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# **101 SERMON OUTLINES**

(REVISED)

**Frank L. Cox**

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DEDICATION

*To my devoted wife, Josephine Margaret,  
this volume is affectionately dedicated.*

THE AUTHOR

## Words of Appreciation

Preachers, elders, and other leaders in the Lord's church will welcome this revised and enlarged edition of *101 Sermon Outlines* by Frank L. Cox. Brother Cox is well known for his remarkable ability in the field of homiletics. He is unsurpassed in his ability to analyze a Scripture text and to put it in outline form.

Frank L. Cox has been a faithful Christian ever since he was baptized at the age of 18 by Alfred Elmore in the waters of Red River. He has been a gospel preacher ever since he preached his first sermon at Baird, Texas, not many months following his obedience to the gospel of Christ.

Born on August 5, 1895 in Farmersville, Texas, the son of Edward Hall and Beulah (Nash) Cox, Frank Cox lived the first seven years of his life in North Texas, after which he moved with his parents to Oklahoma, then known as Indian Territory. Frank grew to maturity as the son of a tenant farmer while learning the value of hard work. In high school he showed his intellectual ability when he was graduated as valedictorian of the Kingston, Oklahoma High School.

Brother Cox received his college training in Abilene Christian College, Thorp Spring Christian College, and the University of Oklahoma. In 1964 Magic Valley Christian College conferred upon him the honorary LL. D. in recognition of his ability as a preacher and his years of useful service for the Lord.

In December, 1969, Brother Cox and his lovely and devoted companion, the former Josephine Margaret Jarnigan, observed the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage, a marriage which has proved to be a blessing to the Lord. Three daughters and one son blessed this happy union. All are now married and maintain Christian homes of their own. Brother Cox had the privilege of baptizing each of his children into Christ and of later performing the marriage ceremony of each one.

Since 1956 Brother Cox has made his home in Tyler, Texas. Previous to this he had served as the local evangelist for a number of fine congregations in both Texas and Oklahoma. He is held in the highest esteem not only in his home congregation, the Glenwood church, where he serves as an elder, but also by the other congregations of Tyler and surrounding communities. He is a source of encouragement to other gospel preachers, both young and old, and I am glad to count him as a personal friend of many years.

In addition to the fourteen excellent books written by Brother Cox, he has been a writer for a number of our gospel periodicals. He was editor of a family type magazine, *The Spotlight*, for seven years. He has been a staff writer for the *Gospel Advocate* since 1953. He has been the editor of *The Minister's Monthly*, a magazine especially for church leaders, since 1955.

Long after Brother Cox has gone to his reward, his books and writings will continue to live, enriching the lives of countless numbers of individuals.

George H. Stephenson, Evangelist  
West Erwin Church of Christ  
Tyler, Texas

For many years this writer has known Frank L. Cox by reputation and through the printed page. For the last four years he has known him personally as they have worked together with the Glenwood Church of Christ in Tyler, where Brother Cox serves as one of the bishops and the writer serves as evangelist.

To know Frank L. Cox personally—as a man, an elder, an editor, a gospel preacher, a writer, a genuine Christian—is to love him deeply. Few men of this writer's acquaintance manifest the spirit of Christ as does he. He is a Christ-like example and an inspiration to all who know him. Only when we 'go home to be forever with the Lord will the full impact of Brother Cox's life and work be known to us.

In no area of service has Frank L. Cox excelled in a greater and more significant way than in his writings which are known, appreciated, and used for good around the world. This writer predicts that this book of sermons will *go* to the four corners of the earth to be used by preachers of the gospel to bless the lives of men and to advance the cause of Jesus Christ everywhere.

Jay Lockhart, Evangelist  
Glenwood Church of Christ  
Tyler, Texas

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## BEATITUDES OF JESUS

Matthew 5:1-12

*Blessed* (happy), the key word. The beatitudes show that supreme happiness depends not on a person's environment or outward circumstances, but on his inward life; not on what a man *has*, but on what he *is*. Now, let us look at the qualities of the men who are truly happy.

- I. *The poor in spirit*. The lowly; the people who feel their own unworthiness. We are reminded that *the poor* become immensely rich: they enter the kingdom (Acts 2:37-41). The kingdom of God, with all of its treasures, becomes theirs because they are willing and ready to enter.
- II. *They that mourn*. The world says, "Shun grief and sorrow." In startling opposition, the Master teaches us to mourn—to mourn our sins (2 Cor. 7:10), to mourn the sins of others (Jer. 8:18), to mourn in sympathy with unfortunate people (John 11:25). Strange to say, comfort is the outcome of sorrow (Ps. 30:5b; 2 Cor. 1:7). When we bear the burden of others, we forget our own.
- III. *The meek*. The world says, "Stand up for your rights!" Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek"—the gentle, the submissive, the ones who are more willing to suffer wrong than to do wrong. "They shall inherit the earth" (land). As ancient Israel inherited an earthly land, so shall the meek inherit a heavenly (Matt. 25:34; 1 Peter 1:4). The selfish shall lose, the unselfish gain!
- IV. *They that hunger and thirst*. Hunger indicates good health. Conditions, physical or spiritual, are critical if appetite fails. If you crave to be righteous, you shall become righteous. Every person shall eventually be what his soul craves most to be.
- V. *The merciful*. The quality of mercy is manifested in three definite ways: in deeds of helpfulness (Luke 10:30-37); in kindness of judgment (Matt. 7:1-5); in forgiveness (Eph. 4:32). The merciful shall reap a harvest of mercy: (1) from man. Our fellowmen treat us pretty much as we treat them; (2) also from God. As long as mercy flows from our lives, divine mercy will flow into our lives (Mat. 6:14, 15).
- VI. *Pure in heart*. The singleminded. Men of our day lay emphasis on purity of morals. Jesus goes beneath all and lays emphasis on the purity of heart—or thought: for when the heart is pure, the life will be pure (Matt. 23:25-28). Purity of heart gives clearness of vision—"The pure in heart shall see God" (Heb. 12:14); Rev. 22:3-5).
- VII. *The peacemakers*. There are many peacebreakers. There is discord between man and man, between man and God. In



the family of God (the church) and partitions are dissolved (Eph. 2:14-16). Those noble people who give their lives to the restoration of harmony "shall be called the children of God"—because he is the "God of people," his Son is the "Prince of peace," and his gospel is the "gospel of peace."

- VIII. The man with these qualities is godly—different from the man of the world; therefore hated and persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). But he is happy because his reward is great—"the kingdom" is his and his companions are the best—"the prophets." Happiness supreme depends on the content of the heart.

### **THE DISCIPLES' INFLUENCE** **Matthew 5:13-16**

When God of old called Abraham, he made him a twofold promise: First, "I will bless thee"; second, "Thou shalt be a blessing." The beatitudes correspond to the first promise, the words of the text the second. The person who possesses the qualities mentioned in the beatitudes will be blessed; he will also be a blessing. Radiating from such a personality will be an influence most beneficent. This influence is illustrated by two figures, namely, salt and light.

- I. *The disciples are salt.* This figure implies that the world is insipid, also that it is in process of decay. Let us consider:
  1. The work of salt.
    - (1) It seasons, giving relish to what otherwise would be tasteless. The disciples of Christ are the relishing element, preventing the world from becoming insipid to the Lord.
    - (2) It preserves, arresting the tendency to decay. The world is tending to corruption; sin, like a cancer, is eating at the very body of society (Isa. 1:5, 6). A godly man preserves society (Mal. 2:6).
  2. The danger. Salt may lose its saltness. Exposure may deprive it of its seasoning and saving power. The disciple is exposed to the spirit of this world. If not careful, he will yield; if he yield he will lose his power for good (Rom. 12:2). Only good men can accomplish good (Luke 22:32).
  3. The doom. Once the saltness is lost, it is "cast out" as useless; it is "trodden under foot," or subjected to ridicule, humiliation. A disciple who has lost his influence for good is worthless.
  
- II. *And they are light.* This figure implies that the world lies in darkness—the darkness of sin, of ignorance, of gloom. The mission of a disciple is to dispel darkness. Two things are necessary to a lamp's shining effectively:
  1. It must be lighted—lighted by another. God is light (1

John 5). When born of him, we become like him—we become lights. By continued fellowship with him, we keep on shining. As long as we walk in the light, we reflect the light (1 John 1:7).

2. It must be set. On a place of prominence—as a lamp on a stand or "a city on a hill." Disciples must avoid two extremes: Ostentation (Matt. 6:1), and timidity. Light makes no fuss, nor does it try to hide. "Even so let your light shine before men." Not fitfully, but constantly. —Flashing are blinding. Not a comet, but the sun lights the world. Why shine "before men"?
  - (a) "That they may see your good works," not the worker. What men see in life has a tremendous influence over their character and helps to shape their destiny.
  - (b) "And glorify your Father who is in heaven." By the power of good works, men are turned from darkness to light. Though he may not speak a word, a good man is a powerful preacher!

Disciples, you are a twofold influence: First, a conservative influence—you are salt! In a world of corruption and decay, preserve all that is good. Second, you are a liberal influence—you are light! In a world of darkness, you are to diffuse the light of divine love and eternal truth.

### **THE LORD'S MORAL LAW** **Matthew 5:17-48**

The law was to pass away, not by destruction but fulfillment— as a bud passes away in the beautiful bloom or the rude outline in the finished picture (verse 17). The Master upheld the moral precepts of the law (verse 18). Those who disregard them are considered "least," those who observe them are considered "great," those who set them aside for the ritual cannot enter the kingdom (verses 19, 20).

Now, comes the question: How does Jesus fulfill the moral precepts of the law? The answer is found in the illustrations that follow:

- I. *The sixth commandment* (verses 21-26). The Jews taught that this commandment was broken only by the deed. Jesus fulfilled it by teaching that it may be broken by a malicious thought or a wicked word. —There is thought-murder, also tongue-murder (1 John 3:15). He makes two practical applications: 1. One is taken from the altar, showing that morality comes before sacrifice, love before worship. 2. The other from a legal procedure showing that all differences between man and man should be adjusted before they come to the court.
- II. *The seventh commandment* (verses 27-32). The Pharisees

taught that this commandment was broken only by the act. Jesus completed it by showing that adultery may also be a thing of the heart. Note the twofold application:

1. The passions of the flesh must be mastered at any price (verses 29, 30).
2. The sanctity of the home must be guarded (verses 31, 32).

- III. *The sin of perjury* (verses 33-37). The law taught that man should not swear falsely (Lev. 19:12). Jesus taught that he should not swear at all—not by the Lord or anything pertaining to him. 1. Swearing is useless (verse 36). An oath will not bind a liar; an honest man will tell the truth without it. 2. A simple affirmation ("yea"), or negative ("nay") is sufficient.
- IV. *The law of retaliation* (verses 38-42). The law sanctioned private revenge (Ex. 21:22-25). But Jesus taught the doctrine of non-resistance. To illustrate the precept, he gave instances of injury to body, to property, to freedom. The disciple's revenge is returning good for evil (Rom. 12:20, 21).
- V. *The law of love* (verses 43-48). The Jews were partial in attitude. They loved their neighbors, but their neighbors were people of their own race, of their own religion. But the Master taught that love should be universal, giving the love of God as an example (John 3:16). We are God's children if we are like him. If we do not love our enemies, we are sinners without reward. By keeping the law of love, all other moral precepts will be fulfilled in us (Rom. 13:8-10). Loving your neighbor as you love yourself, you will not take his life, you will not defile his (or her) character, you will not bear false witness against him, you will do him no injury; you will do him good (1 Cor. 13).

