sexually or wife turns out to be a lesbian or woman lover and husband is straight sexually. A homosexual married to a heterosexual forms an incompatible team. A lesbian married to a heterosexual is no better; it likewise forms an unworkable relationship. These are devilish, destructive, diabolical and deadly D's that every couple must avoid if happiness, harmony and holiness are to be found in the warm and lovely union of marvelous, majestic matrimony.

MARRIAGES DO NOT HAVE TO FAIL

In excess of one million marriages annually do not have to fail by fatal divorce; in excess of one million marriages do not have to fail yearly due to separation or desertion. Many other marriages which barely stay together but with no real happiness or satisfaction do not have to

reel back and forth on the brink of a break-up and ultimately family failure. Your marriage does not have to fail; my marriage does not have to fail; the marriages of your friends do not have to fail. If your marriage has already failed and fallen into permanent disaster, it really did not have to fail. It was caused by a husband who failed, a wife who failed or a combination of both who failed God and each other. God did not will for it to fail; the devil could not make it happen unless one or both mates loaned him helping hands. You and your spouse had the final say! No third party could have made it happen unless there was a let-down of marital fidelity on the part of you, your spouse or both of you. Had you and your spouse taken out sufficient *marriage insurance* it *would* not have failed; it *could* have not failed.

Beloved readers, many of you who read this do not have a marital failure in your past. Some of you are yet young and marriage is yet future. Some of you are happily married. Like the great Warren classic, *MARRIAGE IS FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER*, you have recognized and practiced this guaranteed philosophy for happy marriages and lasting homes.

Marriage insurance is for those who anticipate an attainment into marriage at a future date and for those who have already attained the exciting estate and desire to maintain such. Those with homes intact are intensely interested in marriage insurance. Those who now dream of such likewise are interested in marriage insurance and now is the time to begin drawing up matrimonial provisions.

BEFORE MARRIAGE IS ENTERED

Those who now contemplate marriage in the future need to know what the Bible, God's Inspired Manual of Marriage, says relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage. Responsible people do not buy an insurance policy without knowledge of what they are purchasing. Even more imperative is the permanent policy of marriage which only terminates in an *honorable* way to both parties by physical death. There is an amazing amount of glaring ignorance in the vastly important and deeply significant

realms of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Knowledge and wisdom are musts among those contemplating and entering marriage in our day.

You need to know about the beautiful beginning of marriage as delineated so delightfully in Genesis 2. Jehovah God, man's Creator, looked from the holy heights of heaven upon the apparent loneliness of the man created just a short while earlier (Gen. 2:7,18). The loving Creator declared it to be his divine intent to make for man "*an help meet for him*" (Gen. 2:18). Quite literally the Hebrew means "*a completer*" for the currently incomplete man. As long as Adam was by himself, he was only half of human kind. The other half needed to be formed and fashioned. The Bible says in Genesis 2:21-23,

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Observed in this noble narrative are some striking sentiments. God chose not a bone from man's head as though he intended the woman to be man's head or dictator. He chose not a bone from man's foot as though he intended the woman to be man's doormat and thus trample upon her rights and privileges. He chose a bone from man's side. She was not to be ahead as his superior; she was not to be behind as man's inferior. Very beautifully and appropriately she was to be man's equal. He chose a bone from underneath man's arm. Uniformly within Holy Writ the arm symbolizes power and protection. With his power the loving husband becomes a courageous and constant shield of provided protection for the wife all the days of their marriage. He who forgoes this obligation has lost all right or merit to be called a man in general or a husband in particular. She was taken from near his physical heart. She in unique fashion would be the heartbeat of marriage. Without a physical heart man cannot be; without a wife, marriage of the right kind cannot be. The woman was/is eminently worthy of man's lasting love, his abiding affection. Observed also in this breathtakingly beautiful narrative is the fundamental that

marriage, ideally, requires a threesome instead of a twosome arrangement. Marriage is not to be just a straight line with husband at one end and wife at the other. It is to be a triangle with God situated firmly and fully at the top angle and husband and wife at the base angles. Yet in millions of marriages God is the unknown factor in the marital equation. This is sad; it is inexpressibly sad!

Observed also in Genesis 2:18-24 is the realization that marriage is heterosexual in nature—not homosexual in design. God made and joined not two men—not two women—but a man (Adam) and a woman (Eve). Depraved and degraded indeed is a society that requires this holy type of heterosexual emphasis to be spelled out but it now has to be in view of so-called homosexual marriages becoming more and more acceptable. In times past most all men and women contemplating marriage knew and accepted the heterosexual concept of marriage minus all questionings or quibbles.

Before marriage its anticipated parties should know what made or marred marriages in Bible times. Genesis 2 and Malachi 2 are cases in point. Genesis 2 is a maker of marriages; Malachi 2 is a spoiler of marriages. The contrasts are many in these two chapters. Marriage is majestic in Genesis 2; it is marred in Malachi 2. Marriage has God as author in Genesis 2; Malachi 2 has Satan as author of divorce. Genesis 2 is a stately synonym for cleaving; Malachi 2 is a sad synonym for leaving. There is glue in Genesis 2; the glue is gone in Malachi 2. God smiles on marriage in Genesis 2; he frowns on divorce in Malachi 2. Man is happy with his *desired* mate in Genesis 2; man is harsh with his *unwanted* mate—the very wife of his youth and of a binding covenant—in Malachi 2. Contemplated marriages should aim at Genesis 2; contemplated marriages should shy away from the standards practiced in Malachi 2. Before marriage the man and woman should make a close study of majestic marriages in the Bible and then of marred marriages in Holy Writ. The former should be emulated; the latter should be avoided.

Before marriage one needs to know what Jesus taught about marriage, divorce and remarriage in Matthew 5:31,32 and 19:3-9. He taught that he, not Moses, is to be the author of marriage under the Christian

Dispensation. He taught that the same one who made man and woman at the beginning is the Heavenly Author of marriage. Infidels do not know how marriage came about to be or by whom it was begun. Bible believers know both the *how* and the *who*. Jesus taught that in marriage there is a *leaving* and a *cleaving*. Parents are left; the marital spouse is the one to whom there must be a constant and permanent cleaving. Divorce reverses this and calls for a leaving and an end to the cleaving. Jesus taught that marriage is a blending of two into one. They are no more twain or two but are one flesh. He gave his general law of marriage. It is, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matt. 19:6). He provided explanation for Mosaic toleration for divorce. Hard hearts—not Jehovah's desired will and wish—prompted a Mosaic concession to God's original intents for marriage. Jesus gave the exception to his general law in Matthew 19:9. It reads, "*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*" The grammatical force of "*except*" in Greek means "*if, and only if*" one (the innocent party) puts away the guilty party (the fornicator) may he/she (innocent party only) enter into another acceptable marriage. As long as the two of them live there is one ground and one ground only that breaks the tie that binds. That lone ground is fornication—the actual physical act—not simply heart adultery that never materializes into the actual act of unfaithfulness in the sexual realm. Be it emphasized again that the innocent party *alone* is free to enter into marriage with another. The guilty party is not free to contract marriage with another party. Why? God's law does not permit such. He/she cannot qualify for the lone exception set forth within this passage. The guilty party does not have a fornicating mate to put away; he/she is the fornicating mate; the other is the innocent one, the injured one, the one who has not swayed maritally but has been sinned against unjustly, unmercifully with deep emotional injury. The guilty party is the actual one put away due to his/her having committed the most atrocious act in matrimony—the capital crime of marriage—brutal, ugly, insensitive and flagrant fornication. Inspiration's

portrait of how ugly, degrading and far-reaching in consequences fornication is can be seen in I Corinthians 5 and 6:9-20. The opening verses of Matthew 19 need to be understood by every couple who enters marriage currently. This needs to be prior knowledge—not knowledge subsequent to entrance into marriage.

Before marriage one surely needs to make a thorough study of I Corinthians 7. This chapter contains forty verses and is almost an entire chapter of material on marriage. In it Paul answers various questions relative to marriage that had been sent him by concerned Corinthian Christians. It is an absolute must for those who contemplate marriage and desire a marriage upon which the smiles of Jehovah's grace will rest.

Before marriage one should know what Paul wrote about husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:22-23. Marriage is an institution filled with duties of reciprocity. The wife is to be submissive and respectful toward husband (Eph. 5:22-24,33). The husband is given a double criteria relative to loving his wife. (1) He is to love wife as Christ loves the church and has given himself up for his holy, spiritual bride (Eph. 5:25). (2) Husband is to love wife as he loves his own body (Eph. 5:28ff). Marriage is truly reciprocal and Paul majors in discussing these mutual manifestations and eloquent exhibitions toward each other.

Before marriage one should know just how permanent marriage was/is in the Pauline mind. His illustration in Romans 7:2,3 sets forth the Pauline concept God inspired him to write into profound Romans.

Before marriage one should be impressed properly with this grand and glorious summation of marriage's lovely legacy, its holy heritage as set forth in Hebrews 13:4 wherein we read, "*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*" This verse alone shows what is wrong with just living together intimately with no marriage background and none planned for the future. Illicit sex made easy and convenient is the prime motivation of this popular but glaringly wrong life style.

Before marriage potential wives should ponder well Peter's instructions to Christian wives in I Peter 3:1-6. Submission, true character development and an intense

desire to emulate holy wives of anitquity form a trio of Petrine imperatives. Every potential husband should ponder well and with personal profit these words,

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (I Pet. 3:7).

The husband should have an understanding of his wife. Women have a different composition physically and emotionally than do men. They must be given honor; they are beloved persons of preciousness. Husband and wife should be a team of holiness and harmony in the home in order that their prayers may not be hindered or short-circuited on their way to Jehovah's throne of grace.

Ignorance is neither bliss nor beautiful relative to Biblical knowledge pertaining to marriage and family. Knowledge of God's will toward marvelous and majestic matrimony is an intense imperative. Dispensing with it is an open invitation toward marital mismanagement and family failure.

PLAN FOR AND EXECUTE A WISE COURTSHIP

The late and lamented Brother Gus Nichols of Jasper, Alabama, who preached the gospel for many years, frequently styled this "*the court of inquiry period.*" It should be a time where the young man and the young lady become acquainted with each other relative to respective backgrounds, common interests, mutual plans for a family, how children should be reared, religious interests, spiritual priorities, money matters, occupations, in-law consideration, where to live, on what to live, how to live, etc.

The major decision in any person's life is his decision to obey the gospel thus becoming a Christain and then the living of the Christian life. The second greatest decision that any person ever makes is his/her choice of a matrimonial mate. One's choice of a marital mate will have much to do with whether one lives successfully and faithfully the Christian life. It is true that some people have remained faithful to the Lord even with an irreligious and irreverent mate by his/her side but such has not been without difficulty as anyone who has experienced it would inform

us rather quickly. Brother Thomas B. Warren's classic work on MARRIAGE IS FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD AND ONE ANOTHER says it so well and so wisely. The brilliant Warren superbly states the correct concept which should underlie every marriage. (1) God should be first in affection. (2) One's mate should be next in love.

During courtship there should be the realistic facing of some rather critical and crucial questions. (1) Is this person eligible to marry? If not, the courtship should end *yesterday!* In fact it should never have begun. The quicker it ends the better it will be for both parties concerned. It is wiser *never* to date someone that first time who is ineligible to marry. The first date, quite frequently, is the first step to the marital altar. (2) Is this person a Christian? By all means marry a devout Christian. Be a devout Christian yourself in order that your mate to be may not be robbed in the matrimonial union. When God's child marries into the devil's family, he is going to have constant trouble with his spiritual father-in-law and it is not long usually in arriving and it almost always stays when it arrives. There should be neither question nor quibble relative to this strategic point. (3) Are backgrounds similar enough to promise reasonable success that marriage can be happy, lasting, productive of glory to God and of mutual helpfulness to each other. Where there is a marked or even radical contrast in education, religion, money, toward having children or not wanting them, in temperament, in entertainment policies and philosophy, in matters of honesty and integrity as best or the inexpedient policy of honesty, etc., there will be remote and uneven chances of compatibility in the formation of such matrimonial unions. Age is another vital factor. Sometimes a November-June marriage (vast age difference in the couple) works out but frequently it does not. It is but a point of prudent realism to weigh with care age factors. (4) Do I always choose a *date* fit for a *mate* in marriage? People marry from among dating choices and acquaintances. It just works that way in our current culture. Dating someone who is fit for marriage is a prudent practice and yet vast multitudes in dating and courtship totally ignore the rightness of this rule. (5) Am I going to marry for love or with an ulterior motive in mind such as money,

prestige, to obtain leave from an unhappy, undesirable home situation, to prove to my already married friends that I also can make the marital grade or upon the flimsy basis of emotional infatuation with a handsome physique or a beautiful face and figure? These do not form wise building blocks for stable, solid and satisfying marriages over a long lifetime of ebb and flow experiences. A Biblical brand of love is the only cement that can make marriage what Jehovah and Jesus Christ intended this sacred and solemn institution to be. (6) Am I going to use real prudence and wisdom in the selection of a mate or just narrow down the possibilities by several flips of the coin? In the selection of a spouse some people use no more mature judgment than did a cute five-year-old boy who had several little girl friends on his string of interests. Faced with the question as to which one he would claim as *number one* he said he would just put all of them in a sack, shake them up and the one who came out on top would be his *number one* choice! That is amusing and cute when a child is five; it is alarming when one fifteen or twenty years older uses some similar practice when he is approaching marriage age and matrimonial entrance. Multitudes of marriages have begun on no less an intelligent plan than the cute child's plan with his girl friends!

ARDENTLY AIM FOR MARITAL PERMANENCY

This should be the dominant tone at the entrance of every marriage and it should be the continuing tenor upon which the marriage remains until death takes either husband or wife. A poll was made sometime back in the northeastern part of the United States. Hundreds of women were asked if they would favor marriage on the lease plan where two people married for one, three or five years and make it renewable or forever ended at the end of the projected period. An amazing twenty per cent favored such an infamous, devilish, diabolical plan! This novel plan would keep some together longer however than they now stay for some marry and divorce in less than a one, three or five year period. Marital longevity of the past has now become marital "*shortevity*" for millions of couples in our land.

Jesus Christ and his Heavenly Father are still on Biblical record as saying in essence that marriage is for keeps; it is strictly "*till death do you part*"—not "*as long as love lasts*"—as a denominational preacher in

Tennessee has begun to use in recent years. Such a preacher needs to vacate the marriage ceremony business. He is a signal discredit and total disgrace to it. With the evasive and hazy concept that many have toward love, it can dissolve about as quickly in marriage as the morning mist does before the rising Monarch of the sky. The Lord says, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matt. 19:6). The apostle Paul is still on Biblical record as stressing so very strictly,

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man...The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth: but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord (Rom. 7:2,3; I Cor. 7:39).

Marriage is a serious, solemn step; it is permanent in its duration; it should be entered with this permanent concept in mind—not with a temporary union in mind.

CONSIDER WITH CARE DIVORCE

At one time in our past, divorce bore a stigma in society even among non-religious people. It surely did among those who respected the Bible. Now that stigma is largely lost even among those who claim to respect the Bible for what it says.

One woman is reported to have said she expected to gain a large financial settlement from her husband by means of a divorce. Her only problem was how to get the man to marry her in order that later she might divorce him!

Jehovah God made no provisions for divorce in Genesis 2. It was due to the hardness of human hearts, according to Jesus in Matthew 19:8, that a leeway of tolerance was granted relative to it under Moses. In Malachi 2 God sounded forth his definite distaste for the putting away process or divorce in no uncertain terms. Jesus, in Matthew 19:9, allowed divorce and remarriage upon one ground and *one only* and that was fornication or actual physical unfaithfulness. Then he only grants remarriage rights for the innocent to marry another without its being adulterous in its continuous nature.

Those who may be thinking of divorce should weigh with genuine gravity and deep solicitous care the grave, far-reaching step they currently envision. Divorce is not a sure-fire problem solver; quite frequently it compounds problems. It often deepens problems already there, problems that are heartbreaking. Its fruits are bitterly-produced attitudes in the hearts of both parties as a usual rule. It inevitably leads to handicapped children. It is the constant fuel that feeds to overflowing the entrance into adulterous marriages. Hence, it is destructive to souls that will live forever in one of two destinies. Many times a person who divorces another for very distasteful habits or weaknesses will choose for second, third or fourth spouses the same basic type of person that led to collapse of marriage number one. This is amazingly amazing. There are no more deadly words spoken in our country on any given day of judicial proceedings than that immeasurably sad duet of burdensome words, "*Divorce granted.*" Thus the banged gavel ends what began as a noble dream and high aspiration at a marriage altar on a happy day of the now forgotten and ignored past. Yet this duet of words is spoken in excess of three thousand times each day in our land.

WORK DAILY IN BUILDING A GOOD, STABLE AND HAPPY MARRIAGE

Marriage can be marvelous and majestic; it can be happy, harmonious and holy. Next to our relationship to Christ and Christians in the church it is the nearest place to heaven on earth. Happy marriages do not happen by chance or accident. Couples have to work in unison with God and each other for such to materialize. Daily we need to practice the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12 that demands a treatment of the other as we wish to be treated. Husbands and wives should seek to "*out-nice*" each other—not "*out-knife*" each other. The former *builds* marriages; the latter *destroys* marriages.