## **RELIGIOUS DUTIES**

### **Matthew 6: 1-18**

In verse 1 the Master points out the motive that should move the disciple in the performance of every obligation of life: God's approval, not man's, should be sought. Your light should shine before men, but not for self-glorification. When tempted to show your works for a selfish purpose, you should hide them; when tempted to hide your good works for shame, you should show them. Neither selfishness nor shame has any part in the life of a disciple.

In the verses that follow, Jesus applies this great principle to life. Let us consider the three particulars.

- I. *In deeds of benevolence* (verses 2-4). In the performance of this duty, or any duty, there are two cautions to be observed:
  1. Negative (verse 2). The ostentatious spirit is forbidden under the figure of a trumpet. A person should give to

- help the recipient, not to help himself. —Self-glorification is forbidden.
2. Positive (verses 3, 4). When tempted to parade your benevolence, keep it a secret; else it may minister to your pride. God who sees through the darkness will reward you in the light.
- II. *In our prayers* (verses 5-15). In these verses we have a great lesson on prayer. Let us consider:
1. What prayer should not be.
    - (a) A pretense (verses 5, 6). When you pray, make no effort to impress people with your devotion or eloquence. Shut men out; shut God in.
    - (b) Superstition (verses 7, 8). Vain repetitions are heathenish (1 Kings 18:26; Acts 19:34). However, repetition in prayer is not wrong, if deeply sincere (Matt. 26:39ff). It is not much prayer, but "much speaking," that is forbidden. Prayers prevail not by their length or frequency, but by earnestness.
  2. What prayer ought to be.
    - (a) In form. It should be prominent for simplicity, directness, brevity.
    - (b) In substance. It should rise above selfishness, asking first for the things of God. We should ask no more for ourselves than present (daily) needs. Ask the Lord for deliverance from sin—its guilt and its power.
    - (c) In spirit. Filial—"Father." Fraternal—"Our Father." Reverential—"Hallowed be thy name." Unselfish—"Give us." Forgiving—"Forgive us as we forgive."
- III. *In self-abasement* (verses 16-18). A disciple is taught to deny himself (Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 9:27). In the matter of fasting or self denial there are two conditions to keep in mind:
1. Negative. Do not try to make your self-denial an attraction. Wear no artificial gloom. Seek neither praise nor blame from the sons of men.
  2. Positive. Appear as usual. The Jews washed and anointed their hands except when mourning (Dan. 10:3). If you strive to please the Father, he will greatly reward you.

In the great words of the text we have three aspects of true religion. First, in its *outgoing*—it reaches outward in mercy to man; second, in its *upgoing*—it reaches upward to God in devotion; third, in its *self-abasement*—it looks to self in humility and self-denial.

## EARTHLY TREASURES

### Matthew 6:19-34

From the beatitudes we learn that the life of blessedness does not depend on the possession of material things; and yet we cannot do without them: they strengthen and sustain us; they hold the body and spirit together. In the acquisition and use of them the great Teacher points out two dangers.

- I. *Greed* (or covetousness) (verses 19-24). The desire to accumulate is strong in our nature. It is a worthy tendency; but, like every natural tendency, it must be guarded and guided. Safe guidance in this particular is found in the language before us. In it we see three items of importance.
  1. A prohibition: "Lay not up," etc. For this prohibition two reasons are assigned:
    - (a) Earthly treasures are insecure. Arrayed against them are two destructive forces. One is on the *inside*: "Moth and rust consume"—moth consumes garments; rust, precious metals (James 5:1-13). The other is on the *outside*: "Thieves dig through and steal." There is a thief in human form; a thief in nature—the fire, the flood, the storm, the thief of death (1 Tim. 6:7).
    - (b) They enslave the heart (verse 21). They influence character; they lead into divers temptations (1 Tim. 6:9, 10). Hoarded treasures deprive men of a home in heaven (Matt. 19:23, 24).
  2. A command: "But lay up," etc. When does a man lay up for himself treasures in heaven? When he goes about doing good, when he prays, when he denies himself, when he makes the proper use of his powers and faculties—all for the good of man and the glory of God. The command, as well as the prohibition, should be observed. Now, let us consider the reasons assigned:
    - (a) Heavenly treasures are secure. Moth cannot eat the garments of righteousness—a good life is an incorruptible treasure. Rust cannot consume gold tried by fire (Rev. 3:18). Thieves cannot break through and steal the heavenly inheritance (1 Peter 1:3, 4).
    - (b) They exercise a heavenly influence (verse 21). "The heart follows the treasure, as the needle the lode-stone, or the sunflower the sun." "No man ever went to heaven whose heart was not already there."
  3. A warning. To disregard this prohibition or command is both injurious and fatal.
    - (a) It is injurious (verses 22, 23). Greed obscures vision, blinds men to the best things of life; it takes away sympathy, the principle of "fair play," the spirit of liberality or benevolence.

- (b) It is fatal (verse 24). The man who sets his heart upon the things of the world must give up God and the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:10).
- II. *Anxiety* (verses 25-34). Anxiety over a supposed lack is the weakness of many people. "Why speak to me about hoarding," says one, "when it is with difficulty that I secure my daily bread?" To the overanxious, the Master's law is: "Be not anxious." An important law: for in the passage before *MS* it appears five times. For three or more reasons we should not yield to the weakness of anxiety.
1. God will provide (verses 25, 26, 28-30). Life is more than food, and the body than raiment. Will he who has graciously conferred the greater gifts, neglect to confer the less? If he cares for the birds and the flowers, will he neglect him who was made in his own image?
  2. Anxiety is a most useless mental state (verse 27). It adds nothing to life—its breadth, its length, its height.
  3. To do so is to distrust God—his love, his power, his infinite wisdom (verses 31, 32). For a child to distrust the Father is a sinful attitude.

Instead of becoming engrossed with greed and anxious care, let us be deeply concerned with the salvation of our souls (verse 33). If we do our present duty, the problems of tomorrow need not trouble us. Let us live one day at a time (verse 34).

### **THE PROBLEM OF EVIL** **Matthew 7:1-6**

What should be the attitude of the disciple toward the evil he sees or thinks he sees in the people about him? In the passage before us we have the answer. The Teacher points out two dangers lying in opposite directions.

- I. *That of being too severe* (verses 1-5). In these words we have:
  1. A prohibition (verse 1a). "Judge not," i. e., unkindly, unwisely, unjustly. Be not a critic, a mote-finder. Be not too severe with the faults you see or think you see in others. Let your critical eye be focused on yourself, your charitable eye on others (1 Peter 4:8).
  2. Reasons for the prohibition:
    - (a) Judging provokes judgment (verses 1b, 2). It excites animosity, invites retaliation. The judge will be judged, the critic will be criticized, the measurer will be measured. —Don't forget that life is action and reaction!
    - (b) It is hypocritical (verses 3, 4). The mote-finder, by his very profession, lifts himself above others. As a matter of fact, he has faults of his own. The eager-

ness to find a mote indicates a beam—a glaring sin, a heart poisoned with malice. Criticism is a revealing thing—it may reveal more about the critic than the person criticized (Titus 1:15).

- (c) There is a prior obligation (verse 5). With a beam in his eye, the critic cannot properly evaluate his brother. By removing the beam—the passion for fault-finding—he can see his brother more clearly and help him. The power to do so rests with the man of a loving heart. The way to righteousness lies not in finding the faults of others, but in finding our own and mending them (2 Cor. 13:5).

II. *That of being too lenient* (verse 6). Due to a desire to avoid the spirit of stern severity, some people swing to the other extreme—they condone, they compromise, etc. So, let us consider:

1. A prohibition: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine." Things "holy" and "pearls" refer to precious values—God's word, wholesome character, etc. These "dogs" are two-legged dogs, these "swine" are two-legged swine. —They typify the sensual, the unspiritual, men without appreciation for precious values.
2. A reason for the prohibition: "Lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you." Swinish men regard not priceless pearls: "They trample them under their feet." Doggish men regard not holy people: They "turn and rend you"—your body, your character, your good name.

You should not judge; yet you must discriminate. You must avoid the spirit of stern severity; "yet a dog is to be esteemed a dog, and a swine a swine." It is wrong to be unkind to people; it is also wrong to tolerate evil. It is wrong to condemn; yet it is often necessary to avoid (Acts 13:44-46; 1 Cor. 5:11).

The first part of this lesson lays emphasis on the quality of mercy, the latter part on quality of purity. Both qualities are greatly needed by the disciple (Matt. 5:7, 8).

## **THE TWO RULES**

### **Matthew 7:7-12**

In these words the Teacher presents two essential rules of life: the Rule of Prayer and the Golden Rule. One has to do with our relationship with God, the other our relationship with man.

- I. *The Rule of Prayer* (verses 7-11). In the preceding language, Jesus has pointed out some difficult duties to perform; and now, for help in the performance of them, he directs our thoughts upward to God, who is our strength (Heb. 4:14-16). The loving Lord teaches us:

1. That we should pray. He gives a threefold exhortation with the view to impressiveness: "ask," "seek," "knock." If you are hungry, "ask." If something of importance seems missing in your life, "seek." And if you seem to be shut out, "knock."
  2. That we should pray persistently. Each of the three words—*ask*, *seek*, *knock*—implies a further degree of industry and diligence. We are to *ask*. If by asking we fail to obtain, we are to *seek*. And if by seeking we fail to find, we are to *knock* (Luke 11:5-8).
  3. That God will answer our prayer. Of this we find assurance:
    - (a) In the word of God. "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Prayer is the golden key that unlocks God's great storehouse (James 4:2).
    - (b) *In the very nature of God* (verses 9-11). God, our Father, is *good*; therefore, he *delights* to bless his children. God is *wise*; therefore, he "*knows how*" to bless his children. And God is '*powerful*'; therefore, he is *able* to bless (Eph. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 2:18; 7:25).
- II. *The Golden Rule* (verse 12). We should do unto all men as we would have them do unto us, if our circumstances and theirs -were reversed. By the following items our attention is arrested:
1. Its brevity. Like a carpenter's rule, it is portable. We should carry it with us into every relationship of life— business, social, etc.
  2. Its comprehensiveness: "All things" are included. It embraces every moral obligation, every duty between man and man. It eliminates backbiting, talebearing, cheating, falsehood, unjust criticism, sensuality, and such like. It makes us charitable, merciful, helpful, honest and considerate.
  3. A reason why it should be observed: "For this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:34-40).

A filial relation is implied in the first rule; a fraternal relation in the second. If we are careful to keep the first rule, we shall have power to keep the second. God acts in a fatherly manner toward us; "therefore" we should act in a brotherly manner toward each other. The fatherhood of God involves the brotherhood of man. If God is *your* Father and if God is *my* Father, you and I are brothers.

## ENTER THE KINGDOM

### Matthew 7:13-23

Though the kingdom had not been established, the Master was



laying down the fundamental doctrine upon which it would eventually rest. In the passage before us he points out the guiding principles by which men can enter and be saved. Take note of the following:

- I. *The invitation*; "Enter ye in" (verses 13, 14). In order to make the invitation more urgent and impressive, he appeals to two motives:
  1. Fear. The "broad way" is the way of self-indulgence. It is an expensive way to travel—at the end a fearful toll is exacted (Prov. 16:23; Rom. 6:23a; Gal. 6:, 8).
  2. Hope. The "narrow way" is the way of self-control. It is also an expensive way to travel; but the toll is paid at the beginning (Matt. 16:24). It leads to life.
  