In Ephesians 4:32 Paul inculcates the "*be ye kind*" philosophy, tenderhearted, sympathetic concern and a posture of pardon. Kindness builds happy marriages; harshness destroys homes. TLC, tender, loving care, is a building block of happy, rewarding marriages. HHC, hard-hearted callousness, will topple any marriage and the collapse will not be long in coming.

Just after concluding his wise, weighty words to wives and husbands, I Peter 3:1-7, Peter injects the exhortation

of "*be courteous*" into I Peter 3:8. Obviously, it is of far wider application than just marriage but surely would include husband and wife relationships also. Courtesy is usually an expected art in courtship. It rightly belongs in wooing and winning a mate for life. If anything though, it becomes even more important subsequent to the vow exchange. Unfortunately, it sometimes ends when the honeymoon fades. The young man in courtship will delicately help his date over a square foot puddle of water lest she get a foot wet! When married and a baby in one arm and leading another by the hand he will ford a river walking ahead and call back in disgust, "*Come on, slow poke!*" A lifetime of Christian courtesy eliminates such inconsiderate behavior.

LOVE: THE FOUNDATION OF HAPPY, HOLY AND HARMONIOUS HOMES

Would you know what Biblical love for marriage is all about? It is to love God supremely and your spouse next. These are the two most important steps of happy home foundations and formations. Love is delightfully depicted by Paul as he says,

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth...But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love (I Cor. 13:4-8,13--ASV).

Why not give yourself a test at this point of our study? As a husband or wife can you really put your name where love is in this marvelous message and truly declare, "*That is my daily goal in my own marriage and in the love I extend to my spouse daily?*"

We shall have better parents when we have better marital mates. Better children will be one of the happy and holy fruits of such.

Proper marriage insurance by all marital partners *today* would close divorce courts *tomorrow*. Their services would no longer be of any need. In fact their chambers could be permanently padlocked.

Better and happier homes would be a great blessing to the world. In their absence all suffer. Someone has

well said,

There is no peace in the world because there is no order in the nation. There is no order in the nation because there is no harmony in the home. There is no harmony in the home because there is no beauty in the character. There is no beauty in the character because there is no righteousness in the heart.

Let us do a better job in *attaining* happy marriages and then in *maintaining* them. Let us make homes happy, holy and harmonious.

CONCLUSION

Have you, by gospel obedience, ever been married to Christ, the great Spiritual Bridegroom (Rom. 7:4)? To become a part of his beautiful bride—the church—you must hear him, believe in him, repent of sins, confess faith in his Deity and be immersed in water for or unto the remission of sins. Then love him, wear his name, be loyal to him and die at last in the warm embrace of victorious faith. Heaven will then be yours.

Remember though that it was Jesus who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

CHAPTER NINE

Thy Will Be Done In Unity

Much of the religious world claims avid and ardent interest in unity or at least what they claim to be unity. However, their brand of unity is man-centered—not God-centered or Bible-centered. That is why the Bible is really not consulted in their unity forums, their union seminars and their ecumenical movements. This lesson will stress why man-made unity cannot work and why God's plan of unity *can* and *will* work.

TWO FOUNDATIONAL PASSAGES

Jesus stressed in the stately Sermon on the Mount, "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:9,10). Note the stately standard for what is to be done on earth. It is as God's will is done in heaven. Up there his will is done completely, promptly, respectfully, reverently and happily. The second passage is drawn from Paul's pen wherein he wrote,

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:3-6).

Combined these precious passages lend emphasis to the concept of God's will and real unity in the Spirit. We have set forth therein quite beautifully and majestically our very title of this sermon, "*Thy will be done in unity.*"

THIS IS AN IMPERATIVE STUDY

It is eminently important that we zero in on the doing of God's will generally and particularly in matters

pertaining to this marvelous unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace to which the peerless Paul alluded. Many religionists of our era have little or no affection for the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven on high. They may give it lip service but in teaching and action they deny it from beginning to end in their man-centered religious activities. So many in the religious world are somewhat like the two ladies who once responded to me in personal conversations relative to mechanical instruments in worship. One belonged to the Christian church. She said in all candor, "*I know there is no New Testament authority for their use in worship; my brethren and I use them because we like them.*" Preference or personal desire was a matter of priority to her. The other had come out of denominationalism for awhile, remained in the Lord's church temporarily and returned to another denomination. In inquiring why the change she said to me in essence, "*I know there is no authority for them (the mechanical instruments) in the New Testament but I just feel more comfortable in worship when they (organ or piano) are present and played.*" These attitudes are will-worship gone to seed and then some (Col. 2:23).

This study will define unity, clear up misconceptions about it, list some Herculean obstacles to it, present the Biblical case for unity and exhibit why Christian unity is such a beneficial, beautiful and bright reality when it is attained and then maintained.

In his second tabernacle meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1923, Brother N. B. Hardeman, one of the greatest preachers of this or any age since Inspiration ended, said relative to unity,

The greatest curse on this earth tonight is religious division. The greatest hindrance to the cause of Christ is denominational rivalry. The greatest handicap and the greatest discouragement unto faithful, godly men is the fact that people who claim to be members of the body of Christ are torn asunder, riven, by human opinions, popular preference, rather than submit to God will, all speak the same thing, and be of one mind and one judgment, as the Lord prayed and for which the apostles pleaded (HARDEMAN'S TABERNACLE SERMONS, Vol. II, p. 178).

The *RANDOM HOUSE UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY* defines the term to mean, "The state of being one, oneness, absence of diversity; unvaried or uniform character; oneness of mind, feeling among a number of persons, concord, harmony or agreement." Webster's definition is substantially similar.

The Hebrew word—*yachad*—means "at one or together."

The Greek word—*henotes*—means, according to Thayer on page 217 of his great Lexicon, "unanimity, agreement."

Amos in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament define it very practically by stating respectively,

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?...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 (Amos 3:3; I Cor. 1:10).

CLEARING UP SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

Many people seemingly think that union and unity are synonymous terms. They are not. A hardened criminal and a law enforcement officer who arrests him are temporarily handcuffed. This involves a brief union but no type of real unity—they are on totally different sides of the law! Two cats may be tied together and thrown across a clothes' line. This would be union but not unity as the subsequent fight would amply prove. Many religious groups through the years have had their union meetings but went away as lacking in real unity as ever.

Simply agreeing to disagree is not unity. Yet religious groups in mass do this respecting origins, names, doctrines, organization, mission, emphasis and future directions of travel. "Unity in diversity" relative to Bible doctrine is no real unity at all. Unity, as earlier defined, is "absence of diversity." Yet many are on top of the popular bandwagon of "unity in diversity."

Looking the other way relative to doctrinal differences is not Biblical unity. Yet it is done quite frequently. Two groups disagree. Each determines to look the other

way, do its own thing and yet walk the broad way of so-called unity religiously.

Love covers all disagreements some contend. It surely is a false concept of love to think that all disagreements and divisions can be dissolved in that manner. Real love is an imperative in attaining and maintaining Biblical unity. Love touches the Godhead, the Bible, the church, the gospel and the best interest of human souls. Many have warped views of what love is all about. In the very same chapter where Paul speaks of the unity of Spirit he also enjoins our speaking truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Truth is the one thing about which the unity promoters in denominational circles care but little or nothing. Love, unity and truth have an active and ardent affinity and should not be severed at all as some attempt to do.

Some say love unites while doctrine divides. This is a subtle and diabolical effort to divorce Biblical love and Biblical doctrine. Jesus stressed unity in John 17:20-23. But it was to be a unity achieved and maintained by means of apostolic word or doctrine. The truth of the matter is that warped love produces division and wrong doctrine is incapable of producing unity. Right doctrine is essential for the kingly unity. Right doctrine is essential for the kingly kind of unity the Lord had in mind in his long, intercessory prayer of John 17:20-23.

Many people contend that we all have the Spirit in us and surely our differences are not that consequential. Some claim the Spirit as personal possession and yet never have done what the Spirit demands in the New Testament to become and remain a Christian. Does it seem reasonable that the Spirit would demand unity in the very Book he inspired and then plead for division by some type of subjective, personal, direct indwelling? If differences are not all that vital in the realm of doctrine or teaching that came from the Holy Spirit initially, why did he urge Paul to command the Corinthians to be of the same mind and to speak the same thing (I Cor. 1:10)?

Some lay aside their differences and divisions by saying in essence, "*We are divided but we are all traveling to the same destination—just taking different roads to get there.*" For justification they will mention travel to some well known city and speak of several ways

to get there. The parallel they project is not there!! It would be foolish to argue there is just one way to New York City, Chicago or Portland when any intelligent traveler knows that a variety of ways will get him to any of these cities. Maps speak of different routes of travel to these American cities. However, the Bible does not speak of a multiplicity of ways to heaven. That is where the attempted parallel breaks down. The Bible speaks of only one way to heaven. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life according to Johannine affirmation on John 14:6. In Matthew 7:13 Jesus spoke of the narrow way—not ways—and which destination is life. Christianity is *the* way—not *ways*! Hebrews 10:20 speaks of “*A new and living way*”. There are hundreds of ways to heaven which the religious world fondly favors and ardently affirms. But the Bible fondly favors and ardently affirms only one way to the holy city, the new Jerusalem on high. That one way is the way of gospel obedience. Just as there is the one Lord so there is the one gospel. The one gospel produces just the one way to the heavenly hereafter. Do the proponents of the view of a multiplicity of ways to heaven ever give book, chapter and verse authority for all these imagined ways to heaven? I have been preaching for a third of a century and yet have to hear that first attempted book, chapter and verse citation. If they had Scripture for such, they would not have to resort to the argument that going to heaven is like going to an earthly city. Even if such proponents sought to give Scriptural sanction and warrant from the word of God, it would be of a signal interest to know what they would cite as Biblical proof.

Others contend that it is impossible to be united religiously. Just who says this? The very ones who say we cannot understand the Bible alike. Neither one has a Biblical basis. If we all understand the Bible at all, then we have to see it alike for it only means one thing. I may not understand it; you may not. But if we both understand God's Book correctly or accurately, then we understand it alike. If not, why not? Likewise, we can be united. To deny such possible adds up to making the Lord's prayerful petition an utter impossibility in John 17:20-23. It means Paul's plea in I Corinthians 1:10 was incapable of attainment. It but means that the Spirit gave

us the seven unities and knew all the time they were beyond mortal grasp. Those who so contend need to look at Acts 2 and 4 and observe a group of thousands of early disciples who actually were of one heart, one mind and one soul. They realized the Lord's quest for unity in John 17:20-23.

Many say that "*all unity is good and all division is bad.*" This is not necessarily true at all!! Criminals may be united in crime; people of vice are united in corruption; false teachers are united in error. At times divisions have to occur on the part of the righteous from adamant teachers of heresy. The statement, to be correct or accurate needs to read, "*Bible-based unity is good and sinful division is wrong.*" We must exercise constant vigilance else we be carried away by these devious misconceptions relative to unity.

HERCULEAN OBSTACLES TO UNITY

Roman Catholicism is one such obstacle. They make a untiy pitch to the world. They brag and boast about the great unity they enjoy and how badly divided Protestantism currently is. Roman Catholicism apparently possesses a short, convenient memory. One of the greatest chasms in all religious history rocked Catholicism in 1054 A.D. from stem to stern. That is why the religious world has had the Oriental or Eastern and the Western or Latin branches now for nearly a thousand years. There is *still* much division in these two major movements and especially the Roman branch. If you doubt it, look at the clamor in recent years about birth control controversy between the bachelors in hierarchal control such as the Pope and all his Bishops and priests who rubber stamp Papal decisions and rank and file of Catholic couples who deeply resent Papal and priestly infiltration into their very bedrooms! Look at the clamor created recently by some Catholic women who resent the fact that priestly roles are filled by men only and not open to women at all. View some of their recognized leaders who speak of the church as outmoded, still too much in the Middle Ages and even daringly suggest that neither Pope nor Church is infallible. By no stretch of the religious imagination is Roman Catholicism the answer to

the great unity challenge of our era. Quite to the contrary, it serves as a great Herculean obstacle to such Bible unity built on apostolic words as set forth in the New Testament. To the contrary and in complete contradiction of the same, Roman Catholicism stresses the authority of traditions, the power of Papal pronouncements, the counsel of church councils and priestly interpretations of what little of the Bible they do accept. Roman Catholicism desires to add too much to the Bible to have anything like the Biblical answer for religious unity in our day.

Protestantism is another Herculean obstacle. Its very origin in the sixteenth century as a protest against Romanism soon developed religiously into a division the likes of which the world had never seen before. The movement now is fractured or splintered off into hundreds of religious groups with each group's having its own peculiar package of dogmas to which it subscribes and to which it demands allegiance from all who become part and parcel of the same. Protestantism denies either directly or practically everyone of the great Pauline ones eloquently enunciated in Ephesians 4:4-6. Protestants deny the supreme power or sovereignty of the one God, the one Lord Jesus Christ and the one revelation of authority—the Bible—as inspired by the one Spirit of Holiness. They accept hundreds of religious bodies. They have a number of conflicting hopes—rapture, premillennial and a renovated earth for an eternal home for all but a certain class. They readily accept a multiplicity of faiths. They reject Bible baptism and teach sufficient types of so-called baptisms to fit the preferences of almost everyone. Protestants at one time possibly had greater respect for the Bible than did their corrupt Catholic counterpart but the Bible is now a rejected and outmoded book among a growing number of religious groups composing modern day Protestantism. "*The Bible only makes Christians only*" is not about to be accepted by Protestantism of our time. Were they to do so, it would mean going out of business for every one of them without exception. Like the traditionally-bound Pharisees of Matthew 15 and Mark 7 they are much too fond of the doctrines and commandments of men to put all their trust and confidence in the word of God Almighty or the

Holy Bible. The answer the world needs as touching Biblical unity is not found in Protestantism.

Modern Judaism is another Herculean obstacle to the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17:20-23 and for which the apostle Paul strongly pleaded in I Corinthians 1:10ff. Judaism in our day denies the Deity of Jesus, the inspiration of the New Testament and the divine derivation of the Lord's church. All of these are cardinal toward Christian unity. Infidelic Jews are not God's people. How then can they be the answer to religious unity? They cannot be.

World Religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Taoism, Confucianism, etc., are additional obstacles of Herculean caliber against real Christian unity. They reject the God of the Bible, the Christ of the Bible, the Holy Spirit of the Bible, the one and only true religion of Christianity as set forth in the Bible and all the various fundamentals of that faith made holy. In no sense of the term are they real, basic answers for Christian unity in our day.

Modern cultism is another obstacle to Christian unity. As a rule cultism is built on one man or an elite group of men who stand between their subjects and the devotion and loyalty they should give Deity. Brainwashed serfs—not men and women of Christian liberty and freedom in truth—compose cultism and keep the coffers filled and overflowing with money. And money is their heartbeat. There is not a single one of the cults that is willing to give Jesus Christ his rightful due and proper honor in the hearts of their duped devotees. There is not one single, solitary cultic leader who is willing to accede to the Bible the loyalty and devotion it must have if there is to be Christian unity. It has been reported that *no* Bibles were found in the aftermath of Guyana and the bloodbath triggered by Jim Jones. Earlier in his career Jim Jones, one of the most infamous cultic leaders of our era, once cast the Bible down to the floor in utter disgust and accused his followers of paying more attention to it than to him! He viewed the Bible as his enemy and evidently destroyed its presence among his followers at the last. The Bible is an enemy to all forms of modern cultism. Cultism, in fact, is not the answer to anything that is really wholesome and worthwhile in our day. If so, just

what would it be?

Another major or Herculean obstacle to unity is occultism. Included are astrology, spiritualism, reincarnation, demon possession and so-called exorcism for our day, witchcraft, Satanism, etc. Astrology is too interested in stars, the House of Zodiac and its various signs to be guided by a Saviour. Spiritualism majors in imagined messages from the dead and the mercenary medium through which such supposedly comes. They are not interested in the gospel that flows from him who really possesses the keys of death, Hades and the great beyond. Reincarnation is more interested in coming back in a variety of bodily forms than in making the most of the one and only pilgrimage that any of us is allowed on earth. Since when have you heard any ardent patron of this reincarnation folly advocate the claim of the Christ as touching gospel basics or give the full New Testament plea for the unity of the Spirit that Paul portrayed in Ephesians 4:1-6? Demon possession and so-called exorcism are far more interested in a modern day application and misapprehension of a reality in Bible times when there was real supernatural power available to cast such out of the afflicted but *not* a reality today at all than they are in preaching the gospel in general and emphasizing the principles of Christianity in particular for our era. Witchcraft specialization today is in superstition, fakery, black magic, deception and so many areas that touch the current drug culture. Witchcraft or sorcery is uninterested in the unity of the Spirit. Paul met witchcraft or sorcery in Acts 13 with Elymas just as Phillip, Peter and John met it in Samaria with Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8. In neither case did the apostles Paul, Peter, John and the inspired evangelist Phillip suggest that sorcery or witchcraft forms the workable base upon which Christian unity might be erected. It should be obvious to all that Satanism or the church of Satan that was formed in 1966 in California is not the proper basis for Christian unity. Truly, occultism is a serious, Herculean obstacle toward attaining and maintaining Christian unity.