- II. *A warning*: "Beware of false prophets" (verses 15-20). They would persuade you that the way of self-indulgence leads to life, that the gate is not "narrow," that the way is not "strait" (Jude 4; 2 Tim. 4:3).
  1. Their traits:
    - (a) They are self-appointed. They "come to you"—they are neither sent nor invited.
    - (b) They have a pleasing outward appearance: "sheep's clothing."
    - (c) They are self-seeking: "ravening wolves" (Acts 20:29, 30).
  2. Their test: not always by their teaching, which, when it suits their purpose, is correct; but by their works, or "fruit" (1 John 4:1). The test is one that requires time, but it is the only safe one. Every species bears after its kind (verses 16-18). He who calls upon men to enter the "narrow door" and to walk in the "straight way" must give proof that he himself has done so.
  3. Their doom (verse 19).
  
- III. *How men may enter* (verses 20-23).
  1. Not by mere profession. If we preach but fail to practice, if we cast demons out of others but fail to cast them out of ourselves, if we work wonders but do not work righteousness, we cannot enter.
  2. By the gate of obedience (verse 21; Luke 6:46). Those who obey from the heart—who live a life of obedience— will never hear him say, "Depart from me." They shall abide with him forever (1 John 2:17). In numerous places in the Bible it is said that men shall be judged according to their works, in no place according to their faith or profession (Gal. 5:6; James 2:17; Rev. 22:12).

## THE TWO BUILDERS

### Matthew 7:24-27

In bringing the matchless sermon to a close and climax, the Master warns his hearers not to think it sufficient to pay outward respect to his instructions. Very earnestly he admonishes them to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding their own souls. The necessity of obedience to divine law is animated and enforced by the parable of the two builders. Embedded in the narrative are four cardinal points which we shall consider in order.

- I. *That all hearers are builders.* There are two kinds:
  1. The wise builder. With what words shall we describe him?
    - (a) He is *attentive*: for he "heareth."
    - (b) He is attentive to the *right doctrine*: for he "heareth these words of mine."
    - (c) And he is a *practitioner*: for he "doeth them."
  2. The foolish builder. And how shall we describe him?
    - (a) He is *attentive*: for he "heareth."
    - (b) He is attentive to the *right doctrine*: for he "heareth these words of mine."
    - (c) He is *not* a practitioner: for he "doeth them not" (Matt. 7:21; James 1:22).
  
- II. *That all builders have the choice of two foundations.* Because no building can be more enduring than its foundation, the foundation is important, highly important! Each builder should know something about the two foundations and the material of which each is composed.
  1. The rock—a solid, a firm, a durable foundation (Luke 6:47, 48). The rock is the Christ—his doctrine, his divine personality (Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:19, 20).
  2. The sand—a movable, an unstable, a treacherous foundation. The man who "hears and does not" builds thereon.
  
- III. *That all buildings are tested* (1 Cor. 3:15). Now, let us consider:
  1. The severity of the test. The war of the elements came from every direction—rain upon the roof, the flood against the foundation, the wind against the wall. Our trials come from every direction, culminating in the final judgment (Job 1:11; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7; Rev. 3:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).
  2. The impartiality of it. Both buildings were exposed to the same perils. Reminding us that the storm strikes you and your fellowman with equal severity. Both are endowed with the same nature, the same passions; both live in the same evil world; both are exposed to the same trials and temptations.

- IV. *That only one building will stand.*
1. The house of the wise man "fell not: for it was founded on the rock" (Luke 11:28; John 13:17; 1 John 2:16, 17; 1 Peter 2:6).
  2. The house of the foolish man "fell and great was the fall thereof." The fall of it was "great" for at least three reasons, namely:
    - (a) Because of the suddenness of it—it was not a decline but a crash, a collapse.
    - (b) Because of the completeness of it—it was not a partial fall, but a complete fall.
    - (c) Because of the finality of it. The house was never rebuilt. Once and only once do men build. If, at the completion of life's solemn task, our structure is wrecked upon its own flimsy foundation, the fall will be final, the loss eternal.

### **CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL INVITATION** **Matthew 11:25-30**

Of all the invitations that have come, this one is the most precious. By tenderness and majesty it is marked. By it the attention of the weary and heavy laden is arrested. Let us note some points of interest.

- I. *The inviting word "Come."* This carries with it a number of implications, namely:
  1. That man is separated from God (Isa. 59:1, 2).
  2. That the Lord has a loving interest in man.
  3. That man is able to respond.
  
- II. *The one inviting:* A Son of man, also the Son of God. For a glimpse of his personality, let us look into the content of verses 25-27.
  1. Because he is a Son of man, his heart is in tune with humanity, especially with "babes"—men who are humble.
  2. Because he is the Son of God—
    - (a) He is vested with authority: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father" (Matt. 28:18).
    - (b) He and the Father are on intimate terms: "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father," etc.
  
- III. *The ones invited:* All who suffer. Two groups are included:
  1. Active sufferers: "All ye that labor." All men are sons of toil. Some toil only for the things that perish (John 6:27). Some labor in the service of sin; they can expect nothing but death as wages (Rom. 6:23).
  2. Passive sufferers: "And are heavy laden." All men are burden-bearers, struggling under the weight of a guilty conscience, of bereavement, of doubt and dread of coming days.

- IV. *The blessing offered:* "I will give you rest," or "I will rest you." Let us consider the nature of the rest that Jesus gives. —It is the kind that he himself possessed: for he could only give that which he had.
1. Not an outward rest. During all the days of his life upon earth he was never free from trials, temptations, sorrows and persecutions. From the beginning unto the end, his career was stormy (Matt. 8:10).
  2. An inward rest (John 14:27). He possessed a peace of mind that the world could neither give nor take. In the midst of turmoil, he talked about "my peace." He was free from the burden of a guilty conscience, of anxiety over material things, of fear and dread of the hereafter. —This is the kind of rest that he gives.
- V. *The conditions to be fulfilled:*
1. We must accept the invitation. To do this, we must fit ourselves for his presence—be washed at the cleaning fountain (Acts 2:38).
  2. We must take his yoke, a symbol of submission (2 Cor. 10:5). His yoke *is* easy and his burden is light. This is true for the following reasons:
    - (a) A good yoke-fellow (Ps. 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7).
    - (b) The yoke is made to fit. It is padded with love; for this reason, it does not gall (1 John 5:3).
    - (c) We are sustained by a blessed hope (Rev. 1:10b; 14:13).
  3. We must learn of (from) him—become his student, imbibe his spirit, take life as he takes it. He was meek and lowly in heart. —So must we be. We must be meek toward God and humble toward men.

### **THE TARES** **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

In the parable of the tares the Master warns the disciples against the expectation of finding in the world that now is an unmixed state of good society. The kingdom of God will have universal sway, but that will be in the world to come.

In the story we see:

- I. *The sowing* (verses 24, 25, 37-39). At first the field had no seed in it, and could not produce seed. In the field of humanity, neither good nor evil is native—both have to be planted.
  1. Of the good seed.
    - (a) The sower: "The Son of man." —He is the grand origin of all the good in the world.
    - (b) The field: "The world." Christ is the rightful owner (Ps. 2:8).
    - (c) The good seed: "The children of the kingdom." In

the parable of the sower "the seed is the word of God," but in the parable of the tares, the word had already been received and obeyed. Citizens of the kingdom are the seed of the kingdom.

2. Of the evil seed.
  - (a) The sower: "The devil," an enemy of the Son of man, yea, of all men. He is a silent, unseen sower, moving in the dark.
  - (b) What he sows: "Tares," the plant which resembles wheat, representing "sons of the devil." The devil wants his sons to resemble the sons of God enough to deceive and to be deceived, yet evil enough to be damned.
  - (c) Where he sows: In the same field, a common device in ancient days for wreaking vengeance; "among the wheat"—near enough to entangle, to sap the life.
  
- II. *The growing* (verses 26-30a). Only after a period of growth did the difference between the wheat and the tares become manifest. It was during the period of growth that the servants appeared. Let us note:
  1. Their surprise (verse 27). After all of our efforts to do good in the world, evil men are still in abundance—often in the majority.
  2. Their proposal (verse 28). A manifestation of zeal, but their zeal was without understanding (Rom. 10:1, 2).
  3. The restraint imposed (verses 29, 30a). For three reasons their proposal was rejected:
    - (a) It was rash—destructive in nature (Matt. 26:51, 52; Luke 9:54ff; James 1:20).
    - (b) It was presumptuous—the servants were not the reapers (Rom. 12:19).
    - (c) It was premature. The time was not ripe. "Let them grow together until the harvest."
  
- III. *The reaping* (verses 30, 39-43). The sowing and the growing are followed by the reaping. Here we see:
  1. The reapers: "His angels," the avengers of God's wrath and ministers of his mercy.
  2. The time of reaping: "The harvest" or "the end of the world," when the tares are ripe for destruction and the wheat for salvation (Rev. 14:14ff).
  3. The separation.
    - (a) The tares are bundled and burned (verses 41, 42). "Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them."
    - (b) The wheat gathered into the barn (verse 43). During the present association with the ungodly, the righteous are under a cloud; their light is, in a measure, obscured; but when the cloud is removed they shall shine unhindered.

## THE CHURCH

### Matthew 16:13-18

How very prominent and important is this passage! In it we have the first appearance of the word *church* in the Bible. It means "the called out"; the band of Christian believers, the Lord's house, or the Lord's family. As we ponder the passage, a number of pertinent points arise.

- I. *The foundation of the church:* "Upon this rock," etc. This makes for the solidity and the security of the church. The church was not built upon the man (Peter), but upon the truth he confessed. "Thou (*second* person) art Peter (*petros*, masculine for stone), and upon this (*third* person) rock (*petra*, feminine for bed-rock) I will build," etc. Peter, *a* foundation stone; Christ, *the* bed-rock (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:19, 20).
  
- II. *The builder of the church:* "I (Christ) will build my church." In the Bible the church is spoken of as an edifice. We read of stones, workmen, house, temple. Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah should "build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory" (Zech. 6:13). Jesus claimed this prophecy as having been spoken of him. He is at once the foundation and the builder—the divine Carpenter, no longer the carpenter of Nazareth.
  
- III. *The possessor of the church:* "I will build my (Christ's) church." If Christ is the foundation of the church and the builder of the church, it follows that the church must be his.
  1. The church is Christ's bride (Rev. 21:9; 22:17).
  2. It is Christ's spiritual body (Eph. 1:22, 23).
  3. It is the flock of God, bought with his own precious blood (Acts 20:28).
  4. And the church is the bearer of Christ's name. Surely, the *bride* of Christ and the *body* of Christ and the *flock* of God (or Christ) should honor the Christ by wearing his blessed name! (Rom. 16:16).
  
- IV. *The safety and the security of the church:* "And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Death is the entrance into Hades, the abode of the dead. Therefore the word *gates* denotes death itself. Death cannot destroy or conquer the church that Jesus built. Here we are reminded of the following:
  1. That death did not hinder the establishment of the church. Ordinarily, the plan for building is interrupted when the builder dies. But the crucifixion of Jesus did not thwart the plan of God. After the death of Jesus, the church was firmly established (Acts 2).
  2. That the church shall not become extinct by reason of the

death of its members. In spite of death, the church lives on and on.

3. That death shall not take from the members of the church the bliss of eternity (Eph. 5:23; Rev. 14:13). —The dead shall live again.

Seeing the safety and the security of the church, why not become a member of it? Why not live and work in it, showing forth the excellencies of him who built the church, who bought the church, and who will save the church?

## THE PRICE OF DISCIPLESHIP

### Matthew 16:24

It is an honor to be a disciple. Unto him privileges are granted; upon him blessings descend in time and in eternity. But in order to be a disciple and to attain these favors, a price must be paid. What is the price? In the language of the text the answer is found.