Those who bind where God has not bound are another serious, Herculean obstacle to unity. Anti-ism majors in this. They bind in areas of located preachers, Bible classes, the one container for the fruit of the vine,

congregational co-operation in evangelism and benevolence, care of the needy and orphans by the church, use of uninspired Bible aids, etc. Anti-ism is very proficient in legislation, i. e., making laws where God made none. Needless division has been the bitter fruit of this movement. Anti-ism is surely not the way to Christian unity.

Those who loose where God has bound are another serious, Herculean obstacle to unity. They wish to restructure the church by liberalizing its basic teaching, worship, fellowship approach with others, mission of the church, organization, teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage, etc. These liberals are much less strict than God is. Liberalism is not the wise way to achieve and then maintain Christian unity.

Another kindred and serious obstacle to Christian unity is the very spirit that has produced antis and liberals. I speak of those who utterly fail to make a distinction between generic law and specific law. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 enjoins us to go. Go is generic. The command may be obeyed by walking, running, riding, sailing, etc. It would be a serious mistake at this point to suggest that the "Go" may only be obeyed by walking. That would exclude all other forms of transportation. The word *teach* in Matthew 28:19 and the word *preach* in Mark 16:15 are generic as touching a chosen method that we might decide upon for the actual execution of the commands. Yet they are specific in limiting us to what is actually conveyed, i.e., truth, gospel or commands of Christ. God told us to care for orphans and widows in such places as James 1:27. Just how it is to be done is not spelled out but left in the practical realm of expediency. The besetting sin of anti-ism has been its adamant determination to turn the generics of the gospel into specifics. The besetting sin of liberalism has been its sheer determination to treat the various specifics of Scripture as though they were generics. The way to Christian unity is found in neither approach.

Unity in diversity is another Herculean obstacle to genuine Christian unity. This is the *in* thing in so-called unity circles of our day. Its adherents have suggested that there is a distinction between gospel and doctrine. They

contend that gospel is what one presents to the world; doctrine is what one presents to the church or the saved. They say doctrine cannot be taught to the world and that gospel cannot be taught to the church. But Paul was ready to preach the gospel to the church at Rome as we learn from Romans 1:14-17. Members of the Jewish Sanhedrin accused the apostles of Christ in Acts 5:28 of filling Jerusalem with doctrine (KJV) or teaching (ASV). This new unity movement also says that one cannot disfellowship in matters of doctrine but only in matters of the gospel. But Paul told the Romans in Romans 16:17 to mark them which cause offenses and divisions contrary to the *doctrine* which they had learned and avoid them. This movement further says that one only fellowships in matters wherein people are concerned but Paul told the Ephesian brethren that they were to have no fellowship at all with the unfruitful *works* of darkness (Eph. 5:11). The process goes on and on in efforts to tell us how we can disagree on doctrinal points and still be in fellowship. Unity in diversity is not the way to attain and maintain Christian unity.

Creed-makers and their divisive documents are another major, Herculean obstacle to Christian unity. They are much like the Pharisees, scribes and elders of Christ's day who loved man-made doctrines and commandments far more than heavenly derived truth. When there was a conflict between the two, as was frequently the case, they preferred the works of men over the commands of the God they supposedly served. Mark 7:6-13 is a graphic portrayal of this. Colossians 2:18-23 speaks of those who reject the will of God and its perfected wisdom for matters of will-worship. Will-worship is based on man's will—not Jehovah's will. Yet this is precisely what creed-makers and discipline designers have fostered upon the religious world—a devilish desire to obey the doctrines and commandments of men and to treat God's will with utter contempt and absolute disdain. Relative to creeds of men in the realm of religion a great preacher of the past, Brother Benjamin Franklin of Indiana, voiced four Herculean objections against their authoritative use in seeking to bind the hearts and consciences of humanity. (1) If they contain more than the Bible, we reject them because they contain too much. (2) If they have less than

the Bible, we reject them because they contain too little. (3) If they contain something different than the Bible, we reject them because they are different. (4) If they are just like the Bible with nothing added, nothing subtracted, nothing changed, nothing modified and no substitutions made, we reject them because they are superfluous. We already have the Bible and do not need something just like it. Creeds, disciplines, manuals, etc., have always been divisive and will continue to be. Surely and conclusively, they are not the answer to the world's imperative need for unity.

Religious leaders fondly favorable of newsmaking mergers constitute another Herculean obstacle toward attaining and maintaining the real Biblical unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace of which Paul spoke so wonderfully and warmly in Ephesians 4:3. Back in the 1950's a number of prominent Protestants assembled for deliberations relative to a possible merger of their memberships and forces. They met in a large southwestern city and ultimately presented a unity document several thousand words (fifty thousand as I now recall) in length. I followed their proceedings with intent interest as a young preacher. When their verbose approach finally emerged into their unity and merger document the contrast between what they were doing and the Pauline plan of unity in Ephesians 6:4-6 hit me with fullness of force. Paul's plan contains thirty-five Greek words in my Greek text and the KJV and the ASV translators employed just forty-one words to set the plan into English. Paul's plan is workable because it is divine wisdom; their plan is not workable because it is human wisdom. More recently another similar movement emerged into the news. An update of its decisions appeared in *THE COMMERCIAL-APPEAL*, January 30, 1982. It bore the eye catching title, "*Church Leaders Act To Narrow Differences.*" The article is much too long to include all it said. Here is a brief summary. (1) Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic groups composed the meeting. (2) They met to solve some of their theological differences. (3) The meeting occurred in Lima, Peru. (4) They worked for six years on topics of baptism, holy communion and ordination. (5) They produced a sixteen thousand word document. (6) They decided they needed

more tolerance. (7) Each would express its own concept of Christianity and none would insist on any one brand of Christianity as the true form to the exclusion of other forms. (8) The one hundred representatives will now carry the document back home for approval. (9) If approved, they will have a scholarly framework in which to work for further religious changes. (10) Churches who baptize adults will continue to do that and churches who baptize infants will continue with baby baptism. (11) There will be a mutual recognition of each as valid baptism and no need to be rebaptized for those changing from one to the other. (12) It is likely they will stress weekly communions more in the future. (13) There will be a freer practice of communion at one another's altars. (14) Ordained ministries will be supervised by bishops. (15) The one hundred who attended feel that far more progress was made than in many previous ecumenical movements.

Observations are now in order relative to the Lima meeting. It took six years and sixteen thousand words to work up a unity plan on just three items. It did not require six years and sixteen thousand words for the Lord's unity petition in prayer in John 17:20-23, for Paul's plea in I Corinthians 1:10-13 or for the precious Pauline plan of unity in Ephesians 4:4-6. The Lima document is verbose and vain in its projections for real unity. It only touches base in three areas of doctrine (teaching) and practice—baptism, communion and ordination. Essentially they settled nothing! It does not solve who is and who is not a baptismal candidate. The article did not mention baptism's action and purpose. It does not set forth the full truth about the Lord's Supper and if it did, none of those represented would accept and practice it. The Bible does set forth that full truth and they do not like what it says. Surely it does not settle the clergy problem that rests upon human pomp and pride. It does not solve the massive religious divisions in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox churches and Protestantism. It does not solve names, organization, mission and dozens of other essentials to real Christian unity. It is just another lengthy chapter in the growing book of "*unity of diversity*." It breathes the spirit of greater toleration. It is another extension of the ecumenical spirit at work. It has been an effort to narrow three differences among various

religious groups. The great need is to undo and desolve all Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant bodies and let the exclusive body of Christ—his church—be all that remains. That is all he established! Simply to narrow differences and still stay in Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Protestant bodies is *not* the way to Christian unity at all. Gospel preachers are sometimes asked what we plan to do about the ecumenical movement. My consistent answer has been to do what I have done for a third of a century now—preach the gospel. If this will not give the world unity when heard and heeded, then surely meetings like the one in Lima, Peru, will be totally impotent in producing real Christian unity in divided and divisive religion of the twentieth century. Doubtlessly, it would be interesting to get all the Lima legates together and give them a sheet of blank paper with instructions to answer the very simple question of what one must do in order to be saved and see what they would give by way of written responses. I dare say there would be NO RIGHT ANSWERS among the three major religious groups represented.

THE BIBLE CASE FOR UNITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 13 relates trouble between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. As patriarchal prince of peace "*Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren*" (Gen. 13:8—ASV). Abraham, as later he was to be called and by which we know him so much better, acted here as a precious peacemaker. Willingly, he agreed to sacrificial concessions aimed at keeping patriarchal peace between the two families—his and Lot's. "*We are brethren*" is a mighty excellent reason why the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace should be attained and then maintained. But we have to be brethren in Christ to attain and then maintain such!

Stephen in the seventh chapter of Acts alludes to Moses' heroic attempts to bring two Israelites who were in a conflict while in Egyptian bondage into a peaceful relationship again. Moses is quoted by the great Jerusalem "*Defender of the Faith*" before the angered

Jewish Sanhedrin as saying, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" (Acts 7:26,27—ASV) Here is a case, and it has frequent occurrence in our day, of where the one in the wrong did not desire brotherly unity.

David's breathtakingly beautiful case for brotherly unity is underscored in Psalm 133. Bible students have called it, "*The Excellency of Brotherly Unity.*" Its initial verse reads, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Psalm 133:1). In subsequent verses it likens this unique unity to the anointing ointment lavishly bestowed upon Aaron, to the dews of Hermon, highest mountain peak in all that section of Bible Lands, and to the dews that descended Mount Zion (Psalm 133:2,3). Some things are good but not pleasant; others are pleasant but not good. Medicine may be good and essential for bodily restoration when sick but unpleasant to taste. Sin is pleasant for a season (Heb. 11:25) but it is not good for one's soul here or his eternal destiny in yonder's age. Unity, however, is both good and pleasant. The attractive analogies of the anointing ointment and dews on Mount Hermon and Mount Zion enhance his precious portrayal of brotherly unity.

Amos 3:3 asks so tersely and truthfully, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" The question is rhetorical; it has its own built-in answer. They cannot. Agreement is an intense imperative for traveling together; disunity separates fellow travelers.

THE BIBLE CASE FOR UNITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Unity is the bottom line of Matthew 12:30 which says, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*" Spelled out here is unity if we are *with* and *for* Jesus; disunity is a rebellious refusal to be *with* and *for* Christ.

Unity with Jesus is lovingly and loyally linked with compliance to God's will. Jesus stressed in Matthew 12:49,50, "*Behold my mother and my brethren! For*

whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." This is the only way to be kin spiritually to God and his Son. Only in this manner may Christian unity be attained and then maintained. Yet the ecumenical movement cares nothing, absolutely nothing about Jehovah's will as it is set forth in the Bible and in the Bible only. That is not the unity they seek; it is not the type they intend to have at the end of their unity forums, ecumenical conferences and union seminars. It surely is not the kind they relish, delight in or proclaim to a waiting, watching world of religious devotees who are largely deluded and deceived by their religious lords.

In Mark 3:24,25 Jesus declared that a divided kingdom cannot survive and a divided house is destined to collapse. This is a negative argument that enhances the strength, stability and permanency of a kingdom and house united.

Unity is allied with work—the right kind of work. Jesus stressed, "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*" (John 5:17). This is but one of the many, beautiful ways that Father and Son are one—their unique unison in working that which is right. Engagement in wrong types of work will not produce Biblical unity at all.

Jesus stressed in John 10:30, "*I and my Father are one.*" They are not one and the same person as the Oneness Pentecostals teach and quite erroneously. Jesus was on earth when he said this; the Father was above or in heaven. But they are one in purpose, aim, desire, etc. These likewise are the intense ingredients of Christian unity for us.

Jesus prayed in John 17:20-23,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

This passage does not need so much in the way of analysis or explanation as it desperately needs emulation

by all who profess to love God and claim discipleship to the Christ.

Acts 2 is the beautiful birthday chapter of the New Testament church. Some three thousand obeyed the gospel under Peter's powerful preaching. In Acts 2:42 they continued in apostolic doctrine, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and in prayer. The subsequent verses depict their unique unity by affirming,

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:43-47).

Two chapters later we read again of their unique unity. Luke depicts it by writing,

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold. And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:32-37).

The Jerusalem church realized the quest of Jesus' prayer in John 17 for unity among his subjects. Would God such could be said of all his professing disciples today. Alas, it cannot!

To keep down sinful divisions Paul urged a marking and avoiding of people who deviate from apostolic doctrine (Rom. 16:17,18).

In I Corinthians 1:10-13 Paul pleads for unity at Corinth. They were in gross error relative to "*preacheritis*." Before their party names can be right it would have to be the case that Christ is divided into particles with each

group's having one particle of him; it would have to be the case in the second place that they were baptized into their favorite preacher whether Paul, Apollos or Cephas; in the third place it would have to be the case that their favorite preacher—Paul, Apollos or Cephas—had been crucified for them. But the case for these three items could not be established at all! Christ is not divided; they were not baptized into a mere man; Paul, Apollos and Cephas had been to Calvary for none of them. No greater sermon was ever preached against party names in religion and denominationalism at work in incipency than what Paul wrote here. His logic is brilliant and withering to the errors that fell before his powerful employment of the Sword of the Truth.

In II Corinthians 6:14-18 Paul shows the incompatibility between an unequal yoke that binds believers and unbelievers, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial and between God's temple and the temples dedicated to idolatry. Linking unity with such undesirables was unthinkable to Paul! It should be for us today also. For Christians to seek unity with such works of darkness as herein depicted is unthinkable or at least should be. Such is sinful unity per se! Not all unity is good; not all division is wrong. This we have already explained in this sermon.

In Galatians 5:19-21 Paul lists the works of the flesh which block one's heavenly inheritance. Divisions and parties (ASV) are listed. These are sinful divisions and parties.

Paul states so wisely and wonderfully in Ephesians 4:3-6,

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and One Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

How marvelous, majestic and wonderfully workable is the Pauline plan for unique unity. It did not take Paul six years and sixteen thousand words to set it forth either. Nor did he limit it to just three topics. We dare not put a zero where Paul placed a one; we dare not put a plurality where Paul put a singular. Look at how

comprehensive and compelling and how simple and stately this plan is. The one body would give us unity of organization. In just one sweep of the potent, apostolic pen he presents a death blow to Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxism and Protestantism. No wonder the Lima legates deliberately ignored Ephesians 4:4. They knew there was death in that Pauline plank for their ecumenical edifice. The one Spirit would give us unity of revelation. The one hope would produce unity of aim, anticipation, expectation and desire. The one Lord would produce unity of authority. The one faith would produce unity of doctrine or teaching. The one baptism would give us unity of practice. The one God and Father would give us unity of worship. Paul's plan does not need just *lip* service; it needs *life* service!

Paul urges the Philippians to "*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*" (Phil. 1:27). If you stand fast in one spirit and I stand fast in one spirit and if you strive for the faith of the gospel and I strive for the faith of the gospel, we can be and will be one in Christ. If not, why not?

BRIGHT, BEAUTIFUL AND BLESSED BENEFITS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

1. It answers Christ's prayer in John 17:20-23.
2. It would form a great bulwark in convincing an unbelieving, skeptical world of Christ's Deity (John 17:20-23).
3. It makes us like the Godhead (John 17:20-23).
4. It enables us to emulate the early Christians in Acts 2 and 4.
5. It honors Paul's plan in Ephesians 4:3-6.
6. It greatly strengthens God's people.
7. It enables us to experience much greater happiness, satisfaction and contentment in all our Christian endeavors.
8. It makes church going and worship far greater joy.
9. It makes possible far greater energies devoted toward world evangelism instead of having to expend so much energy in dealing with church divisions, strifes, contentions, etc.

10. It frees our minds for real serious studies of the truth. It is hard to be a serious student of God's word when we are in turmoil much or all the time. For many years the Ripley, Tennessee, church of Christ has provided me with a framework of unity in which to study, preach, lecture and write. I cannot praise them too much or too highly for this great gift of unity.
11. It is excellent preparation for the next world.
12. It makes the type of people of us that we should be and that Deity desires us to be.

CONCLUSION

If you are not now a Christian, let me urge you to hear, believe, repent, confess Christ and be baptized today. Then be faithful till death. Be a committee of one to show the world what the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace will accomplish. But remember it was the Christ who declared, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

Is There A Place For The Negative?

Some years back a querist sent me this question, "*Is there a place for the negative in our preaching and teaching?*" He thought there was; so did I at the time and still do. The thought that no doubt triggered his excellently worded query was the prevalent attitude that opposes all preaching except totally positive preaching. It is amazingly strange that those perched atop this popular bandwagon have never sensed an inconsistency in their own position. They are against all negative sermons and at least to that degree they cannot be one hundred per cent positive! How could they be? Belief is strikingly strong in my mind that we *must* have both negative and positive sermons, lectures, Bible classes and personal work lessons. We must emphasize what is wrong; we must emphasize what is right. Years ago a lady approached Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., with a sentiment of a song then prevalent and popular. She said, "*Brother Wallace, you need to eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive.*" The famed Wallace wit and wisdom were more than ready for her crisp criticism of the negative she had witnessed in one of his sermons. He quipped just as quickly, "*Lady, don't fence me in. Give me land, lots of land under starry skies above. Don't fence me in.*" Had Brother Wallace been an altogether positive preacher all his illustrious life he would have never been the preacher he was for sixty-five years. This is true of all great and godly preachers who, like Paul in Acts 20:26,27, have believed in and do believe in the proclamation of the *whole* counsel of God. This is a New Testament concept about which those on the all positive kick know nothing, absolutely nothing!