- I. *Self-restraint*. "Let him deny himself," said the Master. This does not mean that one should torture his body and refuse life's joys, but to curb his lower-self, to exercise control. Of what must a disciple deny himself? Of "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15, 16). This is not a heartless restraint imposed by an arbitrary power.
  1. Self-control is a law of development; the person who disregards it does not grow.
  2. It is a law of protection; he who ignores it is exposed to injury (1 Cor. 9:27).
  3. The Master denies us of "ungodliness and worldly lusts" for the same reason that a mother denies her child of unwholesome food or poisons. Every divine command is given through love and for our good.
  
- II. *Self-sacrifice*. "And take up his cross." There are three words that convey to the mind the darker experiences of life, namely:
  1. *Burdens*—the inevitable cares and strain of daily life.
  2. *Thorn*—a limitation, mental or physical, which makes life miserable and duty difficult (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
  3. *Cross*—the pain we *voluntarily* suffer on behalf of others. The cross of Jesus meant this to him (Col. 1:24, 25).
  4. Every man must bear his own *burden*, endure his own *thorn*, but the *cross* may be escaped; but without the cross there can be no crown!
  
- III. *Self-expression*. "And follow me." The life of a disciple is not altogether restraint; it is also activity. It is not altogether repression; it is also expression. It is a cultivation of the higher self. A disciple is most active, aggressive.
  1. He must not go *before* the Christ: for that would be presumption.

2. He must not *turn aside* from the Christ: for that would be worldliness.
3. He must not follow Christ *from, afar*: for that would be cowardly and result in denial.
4. But he must follow the Master *in nearness*. This means to obey his word and to tread in his steps (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Now, let us reverse the text and consider the cost of *not* following him: The joy of obedience (Acts 8:29); access to the throne (John 15:7); the assurance that all things work together for our good (Rom. 8:28); the welcome plaudit (Matt. 25:21).

"Oh," says one, "it is such a costly thing to be a disciple of Christ!" That is true, but there is a way far more costly—the way of sin (Rom. 6:23a; Gal. 6:7, 8). "The way of a transgressor is hard"—the hardest way. We are brought face to face with this startling fact: It costs far more not to follow the Christ than it does to follow him!

## A SOUL AND THE WORLD

### Matthew 16:26

These two questions, propounded by the Teacher, are highly suggestive. They set the wheels of thought to spinning, put us to thinking of life's issues, the big things with which we have to do: the soul, the world, gain, loss and profit. With these gigantic issues let us grapple!

- I. *What is the soul?* The higher life, that part of man which distinguishes him from the beast, that which will survive the ordeal of death. Shall we say that man *has* a soul? or that man *is* a soul?
  1. Its value: It is of more value than any member of the body (Matt. 5:29, 30), than the entire body (Matt. 10:28), than "the whole world."
  2. Its possibilities: It can sin or be righteous; it can be miserable or happy; it can descend into the horrors of hell or ascend to the bliss of heaven.
  
- II. *What is the world?* The apostle John gives the answer (1 John 2:16). The *world* of the apostle's language consists not of the people of the world, but those things which rival and exclude the love of God, namely: the sensual pleasures of the world: "the lust of the flesh"; the wealth of the world: "the lust of the eyes"; and the honor the world bestows: "the vainglory of life." "The whole world" includes all the pleasures, all the wealth, and all the honor the world can give.
  
- III. *If you should gain "the whole world,"* what would be your GAIN?
  1. Something that cannot satisfy (John 4:13).



2. A dangerous master When the young ruler gained riches, he gained a master who had more power over him than the Lord of life (Mark 10).
  3. Something perishable (1 Peter 1:24, 1 John 2:17a)
  4. Something you must leave (1 Tim 6:7)
- IV. *If you should gain "the whole world," what would be your LOSS'* For everything you gain, you must sustain a loss
1. Sensual pleasure is gained at the price of purity, wealth at the price of honesty, liberality, sympathy (Luke 16 19-21), honor at the price of conviction (Luke 6 26)
  2. When purity, honest, liberality, sympathy and conviction are gone, the soul is gone—gone for a mess of meat The soul, the higher life, must be surrendered when we make a conquest of the world
- V. *If you should gain "the whole world," what would be your PROFIT'*
1. What would a fish be profited, if it should gain all seas, and forfeit its gills' or a bird if it should gam all atmosphere, and forfeit its wings'
  2. What would a man be profited, if he should gain "the whole world," and forfeit his eyes' or his ears' or his health' or his soul—that which is worth more than the entire body'

This brings us to the Master's second question "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" His first question contemplates man in the present state of existence, his second finds man on the barren shore of eternity, having bartered his soul To regain this priceless possession is out of the question, for he stands there empty-handed The man who forfeits his soul for the world must, in the end, lose both the price and the purchase (Luke 12 16-20)

### **AS LITTLE CHILDREN**

#### **Matthew 18 1-6**

Jesus set the child in the midst of the disciples as an object lesson The child's best teacher is the parent, often the parent's best teacher is the child' The child learns from the adult, the adult may learn from the child

Like the Master, let us set the child in our midst and hold him in our arms As we look upon him we find many traits worthy of imitation What are they'

- I. *Humility* The disciples had been quarreling over places of honor (Mark 9 33-35) Unto them Jesus said' "Except ye turn (from your pride and jealousies), and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" Jesus washed the disciples' feet—the work of a

slave (John 13:5). The ideal of Christianity is not ruling but serving (1 Peter 5:5, 6)

1. Shairp: "Not as men of science, not as critics, not as philosophers, but as little children, shall we enter into the kingdom of heaven."
  2. Webster "Heaven's gates are not as highly arched as kings' palaces: they that enter there must go upon their knees"
- II. *Purity* Children are as pure as the morning dew, the untrodden snow, the unplucked flower—"Of such is the kingdom" They do no evil because they think no evil They are pure in life because they are pure in heart (Prov. 4:23, Phil 4 8, 1 Tim 5:22, Titus 1:15)
- III. *Teachableness* How open-minded is the child! What eagerness to learn! Let us be like him—open-minded, eager to learn (1 Sam 3:10, Acts 17:11) Unless the mind is receptive we can never learn, we can never enter the kingdom (Mark 10:15, Acts 28:27) Like the child, we should entertain no preconceived ideas about God and the things of God
- IV. *Love*
1. A sincere love What frankness of speech' What absence of hypocrisy' (Rom 12: 9, 1 John 3:17, 18)
  2. A forgiving love The child holds no grudge (1 Cor 14:20, Eph 4:31, 32)
  3. An impartial love The child recognizes no social distinctions—the child of a prince will grasp the hand of a beggar, no racial distinctions—the child will play with children of another race. The love of a child resembles the love of God (John 3:16 Acts 10:34, 17:26a)
  4. Like the love of a child, may our love be sincere, forgiving and impartial.

In humility, in purity, in teachableness, and in love may we become "as little children" Once we had these beautiful features and lost them How tragic the day when we began to depart from the traits of childhood' When we compare a man with his former child-character, there steals over us a feeling of sadness How great the departure!

The Lord loves the graces of childhood Said he "When Israel was a child, then I loved him" (Hosea 11: 1a)—"when" a child, how lovable! He would take us by the hand and lead us back to childhood

The candidate for heaven must not be childish, but child-like "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven "

## MARRIAGE

### Genesis 2; Matthew 19

- I. *In its primitive beauty.* After creating the world and all things therein, God began his work with a marriage (Gen. 2:18-24). In the marriage of the pair, we have the ideal matrimonial state.
  1. The characteristics of it:
    - (a) Monogamy. By making only one wife for Adam, God declared against polygamy; by making only one husband for Eve, God declared against polyandry.
    - (b) Unmixed. Both were the children of God; each married in the Lord.
    - (c) Indissoluble. Two lives were blended into one, making the strongest of all earthly ties (verses 21-24).
  2. The divine purpose in it:
    - (a) Companionship (verses 18-22).
    - (b) The perpetuation of the race (Gen. 1:27, 28). Apart from the marriage institution, there is no lawful way of perpetuating the human race.
  
- II. *In its decadence.* When man by transgression fell, everything that pertained to him suffered; the marriage institution was no exception. Let us take account of the departures:
  1. Monogamy supplanted.
    - (a) By polygamy—a husband with a plurality of wives. This departure was introduced by an evil man, a descendant of the first murderer (Gen. 4:19). This pattern was not followed by the sons of the righteous Seth (Gen. 7:15).
    - (b) Polyandry—a wife with a plurality of husbands (John 4:17, 18).
  2. Mixed marriages. Two instances:
    - (a) With "the daughters of men" (Gen. 6:1, 2). This departure preceded the flood and was a cause of it.
    - (b) With "the women of Ashdod," etc. (Neh. 13:23, 24).
  3. Separations. The fact that the courts of the land are filled with divorce cases is a sure indication of the decadence of the home. Divorce itself is not the evil—it is only the eruption of the rottenness within the body of society. Divorce is not a law of God, but a concession given because of the hardness of hearts (Matt. 19:7, 8).
  
- III. *In its restoration.* Jesus came to restore to the human race all that had been lost by the fall, and more! On entering the ministry, his first appearance was at a wedding, giving sanction to the same (John 2). He pointed men back to Eden— "in the beginning" (Matt. 19:1-12).
  1. Monogamy (Matt. 19:4, 5).

2. Unmixed marriages (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14). Since the two are one in flesh, should they not be one in spirit? in faith?
3. Indissoluble (Matt. 19:6). Two lives are blended into one. Like two converging streams, they flow on as one toward the ocean of eternity. Sorrows and joys mutually shared weld the two lives. Marriage is a work of God. He who seeks to dissolve the marriage tie, seeks to dissolve a work of God. Only two things can break the bond:
  - (a) Death (Rom. 7:2). The living is not bound to the dead.
  - (b) Fornication. The innocent is not bound to the guilty (Matt. 5:31, 32).

### **LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD** **Matthew 20:1-16**

The occasion of this parable is found in the preceding chapter, verses 16-20. When the rich young ruler would not sell all and follow Jesus, Peter began to bargain with the Lord, saying, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" It is as if he had said, "We have done what the rich young man failed to do; what shall be *our* reward?" After assuring him that no work would go unrewarded, the Master rebuked the mercenary spirit. This he did by means of the parable before us. Note the four items that follow.

- I. *The laborers hired* (vs. 1-7). They may be divided into two groups.
  1. The legalistic (vs. 1-2). They made a contract. Not the joy of the work, but the pay was their interest.
  2. The trustful (vs. 3-7). These may be divided into two groups, according to the degree of trustfulness:
    - (a) Those who went to work without a contract—just a promise of fair dealing.
    - (b) Those who went to work with neither a contract nor a promise.
- II. *The evening settlement* (vs. 8-10). For all men there will be an evening settlement—at the close of life's day (2 Cor. 5:10).
  1. The last hired—the trustful—were the first paid. Because they had gone to work without a mercenary spirit, trusting the householder, they were abundantly rewarded.
  2. The first hired—the mercenary—were the last paid. On learning of the first settlement, they came with great expectations, thinking not of the householder's pleasure, but the pay.
- III. *The murmur* (vs. 11, 12). They said nothing of the joy of

service. The complaint brought to light the selfishness of their motive. The person who works merely for material remuneration is usually dissatisfied with the returns.

- IV. *The answer* (vs. 13-16). The householder singled out one man as representative of the complainers and spoke to him with kindness: "Friend." To the following he directed attention:
1. The justice of the settlement (v. 13).
  2. The basis of the settlement (vs. 14, 15a).
  3. The cause of the complaint: the "evil eye." The *evil eye* in this instance was the envious eye. The murmur did not arise from the amount of pay they had received, but from the amount their fellow-workers had received.

*Let us learn:* 1. That we should work (John 9:4). 2. That we should work in the Lord's vineyard—his church. 3. That we should go to work at the first opportunity. The parable gives no encouragement to late entrance into the Lord's service. Those who entered at the eleventh hour, entered at their first opportunity. 4. That our service should be motivated by the right spirit—love and trust (Gal. 5:6). 5. That it is the trustful spirit of the worker, not necessarily the amount of work done, that pleases God. One hour of trusting, loving service is more precious to the Lord than twelve hours of selfish service.

### **THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT** **Matthew 18:21-35**

This parable was spoken by our Lord in response to Peter's question concerning forgiveness (vs. 21, 22). As we read, our attention is arrested by the items that follow.

- I. *The helpless debtor* (vs. 23-25). A true representative of the human race. Man has sinned against God; this makes him a debtor to God. And the immensity of the debt makes payment impossible.
- II. *The merciful king* (vs. 26, 27). His heart was touched with the misfortune of the debtor. Being "moved with compassion," he bestowed two favors:
  1. He "released him." God releases us from the cruel bondage of sin when we make the proper approach (Luke 15:20-24; Rom. 6:17, 18).
  2. He "forgave him the debt." Every sinner, regardless of the weight of guilt, is forgiven when he believes and obeys (Acts 2:38; Heb. 8:12).
- III. *The contrast between the treatment received and the treatment given by this debtor* (vs. 28-30). 1. He who was forgiven the enormous sum of about one

million dollars refused to forgive a fellow-servant who owed the small sum of about 17 cents!

2. The fact that God has forgiven us an enormous debt should teach us to be forgiving toward our fellowman. Many went pray to God for mercy while their hands are on the throat of a brother! To some people, mercy is a wonderful thing *only* so long as it is coming their way. Said Shakespeare:

We do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us  
To render deeds of mercy.

- IV. *The fate of the unmerciful servant* (vs. 31-35). The inconsistency of the servant aroused the emotions of the fellow-servants. He was called before his lord for a reckoning. There he was rebuked and delivered to the tormentors. The mercy of the Almighty is bestowed in vain unless we allow it to create within us a heart of compassion. The best evidence that God has forgiven us is the fact that we forgive others (Matt. 5:7; 6:14, 15). Lip forgiveness will not please the Father—it must be "from the heart."

"Tis not enough to weep my sins,  
"Tis but one step to heaven;  
When I am kind to others, then  
I know myself forgiven.

### THE TEN VIRGINS Matthew 25:1-13

From this parable we learn:

- I. *That the Lord is coming.* He is the bridegroom whom we have gone forth to meet. He will come at midnight—an inconvenient, an unexpected hour (1 These. 5:1-3). But he tarries. This he does for two reasons:
  1. That all may be ready—come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).
  2. For the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).
  
- II. *That we should "watch."* This does not mean for us to become sky-gazers (Acts 1:10-12); or to cease lawful labors and give over to excitement (2 These. 2:1, 2); but for us to prepare, to hold ourselves in readiness. This preparation should be twofold in nature:
  1. Inward—"oil." Of what use are vessels and lamps without it? "Oil" represents that faith or reserve force of character which can meet any contingency (Mark 11:22; Heb. 11:6).
  2. Outward—"vessels with their lamps." Of what value is oil without them? The life of a Christian is a life of expression (Gal. 5:6; James 2:17).

III. *Why we should "watch."*

1. We "know not the day nor the hour." He may come later than some expect, or earlier than others expect. Beware of all calculations, or predictions!
2. His coming will reveal character. It is revealed by the crisis, the surprises, the sudden things. Until he arrived, all ten looked alike—all were virgins, all had lamps and vessels, all were in a state of expectancy. Not until he arrived did the difference appear (1 Cor. 4:5).
3. Character is non-transferable—the wise could not help the foolish. It is a personal possession and cannot be passed from one to another, like a medium of exchange.
4. After he arrives no preparation can be made. The time is coming when, whatever we are, that shall we forever be. —The door will be shut. Let us consider:
  - (a) How the door may be shut: by death; by hardness of heart while men are living in the flesh; by the coming of Christ. —The parable refers to the last event.
  - (b) The significance of the closed door. —It is twofold in nature: to the wise, it means security and peace; to the foolish, misery and despair.

The Master's lesson is couched in the last verse of the parable: "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." "*Watch*" is the key-word! Let us lay emphasis on this word by means of an acrostic:

W—Words, Your (Matt. 12:36, 37).

A—Actions or deeds, Your (2 Cor. 5:10).

T—Thoughts, Your (Phil. 4:8).

C—Companionships, Your (1 Cor. 15:33).

H—Habits or practices, Your (Gal. 5:19-22).

**THE TALENTS**  
**Matthew 25:14-30**

The parable of the ten virgins stresses the importance of the inner life, while the parable of the talents places the emphasis on service. A talent was a certain sum of money, variously estimated. In the parable it represents an opportunity—an opportunity to serve, to improve our own station, to move upward into the joy of our Lord.

As we read the story we see:

I. *The talents given* (vs. 14, 15).

1. Generously: The lord "delivered unto them *his* goods."
2. Universally: "To each" servant he gave, overlooking none.
3. Impartially: "To each according to his several ability." The lord recognized the inequality of ability, but manifested no partiality.

4. Trustfully: "He went on his journey," leaving his money in the hands of the servants (Mark 16:15-19).
- II. *The management of the talents* (vs. 16-18). This portion of the text embraces the entire period of time from Christ's ascension until his return.
1. By the first servant. He served his lord promptly, faithfully and successfully.
  2. By the second. He also served his lord promptly, faithfully and successfully.
  3. By the third. He did not embezzle or squander the talent, but buried it; in burying it, he preserved it. Why did he bury it? He said, "I was afraid." This fear was begotten by a misconception of his lord's character and requirement (vs. 24, 25).
- III. *The reckoning* (vs. 19-30). In these verses the story comes to a dramatic close.
1. With the first servant.
    - (a) He was commended.
    - (b) He was promoted. Having served well his apprenticeship, he was given a higher position. He passed from service into joy.
    - (c) The ground of protection. He was able, successful and faithful; but he was rewarded because of his faithfulness.
  2. With the second. He received the same blessing, showing that the mediocre can receive the same reward as the ablest man.
  3. With the third.
    - (a) Forecasting his lord's displeasure, he came forward with a defense (vs. 24, 25). Lack of action on his part called for a multiplicity of words.
    - (b) The retribution: He was rebuked; his talent was taken; he was cast into dismal darkness.
    - (c) The ground for the retribution: He was incapable, unsuccessful and unfaithful; but he was cursed because of unfaithfulness.

*Let us learn:* 1. That our Lord is the giver of opportunities— opportunities to evangelize (2 Cor. 2:12), to serve, to develop our powers, to advance to the golden gate. 2. That opportunities properly used bring heaven's commendation. Opportunities properly used are greatly increased. Opportunities properly used admit the sons of men into the house of joy. 3. That an opportunity buried brings a curse—the dismal darkness of the outside.

**HE SHALL SEPARATE**  
**Matthew 25:31-46**

In the passage before us the teaching of the Master reaches a



climax. For pathos and magnificence, it is unsurpassed in all literature. It presents a word-picture of the final judgment, with five awe-inspiring scenes.

- I. *The throne of glory* (vs. 31, 32a).
  1. The King on the throne (John 5:22, 27).
  2. Angels around the throne—to execute the King's decisions (Matt. 13:41, 42; 2 These. 1:7, 8).
  3. The nations before the throne—to be judged.
  
- II. *The separation* (vs. 32b, 33). The King shall separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, I. e.,
  1. With ease and unerring certainty. —He distinguishes at a glance (John 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:19).
  2. As individuals. The people are assembled as nations, but separated "one from another" (Rom. 14:12).
  3. Placing each in his proper position.
    - (a) The sheep (the obedient) on the right—a place of honor (Ps. 110:1; Mark 16:19).
    - (b) The goats (the rebellious) on the left—a place of dishonor.
    - (c) There is no neutral position (Matt. 7:13, 14; 12:30).
  
- III. *The benediction* (vs. 34-40).
  1. The invitation: "Come," etc. Familiar word! Spoken often by the Master during the days of his flesh (Matt. 11:28; Mark 10:14; John 7:37). After his departure it was taken up by those sent in his name (Rev. 22:17). But now, its course, is nearly run: once more to be spoken, but only "to them on the right."
  2. The blessing to which they are called: "inherit the kingdom," etc. (John 14:1-3; Amos 4:12).
  3. The ground for the blessing (vs. 35, 36). The King lovingly identifies himself with the unfortunate (vs. 37-40). —When we minister unto them, we minister unto him.
  
- IV. *The malediction* (vs. 41-45).
  1. The denunciation: "Depart," etc. All who do not come to him during the day of his grace must hear this denunciation.
  2. The state into which they are banished: "eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."
  3. The ground for the curse (vs. 42, 43). Again, the King identifies himself with the unfortunate (vs. 44, 45). When we neglect them, we neglect him (Acts 9:4, 5).
  
- V. *The passing to destiny* (v. 46).
  1. Clothed in garments of mourning, those on the left shall take the downward path which leads "into eternal punishment" (Rev. 21:8). "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."—Dante, *Inferno*.
  2. Adorned with garments of light, with palms in their

hands, the righteous shall take the upward path that leads into the region of life and love and joy eternal (Rev. 7:13-17).

## WHAT SHALL I DO WITH JESUS?

### Matthew 27:22

Jesus had been brought before the judgment bar of Pilate. After learning that he was innocent, Pilate desired to release him; but he feared a mob of angry Jews who demanded the death sentence. The judge was greatly troubled; and in his perplexity he asked, "What shall I do with Jesus?"

Jesus has been brought before the judgment bar of numerous people. After learning of the beauty of his life, they have desired to do him honor; but some have been greatly disturbed by personal problems. In their perplexity they have been asking the question of Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus?" To this momentous question various answers have been given.

- I. *"I'll sell him,"* was the reply of greed (Matt. 26:14-16, 47ff). Judas betrayed the Master for the legal price of a slave. When he sold Jesus to the Jews, he sold himself to Satan. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). When we sell the truth, we sell Jesus.
- II. *"I'll deny him,"* was the answer of fear (Mark 14:66-72). Peter was a victim of evil environment—too weak for hostile company. When we deny Jesus' doctrine or his church, we deny Jesus (2 Peter 2:1). The one who denies Jesus and refuses to repent will be denied by Jesus (2 Tim. 2:12).
- III. *"Let him be crucified,"* was the cry of envy (Matt. 27:18-23). Others have been answering in the same way, though in language less offensive. If they (had their way, there would be no Bible, no gospel, no church (Heb. 6:4-6).
- IV. *"I'll be neutral,"* was the answer of a politician. Pilate was too weak to take a positive stand for him, yet too fearful to deny him altogether; therefore, he played the part of a coward—tried to be neutral. This is an impossible position (Matt. 12:30).
- V. *"I'll persecute him,"* was the cry of religious intolerance (Acts 9:1-5). Jesus identifies himself with his disciples. Therefore, when we strike them, we strike him; when we persecute them, we persecute him.
- VI. *"I'll postpone my answer,"* was the answer of feeble indecision (Acts 24:24, 25). The person who delays his decision for the Lord makes a decision against the Lord.
- VII. *"I'm almost persuaded to take him,"* was the answer of a

passing impulse (Acts 26:27, 28). Though a noble impulse, it was too weak to carry him over; therefore it did not profit him. Good impulses often perish for want of expression.