This question hits a very sensitive nerve in modern thinking. People today do not like to hear a single NO

expressed. Now they may say NO to a hundred things that would lead them to a better life but they do not intend for anyone to inject a single NO in their planned path of worldly living and fleshly indulgences. A philosophy that contains prohibitions is *not* for them. That negative is just too much for them. Yet from another angle there is one negative they do imbibe! They seek to eradicate every "*thou shalt not*" from their practices. We see this aversion in all walks of life currently. Parents by the millions have decided that total permissiveness is the finest possible framework for child rearing. In reality such is *child wrecking—not child rearing!* Young people voice a frequent no, but openly dare a no to be directed to them. Whether it be access to drugs, alcohol or free and convenient sex in dating, they defy all attempts to negate their base type of jungle-like existence. "*Doing their own thing*" leaves no room for a no or not. "*Stay off the grass*" is all some people need to walk nowhere else but on the grass. "*Stay out*" prompts all efforts to "*get in.*" "*No trespassing*" means to trespass promptly and as much as preference dictates. Federal, state and local governments can pass negative legislation and many experience fiendish fondness in violating it time and time again.

THE NO NEGATIVE CONCEPT HAS INVADED RELIGION

Religion has not escaped this devilish and diabolical attitude. Many people who pride themselves on being religious do not intend to have a single not or no directed at them by the Lord of heaven. Amazingly enough, religious leaders in mass have encouraged people to break every moral law of the Bible. They have encouraged people to make their own religious rules regardless of what God says about the matter. Satan has sold many people a bill of goods that all negative preaching should be eliminated. We should be *for* something all right but never *against* anything, they aver. One exception is made. It is all right to be against *negative* truth. To be *for* and never *against* anything at all is the real way to win friends and influence people. Negative precepts are off limits. Such might be offensive to the sensitive in this

sphere. People want and demand a positive message. Let us get rid of unrelenting, unmerciful attacks on error, they aver. Specific religious errors ought to be left alone. Particular names of error ought never to be mentioned. Especially one should never mention by name the particular religious people who embrace and promote such errors. This is a *no no!* Names of the specific people who peddle such errors should never be called. This also is a *no no!* Satan has convinced nearly all the religious world in general and far too many of our own brethren in particular that any man has every right in the world to preach any error he chooses to whom he wishes to present it and as frequently as he wishes to convey it. Furthermore, he should be given free reign in the perilous, poisonous process. But it is evil, crude, coarse, hard, loveless, intolerant and lacking in good taste and tact for his hand to be called and his error exposed as much as once by any fearless "*Defender of the Faith.*" This attitude comes through loud and clear that the man who teaches error should be applauded but the man who exposes his error and preaches truth and truth only on the point at issue should be strictly anathematized, severely chastened and promptly criticized. Such is a part of the problem we plan to note in this sermon. We shall raise and answer the following questions. Are there noes in the Bible? Did God ever place any prohibitions before men? Are there any "*thou shalt nots*" within Holy Writ? Was the total Bible written with just a positive approach in mind? Did God have a place for the negative in the Patriarchal and Mosaic Dispensations? Is there a place for negative preaching, teaching and writing under Christianity? Answers of a forthright kind will be sought for these strategic queries.

A NO OR NEGATIVE EVEN IN EDEN

Relative to Jehovah's dealings with humanity there has *never* been a time but what there was a place for a no, not or negative. This is true whether we consider man in his pure and sinless state in Eden or after his ejection from the excellencies of Eden when he had become a fallen creature and a practitioner of sin. Both before and after the fall God has had a place for the negative.

Toward the proof of this proposition we shall aim the basic thrust of this timely sermon.

Jehovah had a place for a no, not or negative even in the sinless estate of Eden. We are aware that he emphasized the positive when he said, "*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth*" (Gen. 1:28). Jehovah issued another positive precept when he charged man to dress and keep the beautiful garden that Deity made available for the first human couple (Gen. 2:15). Yet a negative also was imposed,

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16,17).

Adam and Eve understood perfectly and clearly this negative norm in their earthly Paradise. Eve said to the sly serpent in the heat of temptation,

We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die (Gen. 3:2,3).

God said no word, as per our record in Genesis 2, relative to the touching of it; Eve apparently added this part. The prohibition touched the eating. From this we learn that negative law—a crystal clear no—preceded the entrance of sin. Jehovah injected a "*shalt not*" in his stipulations for man prior to sin's tragic invasion into Eden's excellency. This is the very rule Adam and Eve violated—a negative—not the positive precepts of Genesis 1:28 and 2:15. Their ancestors have often queried relative to what type the fruit was. The problem, as one preacher uniquely expressed it, was not the *fruit* on the tree but the *pair* on the ground!

This "*thou shalt not*" precept was the very springboard employed by Satan to allow transgressions to leap into the sinless hearts of formerly innocent humanity. The devil is still quite effective in employing "*thou shalt not*" precepts of the Bible as Satanic springboards to capture humanity for his devilish and diabolical designs. It

is Satan who has placed an abhorrence in human hearts for negative rules and he has done it by humans who are eager to comply. He knows he can capture people for his infamous cause just as effectively by inspiring them to spurn God's great negatives as in violation of positive requirements. Those who cry out against the proper place for the negative would have been signally dissatisfied in the blessed atmosphere and blissful estate of Eden's excellency. The tongues of carping critics would have cried out in deep discontent, "*Lord, we want positives, all positives; we reject negatives, all negatives!*"

NEGATIVES IN THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION

Jehovah God placed negative legislation into patriarchal precepts as Genesis impressively exhibits. Genesis 4 portrays sacrificial offerings from Cain and Abel. Cain's offering was rejected; Abel's was acceptable. Abel's was by faith (Heb. 11:4). Faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Hence, God must have informed both men what to bring in the way of sacrificial offerings. Specification of a bloody sacrifice eliminated the acceptability of a bloodless offering. In essence God said the bloodless was not to be offered. Cain failed to respect this negative implication. As a result his offering was rejected. Later he maliciously murdered righteous Abel. God held him responsible (Gen. 4:9-15). Hence, the law of "*Thou shalt not murder*" was already in effect in the very morning of time.

As a preacher of righteousness Noah condemned the wicked world of his evil era (II Pet. 2:5; Heb. 11:7). Noah preached against the evils of his age. He warned his calloused contemporaries against wrong; he inculcated right. This has always been the dual responsibility of every preacher of righteousness. NO doubt there were flagrant transgressors of that abandoned age who strongly disliked negative preaching. It was not popular to warn them (negative preaching) of the enormity of their sins and of Jehovah's impending wrath that hanged above their impious heads. This disposition has always been reluctant to hear negative sermons filled with weighty warnings.

Jehovah had many negative norms for patriarchal

people. There was patriarchal legislation against idolatry. Jacob told his family, "*Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments*" (Gen. 35:2). There must have been strict moral mandates against fornication for Dinah's defilement by Shechem is greatly abhorred by Jacob, her father, and by her brothers (Gen. 34:1ff). Judah stands condemned for his inexcusable immorality in Genesis 38 while Joseph is highly praised for his retained purity and valiant virtue in Genesis 39. Legislation prohibited incest. This is strongly implied in Reuben's loss of his birthright due to his lying with Bilhah, one of his father's secondary wives. There must have been negative norms leveled against deception, dishonesty and lying for these sins stand solidly condemned throughout Genesis.

Those who cry out against the proper place for the negatives would have been signally dissatisfied under the starlight age of the Patriarchal system. Jehovah surely had a place for negatives back there in the morning of time. There has always been a place for no, not and the negative in God's dealings with man.

NEGATIVES OUTNUMBERED POSITIVES IN OLD TESTAMENT

Those who reject the proper place for the negative would have rejected the majority of Old Testament commandments had they lived prior to Calvary. Years ago I came across this interesting observation. There are six hundred thirteen commands found in the Old Testament. Of this number three hundred eighty-six were composed of "*thou shalt not*" or words to that effect. This leaves two hundred twenty-seven of a positive nature. Percentage wise about sixty-three per cent were negatives; thirty-seven per cent were positives. Those who claim such great dissatisfaction with negatives now would really have been highly displeased had they lived under the Old Testament while it was binding. They would have not liked the Moonlit Age at all.

NEGATIVES IN THE DECALOGUE

Decalogue is but another name for the ten

commandments. They were given from God to Moses on shaking Sinai for Israel. The negatives are greatly in the ascendancy. They are found in Exodus 20:3-17. I shall number them, provide some emphasis and make some pertinent observations as we go through them together.

1. "*Thou shalt have NO other gods before me*" (Ex. 20:3—Emphasis supplied). Here we have negative number one.

2. "*Thou shalt NOT*" make unto thee any graven image,..."*Thou shalt NOT bow down thyself to them,...*" (Ex. 20:4,5—Emphasis added). Here is the second negative. A full reading of number two commandment reflects the stiff teeth God placed in this injunction.

3. "*Thou shalt NOT take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will NOT hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*" (Ex. 20:7—Emphasis supplied). Here is the third negative in these Mosaic mandates.

4. "*Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy*" (Ex. 20:8). This is the first positive of the Decalogue but it still has its negatives since the death penalty was imposed for its violation (See Ex. 31:14,15).

5. "*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*" (Ex. 20:12). This is the second of the positives in the Decalogue and yet there is the death penalty for violators of this injunction (See Deut. 21:18-21).

6. "*Thou shalt NOT kill*" (Ex. 20:13—Emphasis added). This is the fourth negative of the Decalogue.

7. "*Thou shalt NOT commit adultery*" (Ex. 20:14—Emphasis supplied). This is number five of negatives among these Mosaic mandates.

8. "*Thou shalt NOT steal*" (Ex. 20:15—Emphasis added). This is number six of the Mosaic negatives of the Decalogue.

9. "*Thou shalt NOT bear false witness against thy neighbor*" (Ex. 20:16—Emphasis supplied). This is number seven among the negatives.

10. "*Thou shalt NOT covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt NOT covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's*" (Ex. 20:17—Emphasis added). This is number eight of the listed negatives in the actual

commands themselves.

If anyone is prone to quibble that these are not really negatives, let him look up the full definitions of negative as given by word authorities such as Webster.

Eighty per cent of these ten commandments fell into the negative category; twenty per cent were positives and yet these even contained negative elements especially in their execution. Those who cry out that negatives have no place in religion or life, had they lived then, doubtlessly would have found fault with most if not all of these Sinaitic statutes. They, to be consistent with their present positive philosophy, would have met Moses at the Sinaitic base and said something like this, *“Go back up, Lawgiver, go back up. Your message is top heavy with negative norms. We do not intend to be bound by a negative religion: we must have an all positive religion. Exchange the eight negatives for eight positives in their place and by all means delete the negative aspects from the sabbath day and parental decrees toughening their ultimate execution. Moses, when you do this we will then give credence to your statutes but not till then.”* Do you really suppose Moses, at their behest, would have returned to the summit of Sinai again with a pressured request for a change from many negatives to a code of Hebrew law that contained no negatives and all positives? If you think the resolute ruler of his people in the wilderness would have spinelessly submitted to such positive pressure, you do not know the man Moses at all. Even if Moses had attempted such requested changes, who really things the Almighty Lawgiver from on high would have revised his law by rescinding the negatives and issuing all positives? Those who think he would know even less about Jehovah than about Moses. Will any deny it? If so, upon what Scriptural, rational, logical basis?

NEGATIVES AMONG HEBREW PROPHETS

Those who despise negative precepts and detest all preaching against damnable errors would not have been happy with Jehovah's powerful and persistent prophets during Old Testament times. They taught negative norms as well as positive precepts. Against every form of ruinous error and its proponents they raised their valient

voices and clarion calls of powerful protest and courageous conviction. Let us note a few examples.

Moses was a great, godly and good prophet of the Lord (Deut. 18:18). Deuteronomy 34:10 says, "*And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.*" The Sinaitic lawgiver wrote of unlawful marriages and illegal lusts in Leviticus 18. He opposed such; he was against such. There are in excess of thirty negative warnings that are sounded forth in this one chapter alone. This constitutes more than an average of one warning per verse! Deuteronomy 27 contains the curses that later were to vibrate from the barren slopes of Mount Ebal in central Canaan (Josh. 8:30-35). These curses touch such sins as idolatry, incest, beastly uncleanness, parental disrespect and rebellion, dishonesty with landmark boundaries, extreme unkindness toward those in physical affliction, the helpless and unfortunates, murder, acceptance of bribes for judicial injustices and a flagrant failure to confirm to all the Sinaitic statutes. Would any care to deny that Moses was a dispenser of negative norms? If so, what will be the successful ground of denial? His indignant actions toward the golden calf incident of idolatry at the very base of shaking Sinai where the law had been given amply exhibit how he felt toward the toleration of egregious error. He did not yield any more ground relative to this point than did Paul and his fellow apostles at the Jerusalem Conference with the Judaizing forces (Gal. 2:4,5). In fact Moses remained unflinchingly opposed to that which now claimed apostate Israel's idolatrous affections. Those who disdain negatives and all attacks against error would have been quite uncomfortable in the presence of mighty Moses, the Herculean champion who exposed error and stood like a stonewall for truth. Moses was a giant—not a pygmy—in matters for the right. He stood tall and stalwart.

Samuel became the next great prophet of Israel subsequent to Moses. Even as a youth he correctly conveyed to permissive Eli the full destruction that was impending upon his impious family (I Sam. 3:11-18). In I Samuel 7:3 the faithful prophet of Jehovah told Israel that independence from powerful Philistia could only be achieved by a total turning from idolatry and a complete conversion to Jehovah. When he counseled a full rejection

of all their strange gods he was dealing in negatives. Was he wrong in so doing? What say the positive proponents only? Samuel knew they had to get rid of the wrong before they could inculcate the right. This is a most obvious lesson missed almost totally by the whole camp of opponents to all negatives. Samuel sounded forth strong warnings in regard to what Israel would reap with the adding of a king (I Sam. 8:10-22). Total consumption awaited both Israel and its new king if they pursued the pathway of perniciousness is the aged prophet's stern, negative warning of I Samuel 12:20-25. Samuel's instructions for complete annihilation of sinful Amalek by the hands of Saul and his Hebrew army breathe the very spirit of the negative in I Samuel 15. Does anyone suppose that the about-to-be-slain Amalekites thought they were facing a "no negative" type of Israelite philosophy? When intent Israelite swords and spears were at their sides, throats and hearts it is very doubtful that any of these Palestinian pagans had such thoughts. Furthermore, in this chapter we read of where Saul was reprimanded rather severely by God's faithful prophet when he left King Agag alive and preserved the best of the livestock for so-called sacrificial purposes. Samuel said Saul had failed in the overall mission of judicial punishment. The righteously indignant prophet likened the disobedient monarch's rebellion to the sin of witchcraft and his stubbornness to the twin transgressions of iniquity and idolatry (I Sam. 15:23). A failure to abide by God's intention to stamp out totally the cancer of Amalekite infamy and blight led to Saul's rejection as king. Samuel did not give ground to error. He opposed with vim, vigor and valiancy all wrong. The prophet then slew Agag with his own hands. Do you suppose Agag thought Samuel was all positive when he came after him with a sharpened sword or some other weapon? Samuel's actions would not have made him a popular prophet among those who say we only should be *for* something and never be *against* anything. There is entirely too much "loving toleration" for sin and error among the all positive proponents.

Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, three later Hebrew prophets, would not have pleased people today who oppose all negative preaching. The stern prophet from

Tekoah listed Jehovah's judgments of coming catastrophe upon Syria, Philistia, Tyrus, Edom and Ammon in chapter one of his terse, truthful, prophetic book. In chapter two he came closer to home and pictured God's wrath upon Moab, Judah and then Israel. The latter was the very nation to whom he was sent as prophet. Such continues throughout the book. Amaziah, the idolatrous priest of Bethel's pagan religion and an all positive proponent for his day, disliked Amos' blazing, fearless attack upon their daring departures and corrupt customs. He told Amos to go back home to Judah and preach his negative norms there but prophesy no more in Bethel "*for it is the king's chapel and it is the king's court*" (Amos 7:13).

The statesman prophet, Isaiah, filled his long prophetic book with attacks against idolatry and the corruption characteristic of his cruel, calloused, cold contemporaries. He exclaimed in behalf of God, "*put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil*" (Isa. 1:16). Isaiah would not have pleased those who despise and disdain negative preaching.

Jeremiah would have been a constant thorn in the side of all no negative advocates. His clear charge and courageous commission from Jehovah read,

Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth, See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down, to build, and to plant (Jer. 1:9,10).