- VIII. *"We will take him now,"* was the decision of a group of wise men (Acts 2:37-41). To take Christ means to believe what he says and obey what he commands (John 14:15).

In the long ago, Jesus stood before the judgment bar of Pontius Pilate. In the judgment of the last day, Pontius Pilate will stand before the judgment bar of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:10). At this very hour Jesus is brought before your judgment bar. What will you do with him? Which of these decisions will be your decision? Some other day the situation will be reversed: you will stand before the judgment bar of Jesus. What will he do with you at that time? All depends on what you do with him *now!*

### **THE GREAT COMMISSION** **Matthew 28:16-20**

This was the final appearance of the risen Christ in the province of Galilee. The place was "the mountain"—perhaps the same mountain on which he had sat when he delivered the incomparable sermon (Matt. 5:1, 2). The scene is one of singular majesty and awe. The Master's bearing was kingly when he gave utterance to the words before us. This great utterance falls into three parts, namely:

- I. *A great claim* (v. 18). This claim admits of no limitation. Let us observe the following:
  1. Its comprehensiveness: "All authority," etc.
    - (a) As our Teacher, he claims all authority to instruct us in the moral and spiritual realm (Matt. 7:28, 29).
    - (b) As our High Priest, he claims all authority to forgive sins against God (Matt. 9:6; Luke 24:46, 47).
    - (c) As our King, he claims all authority to rule and to reign in our hearts and lives (Eph. 1:20-23).
    - (d) As the Conqueror of death, he claims all authority (power) to raise us from the grave (John 10:18; Rev. 1:18).
    - (e) As our Judge, he claims all authority to condemn or to justify (John 5:27).
  2. The time when made: "hath been given"—at the time of his resurrection (Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:5-11).
  3. The scope of his sovereignty: "in heaven and on earth." What a range! A universal claim, reaching up into heaven and extending over all the earth.
  
- II. *A great command* (vs. 19, 20a). Having all authority, he laid upon them a tremendous responsibility. This charge was not given to Imperial Caesar with legions at his com-

mand and the world trembling at his feet; not to intellectual giants who by their eloquence could turn the world upside down; but to humble men—to obscure Galileans that God, through them, might reveal the marvels of his own power. The Master pointed out three things for them to do:

1. Teach the nations. The subject matter is the gospel (Mark 16:15; 1 Cor. 15:1-8).
2. Baptize the ones taught; "baptizing them." ("Nations" is neuter, "them" is masculine. ) In the action of baptism, two acknowledgments are made:
  - (a) The one baptized acknowledges God as his Father, Jesus as his Lord, the Spirit as his guide.
  - (b) God acknowledges the one baptized as his child (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 16:16).
3. Teach the ones baptized: "teaching them to observe all things," etc. "Observe"—guard, hold, keep. "All things" —this allows no diluted or sorted gospel (James 2:10, 11).

III. *A great assurance* (v. 20b). Imagine the bewilderment of the disciples after hearing the Master's marching orders! In order to encourage them and to strengthen them, he gave a precious promise.

1. Of his personal presence: "Lo, I am with you." With every divine charge comes an assurance of the divine presence (Ex. 3:12, Josh. 1:5).
2. Of his abiding presence: "I am with you *always*." Bright days and dark days; summer days and winter days; youthful days and days of old age (Heb. 13:5, 6).
3. Of his victorious presence: "Even unto *the end* of the world," or the consummation of the age, or till the job is done (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

*Conclusion:* 1. Remember the four "alls": "all authority"; "all nations"; "all things"; and "all the days." 2. He made a great claim—do we acknowledge it? 3. He gave a great command—are we keeping it? 4. He gave a precious promise—are we trusting it?

### **JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC** **Mark 2:1-12**

In this passage we have a cross-section of humanity—men as we find them on the street, on the highway, in their homes. We see the helpless man, the Healer, the helpers, and the hinderers.

- I. *The helpless.* An object of pity. He had lost the power of voluntary motion. He was obliged to depend on others to move him from place to place. He was more than a paralytic: he was a sinner. Let us think of him as a representative man. Sin is a disease; it makes men inert; it paralyzes noble movements (John 5:40; Luke 13:34).

- II. *The Healer.* Numerous are the helpless people, but there is only one great Physician (Matt. 9:9-13). For this wonderful work, he is eminently qualified:
1. He is sympathetic—never turned a man away who came for help.
  2. He has divine authority—attested on this occasion by a miracle (Matt. 28:18).
  3. He has the remedy: "He sent his word and healed them" (vs. 11, 12). The gospel is God's power to save the believer (Rom. 1:16).
- III. *The helpers*—the four friends of the helpless man. They could not heal their afflicted friend, but they brought him unto the one who could. We cannot save the sinners, but it is often within our power to bring them to the great Physician.
1. Notice their qualifications:
    - (a) Faith in the Healer.
    - (b) Love for the afflicted man.
    - (c) The spirit of cooperation—they worked together (2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 5:6).
    - (d) The will or determination—they removed the roof, overcoming the obstacle (Rom. 1:15).
  2. The prime object of the helpers was to bring their friend to Christ; but in doing so, they also arrived. They came into the presence of the Prince of Life.
- IV. *The hinderers.* In the narrative two groups appear:
1. The passive. They stood in the door, blocking the way. They meant no harm, but they hindered a good work. They represent a self-seeking, self-serving group, who are unmindful of the needs of unfortunate people.
  2. The active. They were the cold, carping critics sitting in the seat of the scornful, looking for flaws. They were malicious men, without a constructive program.

*Let us learn:* 1. That we should make an honest effort to classify ourselves. The Healer we cannot be. If we are the helpless ones, we should be seeking the Healer. If we are the hinderers, we should cease to hinder. All who are saved should be helpers of the unsaved. The life of each should be constructive in nature. 2. That no person gets nearer the great Physician than the one who brings the afflicted (the sinner) to him. When we lead a lost soul to the Savior, we arrive in his blessed presence. 3. That the primary work of the church is not to feed the hungry and clothe the naked—these are good works and they should be done. The primary work of the church is to preach the gospel, to save lost souls.

## SINNING AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Mark 3:28-30

The New Testament was written under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit; the words of the New Testament, therefore, are the words of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:1).. When we violate the words of the Spirit, we sin against the Spirit. In a number of ways we may sin against the Holy Spirit.

- I. *By grieving him* (Eph. 4:29-32). The Holy Spirit is a person. When we yield to his influence, we please him; when we resist him or refuse to obey him, we grieve him. By corrupt speech, by every form of hatred he is grieved.
- II. *By quenching him* (1 These. 5:15-22). He is a flame in our hearts to enlighten us, to purify us, to consecrate us. We may quench or snuff out this holy flame, by violating the law of brotherly love, by failing to rejoice, 'by failing to pray, by neglecting to give (thanks. How dark is the heart when this flame is snuffed out!
- III. *By lying to him* (Acts 5:1-3). Ananias lied to the Spirit when he gave a part under pretense of giving all, when 'he tried to deceive him, escape his detection. All hypocrisy is lying to the Spirit. When we pretend to be what we are not, we sin against him.
- IV. *By resisting him* (Acts 7:51). The Spirit is a holy power, striving to lead and direct us. The Jews, to whom Stephen was speaking, resisted him when they refused to yield to this power. When the sons of men, sinners or saints, build up a resistance against any portion of God's word, they sin against the Spirit.
- V. *By trying to buy Mm or his gifts* (Acts 8:17ff). He who tries to purchase him or his power with money places a low estimate on him. Spiritual things cannot be bought with material means. He who tries to do so is in "the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."
- VI. *By blaspheming him* (Text).
  1. The nature of this sin: The word "blaspheme" means to speak against, to revile, to slander.
    - (a) The scribes blasphemed the Spirit when they imputed 'the Lord's miracles to an evil source (Mark 3:22-27). They called good evil. While walking in the light, they denied the light, calling it darkness.
    - (b) It is not an isolated deed, but a condition of heart— hardness and a coldness that resists every wholesome influence (Eph. 4:19; 1 Tim. 4:2).
  2. The heinousness of it. It is unpardonable. This is true because the people involved are beyond the reach of re-

pentance. They cannot repent because they will not repent.

It is obvious that all sins are sins against the Holy Spirit and that in the sin of blasphemy the other sins reach a climax and fruition. How may we avoid this state of depravity and escape the eternal consequences? By grieving not the Spirit, by quenching not the Spirit, by lying not to the Spirit, by resisting not the Spirit, by keeping the heart receptive and warm and responsive to the will of the Father (1 Sam. 3:1-10, Isa. 6:8; Acts 22:6-16).

### **WHO CAN BE SAVED?**

#### **Mark 10:17-27**

The disciples saw a man sadly turn away who had come asking, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" They were bewildered, "astonished exceedingly," and said unto Jesus, "Then who can be saved?" The question amounts to this: "If a man who has kept the moral law cannot be saved, then who can?" This is the attitude of many in our day.

Let us ask:

#### I. *Who cannot be saved?*

1. He who makes money his God: "That trust in riches." This young man could not be saved because riches were more precious to him than life or the Prince of Life (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).
2. The immoral person (v. 19). One may be moral and unsaved, but he cannot be saved in his immorality (Gal. 5:19-21).
3. The self-righteous, like this young man (v. 20). Before he can or will enter the kingdom, a man must be humble (Matt. 5:20; 18:3; Luke 18:9-14; Rom. 10:1, 2).
4. The uncharitable (v. 21). The religion of Christ has a man-ward side as well as a God-ward side (James 1:27).
5. He who turns away from Jesus, as did this young man. Jesus is man's only hope; he who turns from him has no other (John 6:66, 67; Acts 4:11, 12).

#### II. *Who can be saved?*

1. The obedient. The young man came asking, "What shall I do?" Jesus pointed out some things for him to do (James 2:14, 17; Acts 9:6; 16:30-33).
2. He who will act *now*: "Go—come—follow." —All present tense. All of God's commands are for today (2 Cor. 6:2; John 9:4). Death may come without warning (Luke 12:16-20—"this night").
3. The merciful: "Distribute to the poor" (Matt. 5:7).
4. He who calls upon the Lord while he is near. This the young man did not do. When the opportunity was gone, it was forever gone (Isa. 55:6).

## GETHSEMANE

### Mark 14:32

Jesus entered the garden of Gethaemane not to escape death but to prepare for it. In the wilderness (Matt. 4) he had armed himself for life, in the garden he armed himself for death—the pain and suffering involved.

Gethsemane was—

- I. *A garden of solitude*—an enclosed piece of ground across the brook Kedron from Jerusalem. A deer, when stricken, leaves the herd. The heart of man, when wounded, seeks solitude and sympathy. As in the first conflict (in the wilderness), so in the last, Jesus must go alone. Let us notice the steps of his withdrawal:
  1. From the city with the eleven (Matt. 26:30-36).
  2. From the eight at the garden gate with the three (Matt. 26:36, 37). They had been with him in the death chamber (Mark 5); they had seen his face when it "did shine" (Mark 9); now, they must see his face furrowed with lines of pain and blood.
  3. From the three a "stone's cast," to be alone with God. He was near enough to the three for them to see and to sympathize.
  
- II. *A garden of sorrow*. From the cheerful communion in the upper room, Jesus went to the agony of the garden. The word *Gethsemane* means *olive press*. In the garden of Gethsemane the heart of Jesus was crushed.
  1. The intensity of the sorrow: A sorrow unto death; a mixture of tears and blood (Matt. 26:38; Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7).
  2. The cause of it: the shadow of the cross, the pain of it, the same of it, the burden of it (Isa. 53:4-7; Heb. 2:9).
  
- III. *A place of prayer* (John 18:1, 2). A place of sorrow and solitude is often a place of prayer. He prayed that the cup—the bitterness and the burden of the hour—might pass. Notice how he prayed:
  1. Earnestly (Luke 22:44). "Strong crying, tears." Note the posture of the body (Luke 22:41; Mark 14:35; Matt. 26:39). This indicates the extremity of the soul. The trio, when awake, could see. —The Paschal moon was at full orb.
  2. Persistently (Matt. 26:39-42). Thrice did the tempter come to him in the wilderness, thrice did the battle rage in the garden. Thrice he sought sympathy, but made excuse for his friends when they failed to give it.
  3. Submissively (Matt. 26:39). His own will was lost in the will of the Father.



- IV. *A garden of victory* (Heb. 5:7). The place of earnest, persistent and submissive prayers is always a place of victory.
1. He was strengthened by an angel (Luke 22:43).
  2. It became unnecessary for the disciples to watch any longer (Matt. 26:45). Paraphrase: "Take your rest, as far as my need is concerned. I am ready."
  3. He surrendered himself, but not to force (Matt. 26:53; John 18:8).
  4. Thus, by solitude and prayer he braced his spirit and body for the ordeal. His prayer was answered; for "he endured the cross, despising the shame."

*Reflections.* In this story, adorned with pathos and beauty, we see: 1. The enormity of sin. It was the sin of humanity that made *the cup* bitter for the Savior. 2. The depth of divine compassion—a compassion that suffered, sorrowed, prayed, cried! 3. The power of prayer in time of sorrow. No sincere prayer goes unanswered.

### **THE BAPTISM OF JESUS** **Luke 3:21, 22; Matthew 3:13-17**

This is a beautiful story. It is beautiful because of its natural setting; because of its simplicity; because it reveals the state of Jesus' mind; because it provides an example of perfect obedience (John 6:38; Heb. 10:7). His baptism was truly significant.

- I. *A voluntary act:* "Then cometh Jesus," etc. He was not an infant or irresponsible person brought by another, but a responsible person coming of his own will. In like manner, our obedience should be voluntary—"from the heart" (Rom. 6:17; Col. 3:23).
- II. *A separating act.* His private life was behind him, his public life was before him, his baptism between. In another sense, our baptism is also a separating act: before it is the old life, after it is the new life (Rom. 6:4). Before baptism one is in the kingdom of darkness, after baptism the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13).
- III. *An inconvenient act:* "From Galilee to the Jordan," a distance of about 60 miles. As he walked or rode a beast, two or three days must have been required. To him the only thing that mattered was the will of the Father. And this should be our chief concern (Matt. 7:21).
- IV. *An act of humility.* He came "unto John to be baptized of him." Though John was a great man, he was inferior to Jesus (Mark 1:7). Though not a sinner, Jesus was baptized along with sinners (Luke 3:21). Along with people of all walks of life, we should be submissive to the word of God.
- V. *A prayerful act:* "Jesus also having been baptized, and pray-

ing." The first mention of his praying. People of today who are baptized should pray. Not prayer without baptism, not baptism without prayer, but baptism with prayer—a prayerful heart (Acts 22:16).

- VI. *A thorough act:* "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightaway from the water," indicating that he had been in the water. The word "baptize" means to dip, to plunge, to submerge, to bury (Col. 2:12).
- VII. *An act divinely approved.*
1. "The heavens were opened" (Mark 1:10; Matt. 27:51). The heavens of God's love, wisdom and power, which had been shut by sin, were opened unto Jesus and unto us through him (Eph. 1:3).
  2. The Spirit descended. Because the public ministry was before him, the descent of the Spirit was necessary. The priests were anointed with oil, Jesus with God's Spirit (Isa. 11:2; 61:1).
  3. The Father spoke. In this we have a word of endearment, a word of approval, a word of admonition. (As the Son's first recorded prayer was on this occasion, so was the Father's first recorded word to the Son. )
  4. Here, on the banks of the Jordan, we have the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into whose names we are baptized (Matt. 28:19).

## HEARING THE WORD

### Luke 5:1

In the scene before us, "the multitudes pressed upon him and heard the word of God." As of old, men are still anxious to hear the word. The Bible is the most widely read book, the world's best seller.

Let us observe:

- I. *The motives which induce men to hear:*
  1. Curiosity (Acts 17:18-21).
  2. Desire for temporal gain. With some people, hearing is a business expediency (Acts 24:24-26).
  3. To entrap the speaker. This motive is born of envy (Mark 12:13).
  4. Admiration for the speaker—his personality, his voice, his logic. The interest does not rise above the human element.
  5. Love for the truth (Acts 8:26-31). This is the highest motive. A man with this motive will obey when he hears.
- II. *How men should hear.* Much depends on the hearer's attitude. Many who hear are no better for it. Some take heed

how the speaker speaks; they should take heed how they hear (Luke 8:18).

1. Discerningly (Matt. 7:15, 16a; 1 John 4:1). The words of the speaker should be measured (Isa. 8:10). Yet, they should listen sympathetically.
2. Candidly. With open hearts (Acts 17:11a). Prejudice is blinding (Matt. 13:15). After Jesus had spoken the tender parable of the good shepherd, the Jews who had listened called him "a devil" and attempted to stone him (John 10).
3. With all seriousness of mind, making a personal application. The word should be buried in the heart.
4. Reverently. Regardless of the speaker, all truth should be respected because it is of God (1 Thes. 2:13).
5. Frequently (Ps. 1:1, 2; Acts 17:11b). The riches of God's word cannot be exhausted.
6. Believingly (Heb. 4:2).
7. Submissively (Acts 10:33). Cornelius was anxious to hear that he might obey.

### III. *The results of hearing right:*

1. It produces faith (Rom. 10:17).
2. It opens the door for a greater measure of understanding (Luke 8:18).
3. It convicts of sin and of righteousness (Acts 2:37).
4. It gives joy unspeakable (John 15:11; Luke 11:28; Rev. 1:3).
5. It cleanses the heart (John 15:3).
6. It greatly strengthens (1 John 2:14; Acts 20:32).
7. It makes the hearer like a tree planted by the waters— fruitful, faithful, prosperous (Ps. 1).

## **ON THE MOUNTAIN AND IN THE VALLEY**

### **Luke 9:28-42**

This reading presents two contrasting scenes. One is on a mountain, where there is peace, glory and communion. The other is in a valley, where there is unbelief, misery and confusion.

#### I. *On the mountain.*

1. The company (v. 28). Three were needed as witnesses; these particular ones were selected because of their superior faith and understanding (Mark 5:37; Matt. 26:37).
2. The transfiguration (v. 29; Matt. 17:2). "As he was praying." —It is when our faces are turned God-ward that the fashion of our countenance is altered (2 Cor. 3:18).
3. The glorified visitants (vs. 30, 31). Law and prophecy were pointing to Christ, who is the fulfillment of both (John 5:39).
4. The struggle with sleep (v. 32). Visions to be seen, but

hindered by drowsiness. It is because our spiritual powers are not fully awake that we see so little. "When fully awake—they saw."

5. Peter's reaction (v. 33). He gave utterance to a great truth; but he made two errors: placed the three on equality; wanted to abide there.
6. The cloud and the voice (vs. 34-36). The cloud overshadowed the visitants, leaving Jesus alone. The voice exalted him above them.

## II. *In the valley.*

1. The waiting- throng (v. 37; Mark 9:14, 15). An afflicted boy in the center; near him the agonized father; around, the bewildered disciples and critical scribes; then the excited, curious and sympathetic multitude.
2. An earnest prayer (vs. 38-40; Mark 9:16-24).
3. Marvelous power (vs. 42, 43; Mark 9 -. 25-27). Like an evil tenant, the demon did all the damage he could when evicted.
4. A rebuke (Matt. 17:20; Mark 9:28, 29).

*Let us learn:* 1. That the purpose of the transfiguration was twofold to equip Jesus for death; to equip the disciples for life—their life's work. 2. That it is good to be on the mountain of communion, but it isn't best to abide there. In the valley there are demon-ridden victims who need help. 3. That it is on the mountain of worship that we gain faith and inspiration for the task in the valley. Worship is not an end, but a means to an end. Not only are we to worship; we are also to serve (Matt. 4:10). This is the thought embedded in the beautiful poem by an unknown author.

Are you dwelling in the sunlight?  
 Is your path with roses strewn?  
 Do you walk with buoyant gladness  
 In the steps that you have hewn?  
 Have you reached the top of Pisgah  
 Climbing always firm and true?  
 Don't forget that in the valley,  
 There is someone needing you.

### **STRIVE TO ENTER Luke 13:22-30**

On the way to Jerusalem, one of the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, are they few that are saved?" He answered with an admonition and a warning. The admonition: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." The warning: "For many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Then the Master enforced his answer with a parable. In the parable we see a door, a narrow door, and a closed door.

- I. *A door.* The kingdom of heaven is conceived of as a house—a symbol of security, of peace, of comfort. Jesus is the door (John 10:9). He is an open door (Matt. 11:28; John 6:37; 7:37).
  1. A door of escape. Those who enter shut themselves off from the evils of the past—all the sins that hound them (Ex. 14:14; Acts 2:37, 38; 4:12).
  2. A door of advancement. It is a passage into the abundant life (John 10:10). In this beautiful house patriarchs and prophets feast (vs. 28, 29; Luke 14:15). In the body of Christ all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3).
  
- II. *A narrow door.* It is called *narrow* because it excludes so *many*. While it is wide enough to admit the obedient, it is too narrow to admit the disobedient. Every sin must be laid aside, else entrance is impossible. Now, let us take a look at the people who are excluded:
  1. The indolent. Only those who *strive* can enter (v. 24).
  2. The mere professors of the Lord (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46).
  3. The self-righteous (Matt. 5:20; Rom. 10:1-3).
  4. The unclean (Gal. 5:19-21).
  5. The ambitious (Matt. 19:24).
  6. The unborn (John 3:1-5).
  
- III. *The closed door.* Some day the master of the house will rise up and shut the door, and all efforts to enter will be unavailing. This points to the death of the individual (Heb. 9:27), or to the coming of the Lord (Matt. 25:1-3). The closing of the door does not mean the same thing to all men. To those on the outside, it means one thing; to those on the inside, it means something entirely different.
  1. To the wicked (the ones on the outside) this will mean hopeless exclusion. In spite of their profession and anguish of heart, they will be excluded (vs. 25-28).
  2. To the righteous (the ones on the inside) this will mean security against evil intrusions, the darkness and danger of the outside (vs. 28-30).

All men are faced with the future—and the future is tied to the present. When we make eager inquiries concerning the future, the Lord always brings us back to the present. "Strive (present tense) to enter in by the narrow door." The door stands before you, my friend, as the way of escape, as an invitation to the higher life (Acts 17:30; 18:8).

### **THE LOVING FATHER** **Luke 15:11-32**

This story has been called "the parable of the prodigal son." With as much or more fitness it might have been called the "par-

able of the loving father." In it the attributes of divine love are portrayed. Let us enumerate them.