Twice as many verbs were employed to set forth the negative aspects of his mission as were used to set forth the positive side. The negatives were even listed first! Does that not say a certain something about the practical, powerful spot for an impressive beginning of this man's long, distinguished career as God's spokesman? Jehovah and Jeremiah both knew negatives were necessary. They still are, "*positive only*" proponents to the contrary notwithstanding.

Before leaving this segment of our study and going to New Testament preachers who were both negative and positive a few observations appear to be appropriate. It has been my experience in many years of writing that those who never write anything for the public know far

more about how it ought to be done than any literary veteran does. Those who know most about church leadership have never been an elder, deacon, a preacher or a Bible class teacher as per their views. In preaching for a third of a century I have learned that those who seem to know most about preaching and how sermons should be prepared and delivered are those who never worked up a sermon or delivered one. Yet many times these are the very people who cry loud and long against the negative type of preaching that condemns all error and exalts all truth. Those who imagine that negative preaching, negative teaching and negative writing have no place in God's holy scheme of redemption amply exhibit how very, very little they really know of prophetic preachers of the Old Testament which we have already delineated and the New Testament preachers now to be depicted. There is none finer than Jesus who drew out his sword of truth on the banks of Jordan just subsequent to his immersion and threw away the scabbard permanently!

JESUS: A NEGATIVE PREACHER

This is a true and yet often ignored appraisal of God's Son as a preacher. He did not leave error, vice, sin, corruption and wickedness alone and just present pleasing positives, pleasant platitudes and soothing sermons designed never to be offensive to any in his audiences. His sermons were pointed and plain. They were sharp and straight. They were cutting and courageously conveyed. He never backed away from a confrontation with error and sin. Sin was never comfortable in the immaculate presence of Jehovah's holy Son. When it came to upholding the truths of Spiritual Zion and condemning every error that exalted itself against holy heaven Jesus Christ acted as "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Rev. 5:5).

HIS WAS A MINISTRY OF NEGATIVES

Jesus began his ministry and closed it with a confrontation of error and corruption in the highest echelons of Jewish leadership—the temple and its corrupt

priesthood. Early in his ministry he cleansed the temple and repeated the cleansing process three years later on Monday on the Final Week. John 2:13-17 records the initial cleansing; Matthew 21:12,13 and Mark 11:15-19 record the second and final cleansing. This was an initial negative action and a concluding negative action on the Lord's part. I ask *all* who oppose every negative if Jesus Christ did the right thing on those two occasions. I maintain that he did. What say the negative objectors? Between these two negative acts the Lord frequently engaged in teaching and actions of a negative nature.

AN INTERESTING QUERY

It would be of signal interest to have those opposed to all negatives answer this query, "*How could Jesus Christ have met and defeated Satan in the Judean wilderness, upon the temple pinnacle and upon that exceedingly high mountain if he had made no appeal whatsoever to the negative?*" In meeting two of the three recorded temptations in Matthew 4 Jesus employed the negative term of *not*. We read his words of weight and wisdom in Matthew 4:4,7, "*Man shall NOT live by bread alone....Thou shalt NOT tempt the Lord thy God*" (Emphasis supplied). Even in the third Jesus told Satan to be on his way which is negative in nature. He was opposing Satan's continuing stay with him. All the way through Jesus was opposed to the devilish deluder. Can someone tell me how Jesus could have mastered the devilish, diabolical adversary thrice if he had been of the unstable, veering disposition that one must never offend but at all times and in every circumstance be lovingly tolerant toward the other's viewpoint and with never any opposition expressed? Niceties extended to Satan lead to destruction and with lightning like speed! It would have been for our Lord; it surely will be for us also. Seeking to be kind and tolerant toward error is as foolish or naive as the fabled story of the hunter and the bear. The hunter was taking deadly aim. The bear said, "*Let us talk this over first.*" In the dialogue (this is a popular term these days) it was discovered each had but one special need. The hunter desired a fur coat; the bear desired a full stomach. The end of the story found both

with met needs! The bear had his meal—the man. The man had his fur coat but from a different location than he intended!! Such shows the extreme folly of compromise and toleration for the enemy's destructive intents.

*THE LORD'S NEGATIVES IN THE
SERMON ON THE MOUNT*

The renowned preacher of the Sermon on the Galilean mount filled that marvelous discourse, that unparalleled sermon with numerous negatives, many warnings against sin. He warned against murder, unbrotherly conduct, adultery, divorce, sinful oaths, evil treatment of enemies, hypocrisy in alms and fastings, prayer inconsistencies, love of earthly treasures, the evil eye, the folly of seeking allegiance to two masters, needless anxiety, rash, unfounded and unjustified judgments, false teachers and the folly of building on a sandy foundation. Those adamantly opposed to all negatives have to be opposed to much of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount has many precious positives but noble negatives are not lacking by any stretch of the imagination.

*MORE MESSIANIC INSTANCES OF
NEGATIVE PREACHING*

Jesus Christ was a formidable foe of *all* error. Delete what he said relative to error and sin and much of the fine material found in the eighty-nine chapters in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John no longer will remain. Is any positive only advocate really willing to do this? If he is, he needs desperately a refresher course in Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6 and Revelation 22:18,19. If he is not willing to do this, then he should vacate his noxious notion of positives only. What he would give up is simply a totally erroneous stance.

God's Son was engaged in negative preaching when he said,

O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed (Matt. 16:3,4).

Strong warnings such as are couched in these straight forward statements are the very things the no negative advocates dislike. This is what they oppose. Seemingly, it is all right and even consistent, at least as per their views, for them to be *negative in being against negative preaching* but the gospel preachers they oppose and fight must never be against sin, error, vice and corruption! Well, there are some of us that have been in the work of opposing error and upholding truth long enough that we are not going to change regardless of what the positive only advocates propagate. What they designate as the "old guard" will not be easily moved!

Jesus was negative when he warned his easily swayed disciples, "*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*" (Matt. 16:6). Further development of the Scriptural context reveals that he was speaking against the doctrine or teaching of these Jewish sects of the first century (Matt. 16:12). He was *against* their false teaching and publicly said so. He desired his disciples to be against such also and with the same vim and vigor as was he. Against error Jesus was *negative in attitude, word and action!* To say it another way he was *positively against* any and all error.

Jesus was negative when he warned, "*Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Luke 12:15). "*Take heed*" and "*beware*" were frequent expressions that left our Lord's lips. Almost without exception each is followed by a warning—usually a negative warning against some encroaching error or potential danger to one's spirituality.

Matthew 23 is full of negative warnings. In this scathing sermon Jesus warned against following the works of Jewish leaders who were extra big on talk but minutely miniature in the action realm (Matt. 23:1-4). He cautioned his disciples about desiring places of honor and the inexcusable wearing of proud titles of religious distinction (Matt. 23:5-12). Beginning in verse 13 Jesus presents a long detailed list of the perverted practices of sinful scribes and proud Pharisees. Their wicked works are mercilessly exposed in all their hideous ugliness throughout this chapter. If anyone doubts Jesus was a negative preacher, he should take a long, lingering look

at this entire chapter. Those who oppose all negatives have not begun to breathe the militant spirit of Judah's first century Lion. He was nobly negative against all error; he was absolutely positive toward all truth. He loved righteousness; he hated iniquity. This he did as God or Deity (Psalm 45:6; Heb. 1:8,9). No one, absolutely no one, can find an error he condoned; no one, absolutely no one, can find a truth that is necessary for saving man that he neglected, ignored or of which he was ignorant. Toward any and all error he was truly the "*Lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Rev. 5:5).

GREATEST PREACHERS OF ALL TIME PREACHED NEGATIVES

Those who cry out against all negative preaching today evidently have not been sitting at the feet of New Testament greats such as Jesus who has just been portrayed and some of his apostolic proclaimers that will next come into fundamental focus in this desperately needed sermon.

Those who think the negative played no major role in the unique unfolding of the scheme of human redemption know but little of either testament. Though some would take us to task many of us today believe and believe strongly that the greatest preaching of all time was neither prior to the first century nor subsequent to it. The greatest and finest of preaching occurred in the first century and was done by Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, the apostles and other inspired proclaimers of that very thrilling era. This unique band of powerful proclaimers towers above those who were prior and subsequent to them as much as majestic mountains rise above lowly valleys. Yet it is an indisputable fact that this courageous band of preachers engaged in both negative and positive preaching. They did not magnify positives and minimize negatives as far too many are prone to do in our day. Some today are totally positive, they aver. Such a current custom is lopsided preaching. It is a duplication of a sin charged against the Northern Kingdom by sensitive Hosea who wrote, "*Ephraim is a cake not turned*" (Hosea 7:8). Some are totally negative. This, too, makes for lopsided, unbalanced preaching. It, too, produces a cake in today's

church that is baked or cooked on one side but still uncooked or undone on the other side.

A LOOK AT JOHN'S NEGATIVE PREACHING

Those who currently exhibit great distaste for negative preaching and teaching would have been most unhappy with the holy harbinger who came to prepare apostate Israel for a ready reception of long awaited Messiah. Predictive prophecy indicated that John's great work of preparation would be negative as well as positive. Isaiah wrote,

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever (Isa. 40:3-8).

Luke 3:3-6 informs us for a certainty that this passage experiences fulfillment in the work of John the Baptist. Isaiah's imagery is Oriental in its setting of striking color. It depicts a preparation crew at work before an Eastern monarch visits his political domains. Mountains and hills are lowered; valleys are raised; crooked roads are straightened; rough places are smoothed. John did this spiritually. By straightforward preaching John sought to lower the mountains and hills built up by Jewish prejudice and maintained by rabbinical tradition. By a courageous proclamation that knew neither compromise nor surrender the holy harbinger sought to replace the crooked ways with the straight road of truth. Sin, error and superstition had made rough places on the Jewish road of life. These he sought to make smooth by a militant message of righteousness, truth, purity and knowledgeable enlightenment. Matthew 3:3 applies Isaiah's prophetic word to John's courageous work of preparation for the coming Messiah. The work of the Messianic

Harbinger, as delineated by the picturesque Isaiah, includes positives as well as negatives. John was not positive to the exclusion of the negative; he was not negative to the exclusion of the positive. He was a beautifully balanced preacher.

John preached repentance which implies hatred of wrong and a definite disdain for sin. Preachers are but little concerned with the need of preaching repentance unless they hate sin and expose error. People in pews will never sense the urgency of changing their minds toward sin unless they see and sense its awful nature. John could not preach the positive requirements of repentance without calling attention negatively to the enormity and awfulness of sin. Neither can a modern preacher do any better unless there is a place for the negative in his preaching philosophy.

John was quite negative in the remarks he made to proud Pharisees and skeptical Sadducees in Matthew 3:7-10. The immersion of fire and the burning up of the chaff in Matthew 3:11,12 is more of his negative brand of powerful preaching. Those who oppose *all* negative preaching would have hated and despised John's type of proclamation. Generation of vipers, a bold cry for repentance and accompanying fruits that demonstrate a truly penitent spirit, exploding their ancestral trust in Abrahamic blood, the application of the axe to the hollow, rotten tree of hypocritical Judaism and an ultimate immersion in fire for all hardened sinners formed the tremendous and truthful thrust of John's message for his era. It did not make for a smooth, soothing sermon in John's day. It was not filled with positive pleasantries!

Wicked, deceitful and conniving Herodias hated negative preaching. Without fear or intimidation John said to Herod, "*It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*" (Mark 6:18). Luke 3:19 informs us that John reproved Herod for *all* the evils the treacherous tetrarch had perpetrated. But, apparently, it was that one burning negative relative to their notorious affair of brazen adultery that influenced, inflamed and triggered Herodias into the bloody scheme to slay her negative opponent. Had John been a pleasant, positive preacher who studiously refrained from all negatives or no-no themes, he, in all probability, could have died a normal, natural

death at an advanced age. Those who oppose all negative preaching have an ancient counterpart in Herodias; she opposed such long before the current no negative group came along. To be in the same camp, even in just one attitude and action, as was Herodias is no compliment at all.

John, the Messianic Harbinger, and Jesus, the Mighty Messiah, were negative preachers. They were positive in that they taught every principle of purity, proclaimed every condition of conversion and sanctioned all statements of sanctification which heaven had outlined for their respective ministries. But they were also negative in that they met sin with courage and conviction. Sinners were never soothed by the sermons preached by John and Jesus. John lost his head literally due to his negative preaching. The very ones who crucified Christ first turned against him due to his scathing exposure of their hidden sins and their glaring hypocrisy.

NEW TESTAMENT PREACHERS IN GENERAL WERE NEGATIVE

Before we note some of them in particular a few general affirmations and observations are in order. Surely the apostles and early evangelists were negative in norms as well as positive in preaching philosophy. They knew well that the twofold obligation of successful proclamation was: (1) to comfort the afflicted and (2) to afflict the comfortable. Had they preached a soothing gospel that left no one offended and all as feeling comfortable in their sins, possibly not a single one of them would have ever felt the first pain of persecution. Doubtlessly, all of them would have died natural deaths and even reaped ardent acclaim by worldly contemporaries at the time of their demise. But fierce loyalty to fundamental and kingly truth claimed greater adherence from their holy hearts than man-pleasing concessions to their corrupt contemporaries. They preached the truth of the gospel without compromise. The truth they set forth with force and finality opposed falsehood and exposed error. They preached the gospel of purity. This made them at enmity with the vicious vices of that evil era. They preached the gospel of salvation. That grand, good and glorious gospel

opposed every error the design of which was to offer salvation on terms separate and apart from Christ and Christianity. They proclaimed a message of Messianic might whose foundational basis rested upon one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father (Eph. 4:4-6). Those who sought to change these seven cardinal concepts into either more than one or less than one found themselves courageously opposed by these dynamic defenders of that faith once and for all delivered to saints of Heaven's God. The gospel they proclaimed had both do's and do not's heavily incorporated therein. The do not's were to be respected as highly as were the do's. They preached a message that greatly differed from Grecian philosophy and they said the difference mattered. A few years back someone contended that the Grecians of the apostolic period had developed the rudiments of Christianity by philosophic explorations. This I deny emphatically. It goes against everything Paul spelled out to the Grecian minds at Corinth in I Corinthians, chapters one and two. Acts 17:16 relates that Paul found the learned Grecians at Athens totally given to idolatry. That hardly sounds like rudimentary Christianity to me. Does it to you, dear reader? Quite to the contrary it sounds more like deeply entrenched paganism and fullgrown heathenism. They preached a gospel that greatly differed from Roman religions and they said the difference mattered. They preached Christianity as the new and living way. It differed from abolished Judaism and they declared the difference mattered. It, in reality, was the preaching that the differences mattered that triggered every wave of bitter persecution against them. Today Baptists and Methodists differ as to the correct action of baptism. Neither group really believes the difference is major or that it matters relative to salvation in heaven at last. Hence, they work hand in hand with this and all other differences in doctrine and practice played down, way down!

Apostolic preachers or evangelists believed that negative preaching was imperative. They knew well that this portion of their preaching demanded an open confrontation with the prevalent errors of their day. Somewhat briefly

we now note some of the New Testament preachers in negative action.

STEPHEN: A NEGATIVE EVANGELIST

One of the former seven administrators of benevolent tables in Jerusalem became a great and powerful preacher. He preached both negatives and positives in Acts 7. The negatives cost him his life. He reviewed Israel's checkered history for nearly two thousand years. He told of the negative reactions of Joseph's brethren toward him, of Israel's rejection of Moses at Sinai and of their apostate idolatries across the centuries. Stephen's message was built around Israel's rejection of God, God's law, God's prophets of the Old Testament and ultimately their inexcusable rejection of their own Messiah—the Christ. Negatives overflow his piercing words in Acts 7:51-53. Subsequent verses portray the Sanhedrin's murder of this saintly stalwart for Christ. Being against error and for truth cost Stephen his life. Some of the hurled stones had this message, as it were, written in the ink of hatred upon them, *"We do not like negative preachers or negative preaching. We dislike what you said about our Hebrew forefathers. We doubly detest what you said about us. These hurled stones form our final payment of respects to your deeply offensive harangue against us."* Thus rocks from rogues and stones from the sinful snuffed out the life of this dedicated disciple—the first one to die for the Christ and his Cause on earth. Opposition toward negative preaching prompted the death of the first Christian martyr. Negative preaching has never been popular with avowed enemies of Calvary.

PETER: A NEGATIVE PREACHER

The stalwart Peter believed in negative preaching. He was positive when the occasion demanded it; he was negative when circumstances prompted such preaching. His memorable sermon on Pentecost in Acts 2 did not leave sinners soothed in sin and comfortable in their crimes. In fact it was his crystal clear obligation to afflict these comfortable sinners and turn the complacency of their recently committed crime at cruel Calvary into deep-seated

conviction of the greivous enormity of their glaring sin. He declared plainly and pointedly that they had bathed their hands in the crimson blood of the crucified Christ. His stinging words were, "*ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:...*" (Acts 2:23). You killed him; God raised him to life again (Acts 2:24). Had any all-positive proponent been present he doubtlessly would have been tempted to call Peter aside and stress that such negatives would turn off his audience, would never influence people and would never win friends for the Heavenly Cause just beginning that memorable day. But the Holy Spirit who inspired Peter knew better. So did the brave, uncompromising preacher. Peter even called his contemporaries an "*untoward*" (KJV) or "*crooked*" (ASV) generation (Acts 2:40). Yet that day three thousand obeyed a negative-positive sermon. Read Peter's sermon in Solomon's porch in Acts 3 and see its noble negatives. Note the negative stance Peter and John take in Acts 4:19,20. He and his eleven apostolic colleagues resort to a negative posture at the command from an aroused Sanhedrin in Acts 5:28,29. In Acts 5:30,31 Peter sharply delineates Jewish conduct toward the Messiah and what God did in raising up the slain Prince of Glory. It is fashionable and popular today to exonerate Jews from all blame in crucifying the Lord of Glory. It is obvious of course that twentieth century Jews did not put him to death but first century ones did. Peter and Paul both affirmed such (Acts 2:23; 5:30; I Thess. 2:14,15). Peter was also a negative penman as a close perusal of II Peter 2 amply reveals. It is one of the greatest exposures of error found in Holy Writ. It breathes the spirit of Matthew 23 and Jude's militant missive. Brother Guy N. Woods has stated with force and frequency that there is but one acceptable attitude toward error and that is *exposure*. Brother Woods doubtlessly obtained that attitude from Biblical preachers like Peter and Paul. Peter's preaching had balance. He preached positives; he preached negatives.

PAUL: A NEGATIVE PREACHER

This valiant man of God zealously believed in doing whatever negative preaching the occasion demanded.

Soothing sermons, diplomatic discourses and people-pleasing platitudes were not the Pauline stock-in-trade as a missionary for the Messiah and a preacher for the Prince of Peace. He preached the positive aspects of the Christian system to be sure but he did not ignore the negatives for a moment during his fruitful, industrious life. Remove all negatives from his vast and valiant writings in the fourteen epistles, one hundred chapters and some twenty-three hundred verses from Romans 1:1 to Hebrews 13:25 and one would reduce greatly the sacred content of his inspired material within Holy Writ. A close perusal of I Corinthians will reveal that he adamantly opposed some Grecian heresy in almost every chapter. His arguments are ardent; his logic is keen and piercing; his language is crisp and penetrating in answering his critics in II Corinthians.

Paul is very negative with Elymas in Acts 13:8ff. He was anything but pleasingly pleasant with the high priest Ananias in Acts 23. Idolatry did not consider him a friend in Athens, Corinth and Ephesus (Acts 17,18,19). No Pauline punches are pulled as he answers fickle Galatians and lowers the boom on Judaizers throughout the Galatian treatise of truth. He charged Timothy to "*Preach the word; be instant in season; out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (II Tim. 4:2). Thayer's GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, a book which defines Greek terms, says reprove means, "*to find fault with, correct; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove; to call to account, show one his fault, demand an explanation*" (p. 203). This same highly recognized Greek authority defines the original word for rebuke as meaning, "*to tax with fault, rate, chide, rebuke, reprove, censure severely*" (p. 245). Two of the three terms of II Timothy 4:2 employed in preaching faithfully God's word are negative in nature—reprove and rebuke. Even the positive word "*exhort*" means, according to Webster, "*To incite by words or advice; to advise or warn earnestly.*" Paul surely desired Timothy to be positive and even to be positively negative. How could there be any type of comprehensive obedience to II Timothy 4:2 among the no negative, all positive proponents today? In fact it would be of signal interest to see their attempts at

comprehensive submission to this passage and still maintain their no negative philosophy. II Timothy 4:2 calls for both negative and positive action.

NEGATIVES OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

The beautiful, profitable Restoration Movement had its intense inception in our land around the turn of the nineteenth century. It was a courageous and dedicated effort to restore New Testament Christianity from the divided state of so-called Christendom. This major, majestic movement stood for the positive fundamentals of the ancient gospel. The movement recognized from the first that much negative preaching would be required to root up error so deeply entrenched. With force and fervency they preached against the errors of Catholicism, Protestantism and various forms of rampant infidelity. Their stately sermons and decisive debates were a brilliant balance between needed negatives and required positives. Because they dared be negative as well as positive much persecution was leveled against them from well organized opposition.

"*Raccoon*" John Smith was one of the great pioneer preachers of that courageous era. Of him Alexander Campbell once said in essence, "*Brother Smith is the only man I know that a college education would have ruined.*" Brother Smith's lion-hearted courage prompted him to meet error head-on and with unflinching conviction. Such often brought persecution to him.

In Williams' great work, LIFE OF ELDER JOHN SMITH, this colorful description is given of his preaching philosophy,

He usually laid off his discourses, which were two or three hours long, in three divisions, according to the objects he had in view. In the first, he corrected misrepresentation; in the second, he exposed errors; and in the third, he presented the simple gospel to the people.

His wife often remonstrated with him on the frequency and severity of his animadversions (remarks of criticism, censure or adverse criticism--RRT) on the doctrines of the creeds.

"Nancy," said he to her one day, holding up before her

a glass of water. "Can I fill this tumbler with wine, till I have first emptied it of water? Neither can I get the truth into the minds and hearts of the people till I have first disabused them of error" (pp. 190-191).

Brother Smith has had but few superiors when it came to reaching people successfully with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He knew error had to be met and demolished before people were ready for truth. He was unafraid to meet what was wrong in his day. We *must* be of like disposition and persuasion.

Brother H. Leo Boles bridged the gap separating the second generation of Restoration preachers and the current heirs of this great religious legacy. He was born in 1874 and died in 1946. He often said it like this, "*One cannot preach the truth without exposing error.*" Brother Boles was the great-grandson of "*Raccoon*" John Smith. Brother Boles therefore represented well a lesson that his famous forefather learned during the early stages of the Restoration Movement.

Brother Carl Smith of Lansing, Michigan, has been a dear and close friend of mine for well over a third of a century. He also is a direct descendant of the illustrious John Smith and still wears with honor the family name. He believes just as strongly as did his famous forefather— "*Raccoon*"—John Smith and his illustrious kinsman—H. Leo Boles—in standing for the whole truth and exposing all error. This is a lesson that the rank and file of Christians need desperately to learn in our day.

SOME INCONSISTENCIES OBSERVED

Current denials of the negative of its rightful or legitimate place is rather deeply ingrained in our day. Some are dogmatically sure that Bible teachers, gospel preachers and religious journalists should never be negative in any Bible class, any gospel sermon or in a religious article. Were it not of such serious consequence, it would be rather amusing to note just how negative the positive proponents are toward all negative teaching, preaching and writing. They declare it wrong to be negative and yet they are *so negative* in their opposition to this type of instruction. This makes about as much logical sense as debating that it is wrong to debate,

arguing that it is wrong to argue, beginning a religious paper to teach what is wrong with using religious literature as a means of religious inculcation, objecting to written commentaries while stating a multitude of oral comments relative to an exegesis of certain passages or judging that it is wrong to judge. People cannot object to negative preaching, teaching and writing without violating the very thing they propose to eliminate. If so, HOW? Some of the most negative people I know contend there is no place for the negative. Likewise, some of the most intolerant people I know preach a constant message of toleration! "*Loving slurs*" have become a way of life with some who are always preaching love, Love LOVE! I readily grant there is never a right place for improper negatives. But there is a proper place for proper negatives. Those in opposition to proper negatives are in strict violation of Jehovah's will. We *must* favor what he favors; we must oppose what he opposes. The latter forms full justification for this extra lengthy lesson in *SERMONS THAT SAVE*.

BALANCE BETWEEN FOR AND AGAINST

In reality we cannot be for truth unless we are against error. We cannot be for right unless we are against wrong. We cannot be for righteousness unless we are against unrighteousness. We cannot be for godliness unless we are against ungodliness. We cannot be for sobriety unless we are against intemperance. We cannot be for purity unless we are against impurity. We cannot be for honesty unless we are against dishonesty. We cannot be for humility unless we are against arrogance and pride. We cannot be for piety unless we are against impiety. We cannot be for gratitude unless we are against ingratitude. We cannot be for wisdom unless we are against folly. We cannot be for knowledge unless we are against ignorance. We cannot be for courage unless we are against cowardliness. We cannot be for justice unless we are against injustice. We cannot be for kindness unless we are against unkindness (and it is NOT unkind to expose error and oppose sin). We cannot be for God unless we are against Satan. We cannot be for Christ unless we are against Belial. We cannot be for the Holy

Spirit unless we are against all seducing, deluding spirits. We cannot be for the Bible unless we are against everything that opposes the Valiant Volume. In summary we cannot be for positives without accompanying negatives. If so, HOW?

CONCLUSION

The church of the first century would have never survived had its members denied the negative its rightful place in their preaching and practice. The greatly needed Restoration Movement of one hundred and seventy-five years ago would have never materialized if its courageous leadership had spinelessly feared all negatives as some currently do. It needs to be stated clearly, concisely and courageously that the Lord's church would cease to exist immediately if those opposed to all negatives had their way. Perhaps this is the motive behind it all. If not, they surely leave themselves suspect on the surface. It is a foregone conclusion that a group of people unwilling to oppose sin and expose error could never be the Lord's people on earth. Reader friends, do you want the Lord's church to continue? If you do, then you will surely stand and ardently advocate that negatives indeed have a place in our preaching, teaching, lecturing and writing. Let us be willing to preach all noble negatives of God's will and all the powerful positives of the Christian covenant. Only in this fashion may we have a balance in our proclamation of the word.

If not now a Christian, will you not hear Christ, believe in his Deity, repent of your sins, confess Christ and be baptized (immersed) in water for remission of sins? Remember that it was the Christ who taught, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Christian Just Like Paul

It is my seasoned judgment and deep conviction that Paul is the greatest man, except for Christ, to tread God's green footstool in the whole history of humanity. Without question or quibble he is the finest personification of Christianity the world has ever witnessed. This lesson majors in Paul as the champion of Christianity both in what he taught and how he lived. Like the Messianic Master he loved and served Paul both taught and did (Acts 1:1).

A BEAUTIFUL, BEGINNING TEXT

In the latter part of Acts 26 we read from the pen of loyal and lovable Luke this account of Paul's defense before Agrippa,

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him: for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such I am, except these bonds (Acts 26:24-29).

THE STATELY SETTING OF THIS TREMENDOUS TEXT

Paul's great sermon in Acts 26 is an account of his conversion before Agrippa and others. Acts 9 is Luke's account of this strategic triumph for the truth and Acts 22 is Paul's account given before a hostile audience of

would-be-murderers in aroused Jerusalem. The location of its delivery is Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine during the first century. This city was still fairly new in Paul's day having been built by Herod the Great, the great-grandfather of the very king to whom Paul now spoke. It was situated in the plains of Palestine and was about fifty miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was on the Mediterranean Sea coastline.

The sermon was given in about 60 A. D. It was near the end of Paul's two-year imprisonment there. In this chapter Paul is given the liberty of defending himself. Quite like the selfless saint that he was he decides instead to promote with force and fervency the Christian Cause and makes a supreme, heroic effort to convert the young king to the King of kings and Lord of all lords—Jesus Christ. What a triumphant and signal accomplishment for truth that would have been. There had long been a wide gulf that separated the Herodian family to whom Herod Agrippa II belonged and the family of God to whom Paul belonged. The stalwart proclaimer, though in Roman chains, unleashed God's power across this mighty chasm knowing fully well it could save royalty as it had saved untold thousands all over the Roman world from memorable Pentecost till that decisive day in Caesarea.

BACKGROUND OF THE YOUNG KING

No doubt you will find the lesson far more interesting and profitable if you know something of the background of the young king before whom Paul spoke and that he tried so heroically and supremely to convert to Christ. As already alluded to, this king in Acts 26 was a great grandson to Herod the Great who sixty years earlier had sought to slay the Babe of Bethlehem in Matthew 2. His great uncle, Herod Antipas, beheaded John the Baptist in Matthew 14 and Mark 6. Also before this tetrarch our Lord was arraigned briefly in Luke 23. He was son to Herod Agrippi I who slew with a sword the apostle James and fully intended to slay Peter also but the Lord's angel intervened to save Peter's life. That Herod died a horrible death as we learn from the latter portion of Acts 12. Therefore, it is a bit more accurate to refer to the

monarch of Acts 26 as Agrippa II. This Agrippa in Acts 26 had a sister named Drusilla. She was married to Felix, a former Roman governor of Judea. They lived in notorious adultery. Luke refers to both of them in Acts 24:24,25. Paul preached righteousness, temperance (self-control) and judgment to come to this notorious couple of open immorality two years earlier. This Agrippa of Acts 26 had a sister by the name of Bernice who was present also to hear Paul's dynamic discourse.

NO CONVERTS MADE THAT DAY

Paul did not convert a single member of that august group to Christ. Present were a king, a king's sister, a newly appointed Roman governor who was dismissily ignorant of Hebrew history or rapidly emerging Christianity and a host of unnamed dignitaries. Though the spiritual harvest was barren that day, yet it was Paul's noble purpose to convert all who heard his message to Jesus Christ. Involved in conversion is God's will, the will of the sower and the will of the hearer. God's will and Paul's will that day followed parallel lines and envisioned the conversion of the entire audience there in Caesarea. But it was not the will of the auditors to heed what they had heard. Brethren who glibly state that we can take the world for Christ any time we want to fail to realize that the world has a will in this regard. God's will is that all be saved (I Tim. 2:3,4). That should be our will also. But the world with its adamant will also has a say and that say is the modern counterpart of Paul's audience in Caesarea in Acts 26—no obedience to truth. Our responsibility is to preach the gospel to all the world and live Christ before all men—not make or force them to accept it. The former we may and must do; the latter we cannot do.

Even in his non-conversion response Agrippa, and perhaps all the audience also, sensed that acceptance of Paul's message would make of him a Christian. So would it of all others in royal audience of high governmental auditors. Paul wanted them to be what he was—a Christian—but with one noticeable exception. He would wish Roman bonds or chains upon no man. How was Paul a Christian? Six rather courageous, comprehensive

answers will be given in the remnant of this sermon.

I. PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN IN NAME

He was present in Syrian Antioch when the noble name of Christian was first tendered to disciples in Acts 11:26. The passage states in marvelous fashion, "*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*" Enemies did not invent the noble name of Christian. Even if they had, disciples would not have accepted a name with no higher authority back of it than what originated with forces of falsehood. Disciples did not coin the name. It would still have been minus authority. The Lord—not they—occupied the driver's seat of supreme authority or sovereignty in this matter. Actually, it was a striking fulfillment of Isaiah 62:2 that promised the giving of a new name just as soon as Gentiles experienced God's righteousness. This they did in Acts 10 with the inclusion of Cornelius and his Gentile family into the fold of the faith. Acts 11, the very next chapter, is when they began to wear this name of Christian. The Greek construction of Acts 11:26 means that they began to wear this name because it was divinely called.

Paul urged Agrippa to be a Christian (Acts 26:28). Agrippa declined the ardent acceptance of Christianity but he sensed clearly in Paul's moving message that if he obeyed its obvious import, it would make of him a Christian. That is the why of his statement in Acts 26:28. Paul sought to persuade people to be Christians—not Pharisees, not Sadducees, Not Essenes, not Roman Catholics, not Protestant denominationalists and not Judaizers. He was interested in "*Christianizing*" his audience in Acts 26—not "*Grecianizing*" or "*Romanizing*" them into one of the popular but poisonous religions of the day. Were Paul here today he would still persuade people to be just Christians—nothing more—nothing less.

Like his apostolic colleague Peter, Paul would view this as a name through which God could be honored, Christ be glorified, all disciples united and the cause of truth spread abroad. Peter said of this noble name in I Peter 4:16, "*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*" The ASV has "*in this name.*"

Like his great friend who was a fellow pillar of the Jerusalem church, James, the Lord's brother, Paul along with Peter and John would have considered the name of Christ or Christian a worthy name (James 2:7; Cf. Gal. 1:19; 2:7-9). A name that honors a mere man, a geographical location or a form of church government could scarcely be designated as a worthy name could it? If so, how?

In I Corinthians 1:10-16 Paul strongly forbade the wearing of party names. Some were doing so at Corinth with the names of Paul, Cephas and Apollos. Such greatly displeased Paul. This party business would have been just as distasteful to Cephas (Peter) and Apollos also. Paul declared such right only if Christ is divided into little particles with each group's having one of the particles. But Christ is not divided. Such could only be right if they had been baptized into a Paul, a Cephas or an Apollos. But into this trio they had not been baptized. Such could only be right if any or all three of this group—Paul, Cephas or Apollos—had been to Calvary in their stead. But this had not been the case. Paul baptized no one at Corinth into a Pauline relationship or by *his* authority. Neither did Cephas nor Apollos. Paul, Cephas and Apollos had not been to Execution Hill for the religious parties in Corinth. Paul was not the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29,36). Paul did not taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Paul was not the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). In this strategic passage we have three cogent reasons why party names in religion are wrong—grossly and glaringly wrong!

Paul would have no sympathy at all for those who cry that "*there is nothing in a name*" or that "*one name is just as good as another.*" Religion is the only realm where such folly is tolerated much less pushed and promoted. Paul knew better than to teach such naive doctrines relative to names. Paul knew there is something in a name; he knew that one name is not as good as another. Would any say that Beelzebub and Jesus Christ are of equal merit? Would any affirm there is no difference between Jehovah and Satan? Would any take the position that no appreciable difference lay between the noble name of Nathaneal, an Israelite indeed and one in whom there is no guile and the infamous Nero on

the Roman throne at the very time Paul preached to his august audience in Caesarea on the Mediterranean? (John 1:46ff). What about the names of Paul and Judas Iscariot? Foolish is any religious leader who gets on such a bandwagon and denies the importance of names in the realm of religion. Paul was just a Christian; he was a Christian in name. He placed no prefix before; he placed no suffix afterwards. Paul did not believe in hyphenated Christians.

II. PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN IN FACT

His conversion was not fanciful; it was factual. He became a Christian by his obedience to the gospel. The simple fact that he saw Jesus on the Syrian road near Damascus did not of itself constitute him into a Christian. Many saw Jesus on earth and never became his disciples. Were seeing Jesus with one's eyes and hearing God's Son with one's own ears both imperative conditions of conversion, then not any of us could be saved. Numerous deluded souls of our day claim to have witnessed a vision of Jesus, to have been visited by an angel or to have heard audible words directly from Jesus which spoke of salvation to their souls. Such is not so, and even if it were, this would not make of them Christians. In Paul's case Jesus appeared personally to him to make of him an inspired minister and witness and to qualify him as an apostle lacking in no one essential. Paul surely should have known the purpose of that heavenly vision. In the Pauline discourse to Agrippa and the Caesarean dignitaries Paul quoted the very words Jesus issued that fateful day,

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for the purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee (Acts 26:16).

In a valiant vindication of his apostleship at Corinth Paul linked his having seen Jesus with that very apostleship under attack by his opponents. He wrote in I Corinthians 9:1, "*AM I not apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?*"

His being an inspired witness of the Lord and his apostleship to the Gentiles demanded his seeing the Lord.

Becoming a Christian did not so demand.

In Paul's case he became a Christian by obeying each stipulation of salvation. He omitted no imposed condition of conversion. Hearing, faith, repentance, confession and baptism were required of him as with all other conversions delineated by Luke in Acts. Did Saul or Paul acquiesce to all these? Indeed he did! There is no doubt about his hearing. He heard the instructions of the Christ in Acts 9:4ff; he heard and heeded what Ananias told him to do in Acts 22:13-16. He believed as per Acts 9:6 and 22:10. He repented. No one can deny that. Acts 9:9 says "*he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*" This is a portrait of penitence—not of impenitence. The fruits of his penitence are also exhibited in the important realization that he did not do in Damascus what he came there to do, i.e., bind Christians and take them back to Jerusalem for additional punishment (Acts 9:1,2). Ananias, the God-sent preacher, operated under the Great Commission which demanded repentance before there could be remission of sins (Luke 24:47). Paul would later state to an Athenian audience, "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent*" (Acts 17:30). That comprehensive command surely included Paul at the time of his own initial obedience. He surely confessed the Deity of Jesus on the Damascus Road and his belief of the same when he declared in Acts 9:6, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" The parallel to this in Acts 22:10 reads, "*What shall I do, Lord?*" Herein is a recognition of Jesus' Deity and a confession of the same. In later years Paul would write in his profound work to the Romans that confession is unto (in the direction of) salvation (Rom. 10:9,10). Inclusive would have been Paul in his initial obedience to the gospel of Jehovah's Son. Ananias commanded or charged his rising (no doubt from his prostrate position of prayer) in order that he might be baptized. We read in Acts 22:16, "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" With admirable promptness he "*arose, and was baptized*" (Acts 9:18). In writing to the Romans later Paul was inspired to indite these significant words,

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death (Rom. 6:3,4).

At this precise point (and this is three days subsequent to his seeing Jesus on the Syrian road and the time most religious leaders have him saved) and not one moment earlier did Saul become a Christian, a saved person in Christ and an added member to the body of Christ, the church of Christ (Acts 2:47).

Paul did not make a decision for Christ and leave out one or more of the gospel requirements leading to redemption. He did not become a Christian by "*faith only*," "*grace only*" or by any other "*only-ism*." He did not sign a pledge card giving himself to the Lord or raise his hand at a given signal to signify a desire for salvation. He did not bow and touch a radio or TV set as points of contact as people now are encouraged to do in mass form by high pressure tactics of crusading evangelists. He was not told to pull over to the shoulder of the Syrian road and say, "*Lord, come into my heart as personal Saviour and save my soul*" as people are now urged to do. It has long seemed strange to me why preachers on radio will tell people in their cars to pull over to the *shoulder* of the highway and ask Jesus to come into their hearts as personal Saviour. Cannot the all powerful Lord of heaven save people in a *moving* car just as quickly and effectively as he can in a "*stationary*" car? Saul did not become a saved person in Christ the way a certain high powered evangelist instructed an audience to do in a past crusade in one of our northern capital cities some years back. An outdoor theater had been rented for the occasion. This means that his audience were in their cars. When ready to extend his invitation one night he told them to turn on the headlights of their cars at the given signal from him if they desired salvation right in their automobiles. Did anyone ever read of headlight conversion in the book of Acts—an eminent book filled with New Testament conversions? If so, where are such to be found? Book, chapter and verse authority is needed for a plan of salvation that man offers an audience of eternity-bound men and women, boys and girls. Such foolishness in religion reminds me of a denominational preacher in Chattanooga who affirmed on radio that Saul

of Tarsus was saved between the time he fell from his stallion and before he hit the Syrian sand. Such caused one of our ablest and most knowledgeable preachers to reflect and say, *"Have I been reading Acts 9 all these years and missed a thing as big as a horse?"* Obviously, he had had not! No stallion is therein depicted. Even if this were Saul's chosen mode of transportation from Jerusalem to Damascus, a distance of nearly one hundred and fifty miles, yet Saul was not saved from the time he left the horse's back and before he hit the ground. Such would make him saved while still an infidelic Pharisee as touching Jesus. After falling to the ground he inquired into the very identity of the speaker by saying in Acts 9:5, *"Who art thou, Lord?"* Lord, in this instance, is the equivalent of our term Sir. This denominational preacher was trying to "horse" around with the Biblical Doctrine of Pardon! Paul did not become a Christian by the simple reception of literature and a counseling session only to be told that he could now return to his friends in the stadium as millions are now encouraged to do a la Grahamism.

Paul became a Christian by being born again or being born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3,5,7). He became a Christian by being obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). He became a Christian by obeying the gospel (Rom. 10:16). He became a Christian by being delivered from the power of darkness and being translated into God's kingdom (Col. 1:13). His conversion was real and genuine; it was not a quarter, half or three quarter type of conversion with one, two or three conversion requirements omitted or ignored. Paul honored Mark 16:16 which says in crisp, crystal clear language, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* I make it a practice to close every radio message I give by citing the words of Mark 16:16 and reminding my listeners that *"the Bible only makes Christians only."* The gospel only made only a Christian out of the brilliant Saul of Tarsus.

III. PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN ON LOCATION

He became a Christian in Damascus of Syria. Before his life would end about thirty or thirty-five years later he would preach the gospel in such great cities of his

day as not only Damascus of Syria, but also Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, Philippi, Thessalonica and Rome itself. Whether Paul was in a large city or out in the country he was a Christian on location. Whether he was a person of liberty or was bound with Roman chains he was a Christian on location. Whether he was among strangers or those who knew him longest and best he was a Christian on location. Crossing into a strange country and confronting a totally new culture did not change his basic and beautiful brand of applied Christianity. Being far removed from home did not change his Christian steadfastness one iota.

Many professing Christians today are not like Paul; they are not Christians on location. They *appear* to be Christians at home but are anything but Christians while in strange places or while on an out-of-town or out-of-state business trip where wine, women, gambling, etc., are no longer off limits. Some have appeared to be Christians while in high school but leave Christ, his church, his Book and his moral mandates back home when the college years beckon and are entered. Some are not Christians while in the military. They cease prayer, Bible Study, soul winning and worship with a military congregation that meets near the base. Transplanted Southerners to northern industrial centers often leave their religion back home. The low morals and religious apathy of big city life soon wean them away from Christ and mold them into the sophisticated stances of sinful society.

Some years back my wife and I visited with a couple on a Sunday. I preached that day where this couple had membership. During the afternoon he was packing his suitcase for his usual Monday through Friday out-of-town trip. He was in construction work and went where jobs were available. As he packed he made mention of two possessions he always took with him—his Bible and a picture of his wife. How admirable I thought! The former would remind him of the fidelity he owed his Lord while gone from home; the latter would be a constant reminder of the fidelity he owed his wife while gone. This is part of being a Christian on location.

In reality a person who is not a Christian *everywhere* is not really a Christian *anywhere!*

IV. PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN IN SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION

They ran him out of Damascus, the very city of his conversion to Christ. To escape he was let down in a basket by the outside of the city wall (Acts 9:23-25; II Cor. 11:32,33). He was unwelcome in Jerusalem, the city of his early education and the place where he once majored in Christian persecution himself (Acts 9:28-30; 8:1ff; 9:1ff). He was stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19). He was beaten publicly and jailed in humiliation in Phillipi of Macedonia (Acts 16:19ff). They mocked him and his preaching in Athens—capital of worldly wisdom in that era (Acts 17:32ff). He was brought before the Grecian authority in Corinth (Acts 18:12ff). His life was in danger in Ephesus as he fought with beasts—two-legged variety—again and again (I Cor. 15:32). In the two previous verses he wrote, "*And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily*" (I Cor. 15:30,31). They imprisoned him in Jerusalem, Caesarea and Rome as the last six chapters in Acts reveal. In the latter portion of II Corinthians 11, he presents a courageous catalogue of the sufferings he had endured for his Lord and yet that account was penned a full decade before martyrdom occurred for him in Imperial Rome perhaps around 68 A. D. Paul wrote,

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep: In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (II Cor. 11:24-28).

In Galatians 6:7 he spoke of the marks on his body which he had received due to his being a Christian. In II Timothy 2:10 he wrote of enduring all things for the sake of the Christ and his holy cause. He reminded Timothy of his many sufferings, afflictions and persecutions endured

in his travels for truth (II Tim. 3:10-12). He courageously reminded brethren in Caesarea in Acts 21:13 of his total willingness to die for Christ if such became necessary. Years later in Rome this sentiment was crystalized into a brave martyrdom for the peerless Paul.

Is this sermon being read by someone who has allowed suffering and disappointments to detour you from the Saviour's Cause? If so, why not take a long and lingering look at Paul and return to the first love you have forsaken, by repentance, prayer and confession, if you are an erring child of God? If you have never obeyed the gospel, remember that you need to hear Christ, believe in him, repent of all sins, confess faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3,5; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38).

V. PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN IN ZEAL

Zeal in preaching began to exhibit itself almost immediately subsequent to his conversion to Christ and Christianity. The Bible declares in Acts 9:20 how that "*straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*" Through the remainder of his life he was a zealous preacher and teacher. He made three long and great missionary trips, and no doubt many short journeys, to preach truth about the saving Christ.

Paul was zealous as a writer. If Hebrews be his epistle, the peerless Paul penned over half of the New Testament books—some fourteen in all. He wrote an even one hundred chapters of the New Testament.

He was zealous as a doer of good. At all times he had sympathy for the poor. While executing his third missionary journey he spent considerable time in gathering a great contribution among Gentile congregations to be carried to Palestine for aiding the poor in that famished land.

He was zealous in his worship. A number of times in the book of Acts he remained at places for seven days though often in haste to get to desired destinations. Why? At no place in those days where there was a congregation of God's people would he have to stay more than seven days to have the precious privilege of worshipping with them upon the Lord's Day.

He was zealous as a person of prayer. The opening, closing and many of the chapters in between of his epistles attest to this.

He was zealous in the training of younger, talented and dedicated men to carry on the Lord's work when he was no longer here.

Truly, Paul was a Christian in zeal. Such words as lukewarm, apathetic, indifferent, listless or heartless would be out of place if attached to the noble name of Paul. Very appropriately such tremendous terms as dedicated, committed, consecrated, sympathetic, sacrificial and loyal belong to his noble name.

IV. PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN TO THE END

This is why he buffeted his body lest he be lost after preaching to others (I Cor. 9:27). This is back of his resolute goal expressed in Philippians 3:13,14. Like Peter in II Peter 2:20-22 he knew the high price of being a Christian apostate. Unlike John Mark he did not defect temporarily (Acts 13:13; 15:37,38; II Tim. 4:11). Unlike Demas, Paul did not turn back to the world as a lover of the same (II Tim. 4:10). Paul began well; he continued well; he concluded well. In his final chapter he wrote with vibrant victory underscoring every stately syllable,

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

How tragic for one to be a Christian in youth and middle age and cast it all aside in one's sunset years as entirely too many have done. This Paul did not do. Like Paul, let us be Christians to the very end.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps you have observed that the thrust of this lesson has not been upon Paul as an apostle; in this we cannot emulate him. Our thrust has not been upon Paul as a worker of miracles; in this we may not imitate him. Our

thrust has not been upon Paul as one who could dispense supernatural gifts by imposition of apostolic hands; in this it is impossible for us to emulate him. Our thrust has not been upon Paul as a writer of Scripture; again in this we may not pursue like work. Our intended thrust has been to portray Paul as a Christian and in such vital realms as we may follow him even as he followed the Christ (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17). We can obey the gospel he did and in the five same imposed stipulations as he did—hearing, faith repentance, confession and baptism. (1) We can be a Christian in *name* as he was; (2) in *fact* as he was; (3) on *location* as he was; (4) in *suffering* as he was; (5) in *zeal* as he was; and (6) till the *end* as he was.

If all of us would be Christians as Paul was, it would spiritually revolutionize churches of Christ all over the world. People would and could see the impact and would have to be impressed. Does not the Lord deserve to have in you and me Christians just like Paul? If not, why not? What is going to be our attitude, action and application of this lesson to our lives? We hold the key!

But remember in closing that it was Jesus Christ who taught, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

Where Shall We Be In Eternity?

Gospel-centered sermons and Bible-related lessons in lectures, classes or individual studies are vastly important because happiness here and eternal felicity are at stake in our hearing and heeding of the same. Yet to the masses of men, women, boys and girls all such lessons are boring, wasteful of time and totally without redeeming value. They are unconcerned with the there and then; their only concern is with the here and now. Eat, drink and be merry today is their daily norm. They never rise above such a low, base philosophy for human existence. Lovers of this world and worshippers of the Golden Now count the gospel that reveals a dying, resurrected and reigning Redeemer and paints the pictures of two divergent destinies as matters of plain foolishness. Skeptics in Christ's day by the name of Sadducees held similar views. They denied man a spirit and heaven of any angels now or redeemed in another age (Luke 20:27-38). Grecian and Jewish infidels did the same in Paul's era. He wrote a description of them in these words of weight and wisdom,

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness: But unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God...For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called (I Cor. 1:18-24,26).

Human nature, whether it belongs to believers or unbelievers, has not changed since Bible times.

THE TERM TWO IN THE BIBLE

The gospel of Christ divides men into two classes. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 2:15,16,

For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Of all accountable people there are the saved and the lost. The saved are Christians, the lost are non-Christians.

Men travel two ways in this life. Near the end of his historic Sermon on the Galilean Mount Jesus said descriptively of these two divergent paths of potential travel,

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in therat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13,14).

Accountable people face two potential realms of physical death. One is a death in sin; the other is a death in the Lord or within righteousness. Jesus spoke of the former by saying,

I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come...I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:21,24).

Thrice in these two verses Jesus affirmed that man can die in his sins. Yet multitudes of denominational preachers who claim to be spokesmen for this Jesus do not believe a word of it. If anyone questions this assessment, observe the funerals at which they officiate and what they tell the family about the heavenly world that all the dead ones now inhabit with glorious happiness. They *never* lose a case but can have both religious and irreligious in glory in less than two minutes after they have begun to talk!! People can die in faith or in the Lord. We have Scripture to that effect. We read,

These all died in faith (according to faith—margin), not having received the promises, but having seen them afar

off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Heb. 11:13; Rev. 14:13).

People die in sin because that was their preferred realm in life; people die in faith because they lived in faith; they die in the Lord because they came into the Lord earlier in life and remained there till death. That is where death found them—in the Lord.

The resurrection of two classes will occur on that final day. These are not resurrections separated by a thousand year interval as erroneously envisioned by premillennialism but the resurrection of the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous. Both occur simultaneously. The Bible states in precise terms,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28,29).

There will be two groups in judgment. The righteous will be placed on the right hand and told why in Matthew 25:34ff; the wicked will be placed on the left hand and told why in Matthew 25:41ff. In judicial proceedings in that day the position at right meant acquittal; the position at left meant guilt and condemnation. Jesus employed that as his graphic, vivid imagery in Matthew 25:31ff.

There will be two eternal destinies. Matthew 25:46 closes by saying, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.*"

God forbid that any of us should ignore the Bible Doctrine of these two destinations for all humanity. To reject such is equal to a denial of the Bible, the truthfulness of Christ and the reliability of apostolic testimony.

HEAVEN: THE DESTINATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Heaven is used in three senses in the Bible. (1) The

atmosphere where birds of the air fly and clouds form is the first of these three. At creation fowls of the air were made to "fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (Gen. 1:20). The Bible speaks of the clouds of heaven. Jesus was taken up by a cloud as the eleven apostles looked toward heaven (Acts 1:9-11). (2) The second heaven is the place where sun, moon and distant stars have their fixed orbits and function so precisely in accord with a Wise and Gracious Creator's intent (Gen. 1:14ff). (3) The third heaven is the Palace of the Universe; it is the holy habitation of God; it is the stately center of everything. To the reverent Bible believer and defender the universe is neither earth-centered nor sun-centered; it is God-centered with his throne in grand and glorious ascendancy. Paul alludes to the third heaven in these remarkable words,

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven...How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (II Cor. 12:2,4).

Uninspired men have talked of the seven heavens. An inspired man spoke of the third heaven and there is none above or beyond the third one. That leaves four unaccounted for in the Bible. The third heaven implies a first and second but not a fourth, fifth, sixth or seventh. It is about this third heaven, center of Paul's amazing, thrilling trip, that we now contemplate and what it will mean to those who one day will inhabit this heavenly hereafter.

There are many things about the heavenly hereafter that we do not know and cannot know this side of judgment. However, the Sacred Scriptures furnish us with a few brief but very beautiful glimpses of glory. Heaven was frequently on the Saviour's mind. He had come from there and would return with far greater glory subsequent to the third of a century in which he sojourned on our mundane globe. With fervency he taught his disciples about this royal realm of righteousness. Jesus stated in Matthew 8:11, "*That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*" Here he portrays gospel subjects in intimate fellowship with the three founding

fathers of the Hebrew and Israelite people and all situated in the kingdom of heavenly glory. Kingdom of heaven, though often a reference to the church in Matthew's gospel record, does not have that usage here. As employed in this valiant verse it has reference to the heavenly kingdom of glory. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were never members of the kingdom of heaven on earth—the Lord's church.

In a chapter of precious parables relative to the kingdom, Matthew 13, Jesus again depicted a heavenly glimpse of glory. We read Matthew's report of Christ's saying, "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matt. 13:43). Imagery here is drawn from the mighty monarch of the sky—the most brilliant light that men know—the sun. Jesus thus wraps the heavenly world in a blaze of brilliance and brightness. In marked contrast there is no brilliance, brightness or shining in the horrors of Hell delineated quite vividly in the previous verse (Matt. 13:42).

Matthew 25 is a second-coming chapter just as most of Matthew 24 is a destruction-of-Jerusalem chapter. Both chapters compose the Lord's famed and famous Olivet Discourse delivered on the Tuesday of the Final Week. In this remarkable chapter which depicts his second-coming the Lord removed briefly the curtain that hides heaven from earthly eyes and presented these precious portraits of that upper and better realm,

Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord...Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matt. 25:21,34,46).

In a strikingly beautiful passage Jesus says,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

For the deeply troubled hearts of his fearful followers

Jesus provided a Spiritual Gibraltar, a beautiful bedrock of three cardinal beliefs which are: (1) belief in God; (2) belief in Christ as God's Son; and (3) belief in the heavenly hereafter. Minus any or all these fundamental faiths man is without chart or compass upon the ocean of life. It is reported that the brilliant genius, John Stuart Mill, once said that he would give all he had or ever hoped to have if for one hour of the day he could look up at the beautiful blue and call it heaven as he had done while a boy. Here was a man renowned and successful in the eyes of the world that admired his brilliant genius and yet had lost his precious, powerful, childlike faith. What a loss! The world has nothing, absolutely nothing to replace famished and fading faith in the spiritual. Worldly philosophy had not worked for the brilliant Englishman; it will not work for anyone today either regardless of how many place their faith and dependence in such evasive endeavors.

Do you not agree that all the foregoing glimpses of glory are bright, blessed and beautiful?

Heaven was on Paul's mind as he served the Lord in an earthly setting. We have already alluded to his calling this royal realm the third heaven and paradise (II Cor. 12:2,4). Paradise derives from a term that means a garden of pleasure.

Paul described the heavenly bodies of the redeemed in his great resurrection chapter, I Corinthians 15. They will be incorruptible, powerful, spiritual, heavenly and immortal (I Cor. 15:42ff).

In II Corinthians 4:16-5:9 he presents the heavenly realm as: (1) "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" (2) the great realm of the unseen; (3) "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" (4) the place where we can earnestly desire "to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven;" (5) that anticipated and desirable realm where "mortality might be swallowed up of life;" and (6) being home at last with the Lord. In these dozen verses, all set in one precious context, we have one of the most precious of all Pauline glimpses of heavenly glory. Does it not make your soul long to go there? Paul says in I Thessalonians 4:17, "*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to*

meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Being eternally with the Lord is one of the greatest glimpses of glory vouchsafed the righteous on earth.

We read in Hebrews 4:9, "*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*" Jesus promised a twofold rest in the Precious Invitation (Matt. 11:28-30). We have rest in the form of pardon from our sins, as aliens, by obeying initially the gospel and as God's erring children by honoring the clear conditions of his second law of pardon, and in the next world the eternity of heavenly rest. Hebrews 4:9 refers to that rest in yonder's world. So does the rest of II Thessalonians 1:7 and that of Revelation 14:13. Hebrews 11 is Inspiration's Hall of Faith and Fame. In it we read the thrilling statement, "*But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city*" (Heb. 11:16). Better is a relative term. It means that the heavenly estate will far, far exceed anything we have known and experienced on earth.

Peter spoke of heaven in his opening epistle chapter, I Peter 1, and also in his eighth and final chapter, II Peter 3. Very early in his inspired literary production he wrote, "*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (I Peter 1:4). In II Peter 3:13 the aged Peter wrote, "*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" Peter surely is not speaking of a renovated earth as the new earth. He has just affirmed that current heavens and earth will be destroyed, dissolved and burned up at the Lord's second advent (II Pet. 3:10ff). New heavens and a new earth of II Peter 3:13 mean precisely the same as the expression, "*reserved in heaven for you*" means in I Peter 1:4. Heaven, not this earth, is the hope of God's children for the next world.

John promises that we shall be like Jesus in that world of inexpressible wonders (I John 3:2). Such a blessed hope should produce an ascending motivation toward our being pure even as the Lord is pure (I John 3:3).

Revelation 21 and 22 contain a precious panorama of

glimpses of glory. Heaven is the holy city, the new Jerusalem. It is like the beautiful, beaming bride made ready for her groom on her day of days (Rev. 21:2). It is being with God and his being with the redeemed (Rev. 21:3). Revelation 21:4 overflows with generous glimpses of glory. The precious passage 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.*" This comprehensive verse is almost without peer in its delightful depiction of glimpses of heavenly glory. It is the place of heavenly inheritance (Rev. 21:7). It is the foursquare city (Rev. 21:16). John assembles an almost unparalleled accumulation of precious stones in depiction of its vast value (Rev. 21:18-21). Therein God and the Christ are temple, light and glory by way of positive depiction and by a negative delineation it has nothing that defiles, that works abomination or that lies. It is for those whose names have been inscribed in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:22-27). Several valiant verses in Revelation 22 continue the heavenly depiction of glimpses of eternal glory (Rev. 22:1ff).

Several clear observations are readily evident. (1) Heaven is a real place; (2) it is a better realm; (3) it is a place of joy; (4) it is a place of peace; (5) it is an eternal realm; (6) it is a land of no mores—no more tears, sorrow, night, curse, pain, temptation, sin, death, Satan, beast, false prophet, etc.

Will there be future heavenly recognition? This is a frequently repeated question. The Bible presents overwhelming proof that there will be heavenly recognition. David knew he would later die and then go to his son (II Sam. 12:23). Jesus taught that gospel subjects under Christianity will recognize Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in heaven (Matt. 8:11). There was recognition in the account of Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31. Paul expected to recognize his gospel converts among Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:19,20). The redeemed will possess both identity and memory. These are the two pre-requisites for human recognition on earth and will be the same essentials for recognition in the heavenly realm.

HELL: THE DESTINATION OF THE WICKED AND DISOBEDIENT

A few terms will be of profit to us before noting what the Bible says relative to hell. The Bible teaches an intermediate realm where both righteous and wicked go at death to await judgment. The righteous are in Paradise or Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:19ff; 23:43). The wicked (both men and angels) are in torments or Tartarus (Luke 16:23; Jude 6; II Pet. 2:4). The intermediate realm is Sheol and Hades. It has the two compartments. The wicked in eternity will be in hell or Eternal Gehenna. Gehenna occurs a dozen times in the Greek text. Except for James in 3:6 the Lord Jesus uses it directly the other eleven times. There is punishment for the wicked prior to death and then subsequent to death (Luke 16:23; II Thess. 1:7ff).

The Bible has much to say about hell. Militant atheists such as Flew, Matson and Barnhart in their debates with Brother Thomas B. Warren all exhibited their utter hatred and deep disdain for the doctrine of future punishment in hell. Being mad at this doctrine, poking fun at it, ignoring it or rejecting it will not dissolve the doctrinal aspects of its reality, finality and eternity. Who in Sacred Scriptures taught the concepts of hell and what of its nature?

Daniel spoke of those who would awake "*to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Dan. 12:2). Old Testament personalities knew much more about the soul's immortality and the two eternal destinies than modernism is willing to concede.

John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11,12 spoke of it as a baptism in fire. This will be an eternal immersion—not one of short duration as is baptism in water in the Great Commission (Matt. 3:11). In the subsequent verse John states, "*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*" (Matt. 3:12). There will be no fire extinguishers hanging on the walls of hell. No one there will be able to quench the fires that have been ignited by Jehovah's justice.

Jesus taught it forcefully, frequently and frightfully. He spoke of hell fire in Matthew 5:22 and of being cast into hell in Matthew 5:29,30. In Matthew 13:41,42 God's Son declared,

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

In the great Olivet Discourse as he discussed the second major aspect of his sermon, his coming at the end of the Christian Age, he said,

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth...Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...And these shall go away into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:30,41,46).

Thrice in Mark 9:42-48 Jesus spoke about the wicked's being cast into hell where the fire is never quenched and their worm never dies. A recent Pope of the Catholic Church never mentioned hell according to one of his Vatican spokesmen though the spokesman affirmed that the Pope was more concerned about hell than any other person. Amazingly enough, this concern was insufficient to cause him to speak out in warning people lest they go there. It was the silent spot in the Pope's theology. Jesus spoke of it often and always in all of its hideous horrors.

Paul spoke of its reality and described its noxious nature. He stated,

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thess. 1:7-9).

Peter affirmed punishment for apostate angels in II Peter 2:4. He wrote in that same context, "*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*" (II Pet. 2:9).

John wrote,

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name...And death and hell (Hades—ASV) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire...But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and

whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death...For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 14:11; 20:14,15; 21:8; 22:15).

Will there be degrees of punishment in hell? Indeed so! Unless this is so then it could not be worse for the Christian apostate than for one who never knows truth and yet Peter so affirms that it will be so in II Peter 2:20-22. Jesus recognized corresponding guilt and greater punishment in both Luke 12:47,48 and in Matthew 11:20-24. Where knowledge or light is greater, the more severe will be the reaped punishment. Hebrews 10:26ff teaches the same principle.

Hell is real; it is for those who never obey the gospel; it is for the atheist or unbeliever; it is for those who were once Christians but apostatized and died in rebellion toward God. It is horrible, awful and eternal. Here on earth we hear from time to time about "jailbreaks." However, there will be no "hellbreaks" in eternity. Those consigned there are going to stay there! Make no mistake relative to this point. No one will be able to bail them out. They are well beyond the final court of appeals!

HEAVEN AND HELL: A STUDY OF OPPOSITES AND CONTRASTS

Heaven will be where God, the Christ and the Holy Spirit are. Heaven will contain the angels that sinned not but retained their own estate. Heaven will have all the redeemed of patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian Dispensations. Hell will have none of these.

Hell will have Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the damned and all the wicked and disobedient. Heaven will have none of these.

Heaven will have all babies and little children who died before reaching responsibility or attaining accountability. There will be no babies and little children in hell, cold, cruel and calloused Calvinism to the contrary notwithstanding.

Hell will be horror, anguish and pain. Heaven will have none of this.

Heaven will be happiness, rest and contentment. Hell will have none of this—not that first particle.

Heaven will be light; it will be one eternal day. Hell will be darkness; it will be outer darkness; it will be a darkness that cannot be penetrated; it will be a darkness that can be felt. Hell will be one eternal night.

Heaven will be eternal life. Hell will last forever and yet eternal life is never associated therewith due to that term's being marked so nobly with a quality of life. Eternal Gehenna knows nothing, absolutely nothing about. Hell will be eternal death—everlasting separation from God, Christ, the Spirit and all the heavenly redeemed.

There will be singing in heaven. In hell there will be weeping, wailing and the gnashing of teeth. There is a marching Christian hymn relative to the glorious time when all of God's singers get home. Nobody, I suppose, ever thought of writing a song and entitling it, "*When All Of Satan's Singers Get Home*" and making it applicable to hell. The wicked had better get all their singing done here because songs will neither appear on their lips nor fill the corridors of hell in yonder's age.

Heaven will be home; hell will be anything but home. Home reflects a certain type of quality. This hell will not and cannot have.

Heaven will be a living realm of NO DEATH; hell will be a dying place designated by John in Revelation as the second death.

Heaven will be pleasure without dilution; hell will be pain, anguish and suffering undiluted.

Heaven will be desirable; hell will be detestable.

HUMANITY HAS A CHOICE

The aged, faithful and stalwart Joshua in Joshua 24:15 placed before the Israelites the choice of idolatrous worship, loyalty and service or the worship and service of Jehovah God. Courageous Elijah challenged Israel to decide between God and Baal (I Kings 18:21). Jeremiah set before his apostate peers in Judah "*the way of life and the way of death*" (Jer. 21:8). Jesus spoke of the broad way entered by a wide gate, which is heavily traveled and which ends in destruction and in marked contrast a narrow way, entered by a strait gate, with only

a traveler here and there upon it and whose destiny is delightful (Matt. 7:13,14).

The choice is ours as touching eternal destinies. God does not make it for us; no other person can do so by proxy. You make it for yourself; I make it for myself. Jehovah God, in a sense, votes for our going to heaven; Satan, in a sense, votes for our going to hell. We break the tie. One day our last chance to vote (obeying the gospel and living well the Christian life) will be gone and gone forever. Then it will be too late and too bad. When you refuse God's way as *your way*, Satan wins. God loses but you are the real loser in the long (eternal) run. Such an unwise and foolish choice means that one is headed for a devil's hell and is riding a speeding roller coaster to get there. The momentum picks up additional speed every hour you put off obedience to God's glorious gospel.

CONCLUSION

A three year-old child was once on a railroad track. There was a speeding train bearing down upon him. There was insufficient time for him to get off. His father was a witness to it all. He could not reach him in time. This he knew! Promptly he cried out with all the volume and urgency at his command, "*Son, lie down flat, lie down flat!*" The boy hit the crossties with instant response and speed. The train passed over him without injury. That is the kind of obedience we need to escape going to hell and being privileged to go to the heavenly hereafter in yonder's world. Do you have that type of obedient spirit? Today is the day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7,8). Place no boasting confidence in tomorrow (Prov. 27:1). Hear Christ today; believe in his Deity today; repent of sins today; confess faith in him as God's Son today; be baptized (immersed) today. Begin to live for Christ today as a redeemed son or daughter of the King of the Universe. Every day your back is to hell and your face is pointed toward heaven.

Remember, reader friend, it was the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). The Bible only makes Christians only.

May the Lord bless richly everyone who has read these *SERMONS THAT SAVE*.







Other Publications By Firm Foundation Publishing House

Wm. S. Cline & John G. Priola, Editors, **The Firm Foundation Of God Standing.** The first annual Firm Foundation lectureship. Cloth. \$14.95.

Where The Saints Meet. A directory of the congregations of the churches of Christ. \$10.00.

Dewey Fogerson, **The Witnesses, Jehovah.** A study of the term "Jehovah" and the Watchtower's version of the New Testament. \$3.00.

Gailyn Van Rheen, **Biblically Anchored Missions.** Perspectives on church growth. \$4.50.

Walter Adams, **Church Administration.** A handbook for church leaders. \$3.25.

Michael Wilson, **An Outline Of Bible History and Major Christian Movements.** \$4.95.

Harvey Childress, **The Lord's Own Church.** \$2.25.

Lynn Walker, **Supernatural Power and the Occult.** \$4.00.

R. W. Grimsley, **The Church That Jesus Built.** \$2.75.

Bill Humble, **The Story Of The Restoration.** \$2.75.

L. R. Wilson, **The New Testament Church.** \$2.75.

R. C. Bell, **Studies In Romans,** \$2.75.

R. C. Bell, **Studies In Galatians.** \$2.75.

R. C. Bell, **Studies In Ephesians.** \$2.75.

Order From

FIRM FOUNDATION PUBLISHING HOUSE

P. O. Box 17200

Pensacola, Florida 32522

1-800-874-1804

Call Us For Bibles, Literature, Supplies, Etc.