- I. *A dividing love* (vs. 11, 12). The Lord shares with us the wealth of the vast universe. He treats us as sons, not as slaves (James 1:17; John 3:16; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Rom. 8:17).
- II. *A grieving love* (v. 13). The father allowed the son to depart. (He could not have done otherwise and treated him as a son. ) Then, grieved the departure. The form of the departing- son cast a shadow over the father's life. If God is our Father, how can he but grieve when we forsake him? (Gen. 6:6; Heb. 3:10; Hosea 11:8; Eph. 4:30).
- III. *A longing love.*
  1. He prepared for the son's return: "The fatted calf" (Luke 14:16, 17; John 14:1, 2; 1 Cor. 2:9).
  2. He looked for the return: "While he was yet afar off, the father saw him." The eye of love is forever turned toward the wayward, yearning for a sign of repentance.
  3. He recognized him upon his return—in spite of intervening distance, the son's rags and half-starved condition. Heaven is quick to recognize the faces that are turned Godward and to mark the first homeward step.
- IV. *A forgiving love.* The first sight of the son stirred the father's emotions. The activities which followed were prompted by this compassion.
  1. He "ran" to meet him. When we repent, God goes out to meet us.
  2. He "fell on his neck, and kissed him"—the seal of pardon. The son did not complete the confession; he was hindered from so doing by his father's kisses (vs. 18, 19). Not once did the father chide him, rebuke him or mention the son's sins. The grief of the past was lost in the joy of the present.
  3. He restored him. Four tokens of restoration were given: the robe of honor, the ring of authority (Gen. 41:42), the shoes of freedom, and a feast of joy. The privileges the son had once enjoyed, but which had 'been forfeited by the departure, were given to him again.
- V. *An entreating love* (vs. 25-32). The father had run to meet the returning son; he "went out" and entreated the elder son to come into the house. In an effort to reach the heart of this self-willed, self-righteous son, he spoke in tenderness.
  1. He promised him great things: fellowship and riches (v. 31).
  2. He appealed to his sympathy (v. 32). The elder son did not want rejoicing in the home. The father endeavored to show him that rejoicing was altogether fitting.

The beautiful story offers: 1. Encouragement for every prodi-

Gal. Though he may have drifted into the "far country" of sin, pardon and privileges await him upon return (Isa. 55:6, 7). 2. An example for the one who stays at home—the elder son. If the Father forgives, should he not forgive? If the Father rejoices when the sinner returns, should not the elder son? In every way, the son should follow the pattern of the Father.

## **THE SIN AND RESTORATION OF SIMON PETER Luke 22:43-62)**

The story of Peter's life grips our attention. This is true because he was so human—so much like ourselves. His impulsive nature carried him to the lowest depth and the highest heights. The passage before us presents him in his sin and humiliation, perhaps the darkest hour of his life. Concerning this crucial experience, we shall make three observations.

- I. *Peter went downward.* A downward trend precedes every fall. The fall itself may be sudden, but the movement toward the precipice is a gradual process. Before the fall, Peter took four downward steps.
  1. Self-confidence. He compared himself with others and preferred himself to them (Luke 22:33; Matt. 26:33).
  2. Rashness (John 18:10). Misguided zeal is often a forerunner of a cowardly word or deed.
  3. Tardiness. —He followed from afar. The disciple who allows too much distance to exist between himself and the Lord will likely stumble. Some think it isn't safe to follow Christ in nearness, so they follow from afar.
  4. Evil associates (John 18:15, 16; Luke 22:55). "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33).
  
- II. *He fell.* While sitting around the devil's fire, the temptation came. Peter tried to pass off the first taunting statement with ignorance. He met the second with an emphatic denial, the third with an oath (Mark 14:66-71). Thrice he denied him. He descended unto the depths of sin and shame. He was guilty of falsehood, of swearing, of disloyalty. We do not condone the sin, but we pity the sinner. Under similar circumstances, our conduct might have been as shameful. Now, let us recall the circumstances.
  1. A marked man, a recognized leader. He had already made himself conspicuous (John 18:10, 26).
  2. A lonely man. His brethren had "fled." It is true that John was near Jesus, but John ran no risk—he had a measure of influence (John 18:15).
  3. A defenseless man. The only means of defense known to him had been denied him (Matt. 26:52). Had the sword been allowed, no doubt he would have fought to the bitter

end. As it was, he was tempted from an unexpected direction and fell.

- III. *He arose.* Many sin a grievously; only a few repent as nobly. His sin should serve as a warning, his repentance as an example. Let us note the marks of his repentance.
1. A divine thing. It began with the Lord. —He "turned, and looked upon Peter." A look all-eloquent, that needed no words. What did the fallen disciple see in those eyes that wrought repentance in his soul? Reproof, sorrow, wounded love, compassion—something that caused him to feel his guilt, yet saved him from despair.
  2. A lonely thing. He "went out"—from the presence of the associates who had tempted him, to be alone with his sin and God.
  3. A sensitive thing. He "wept bitterly," or "aloud." The fountains of the great deep were broken up and he wept as a child. God does not need to thunder men to repentance. The heart of man is tender; it may -be awakened with a touch, with a look, with the crowing of a cock, with a voice of gentle tenderness.
  4. An immediate thing. He did not wait until the sin had become old or cold. Delay dulls or deadens the conscience.
  5. A genuine thing. He did not blame the environment that had encircled him. He did not curse the circumstances that had betrayed him. He accepted the responsibility. Never again did Peter deny the Lord!

*Let us learn:* 1. That a disciple may fall (1 Cor. 10:12). Yea, he may fall in his strongest points. Peter was a brave disciple, yet he did a cowardly thing; an honest man, yet he told a lie; he loved the Lord, yet he denied him. 2. That it is not necessary for a disciple to fall—a way of escape has been provided (1 Cor. 10:13). 3. That the Lord does not give us up when we throw ourselves away (2 Peter 3:9) He restored the disciple. Disciples should restore one another (Gal. 6:1, 2). 4. That the penitent disciple should be given a work—something to do (Luke 22:32). Is a disciple weak? Strength comes through exercise. The exalted Christ used the penitent Peter on the day of Pentecost! (Acts 2).

### **ON THE CROSS** **Luke 23:33) Let us inquire:**

- I. *What did Jesus feel?*
  1. Pain of the body. He had passed through a sleepless night and undergone six trials—three before the Jewish and three before the Gentile courts. Consequently, he was weary and worn. A crown of thorns had pierced hits



brow. And now, his body was suspended *by* spikes in his hands and in his feet.

2. Loneliness of heart. He had been betrayed, denied and forsaken by the disciples. He was encircled by foes. Unto him no angel ministered (Matt. 4:11) and God seemed far away (Isa. 63:3a, 5a).

## II. *What did he hear?*

1. He who had often said, "Be of good cheer," heard no word of encouragement.
2. Mockery of the people (Matt. 27:40, 49).
3. Challenge of the Jewish leaders (Matt. 27:41-43).
4. Conversation of the malefactors (Luke 23:39-43).

## III. *Whom did he see?*

1. Indifferent men—Roman soldiers who were watching him and gambling over his garment (Matt. 27:35, 36; John 19:23, 24).
2. Malicious men—men with unfriendly faces, wagging their heads in derision (Mark 15:29-32).
3. Some who loved him, including his heavy-hearted mother and the disciple who had lately leaned on his bosom (John 19:25-27).

## IV. *What did he say?* He gave utterance to "The Seven Words." The first three were spoken in the light, the last four in a mysterious darkness.

1. An intercession: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17).
2. A promise to a penitent: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:29-43).
3. A loving committal. He gave to his mother a son: "Woman, behold thy son!" He gave to the disciple a mother: "Behold, thy mother" (John 19:25-27).
4. A cry of a lonely heart: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:45, 46).
5. A cry of anguish: "I thirst" (John 19:28).
6. A voice of triumph: "*It* is finished" (John 19:30).
7. A prayer of resignation: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

## **THE EMPTY TOMB**

### **Luke 24:1-12**

What strange, what unusual experiences are here recorded! What emotions or feelings must have arisen and surged in the hearts of the disciples as they moved about the empty tomb!

- I. *Love* (v. 1). Disregarding their own comfort, they came to the tomb at early dawn. Not anticipating the Lord's resurrection, they brought spices to embalm his body.

- II. *Disappointment* (vs. 2, 3). How painful is love's disappointment! How deeply it is grieved when it is hindered in doing what it had planned to do!
- III. *Perplexity* (v. 4a). Their disappointment grew into a problem of great proportions. The empty tomb was a puzzle. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," said Mary.
- IV. *Hope* (vs. 4b-7). The angelic voice turned their night into day, causing the star of hope to dispel the darkness of despair and disappointment. Take note how this was done:
  - 1. A kind rebuke: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"
  - 2. A glorious announcement: "He is not here, but is risen."
  - 3. A gentle reminder: "Remember how he spake to you," etc.
- V. *Joy* (vs. 8-10). Hope gave birth to joy. The tidings were too good to keep. Like the glorious rays of the sun, their joy could not be concealed. The glad news of the risen Lord the noble women shared with others.
- VI. *Wonder* (vs. 11, 12). The announcement seemed to the apostles to be impossible. Hence, it was shocking, bewildering. After visiting the empty tomb, Peter's unbelief melted into wonder, or astonishment.

The way in which the minds of the disciples were prepared to receive the fact of Jesus' resurrection is both tender and marvelous. The fact was too brilliant to *flash* upon them, so the Master in his goodness caused it to *dawn* upon them. First, the sight of the stone removed; then, the empty tomb; then, the angelic announcement; and last, the appearance of the risen Christ.

*Let us learn:* 1. That the empty tomb is eloquent with meaning. 2. That the resurrection assures us of Jesus' divine nature and oneness with God (Rom. 1:4). 3. That the resurrection is heaven's endorsement of all that Jesus did and said. It is in harmony with the voice that spake at the beginning of his ministry (Matt. 3:17). 4. That the empty tomb is a prophecy and an assurance of the day when all tombs shall be emptied (John 11:25; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:20).

**EUREKA! EUREKA!****John 1:41**

I have found him! I have found him! All of these years I have been looking for him, looking for him! And now, at last, I have found him—the *Messiah!* Let us look upon him. (An acrostic. )

**M**—*Master*, The. Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest teacher (master) the world has known (Matt. 7:28, 29; John 7:45, 46).

**E**—*Eternity*, An inhabitant of. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:13). He has always been, he is ever to be (John 1:1-4, 14; Heb. 13:8).

**S**—*Son of the living God* (Matt. 3:16, 17; 17:5). Only the Son of God could have conquered the grave and brought life and immortality to light (Rom. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:10).

**S**—*Suffering Savior*, The (Isa. 53:1-9; Acts 8:26-40). Though he did no sin, he suffered for sin—for sinful man that he might redeem us and lead us upward (John 3:16).

**I**—*Immanuel*, which is, being interpreted, *God with us* (Matt. 1:22, 23). The men who saw the Son, saw the Father—the Father's mercy, wisdom, power, purity (John 14:9).

**A**—*Anointed*, The (Ps. 2:2). *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) mean the same: The Anointed. "With the oil of gladness" he has been anointed (Heb. 1:9).

**H**—*Heaven is his home*. From heaven he came, unto heaven he returned, in heaven he abides (Phil. 2:5-11, Acts 1:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16).

Having found him, let us arise and follow him. Let us follow him faithfully, devotedly and lovingly, leaving the world behind (Matt. 16:24). He will never leave us, nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Let us never leave him, nor forsake him. He will lead us out of the darkness into the light!

The people who eat in darkness  
Saw a great light,  
And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death,  
To them did light spring up (Matt. 4:16).

**GOD'S GREAT LOVE****John 3:16**

This passage is very comprehensive. It seems to unfold what the entire Bible unfolds. For this reason, Martin Luther called it "the little Bible." For the same reason it has been called "the

golden text of the Bible." According to an eminent preacher of the last century, the passage contains four things, namely: a spring, a stream, a pitcher, and a drink.

- I. *The spring*: Divine love. "God so loved the world." The Bible speaks of God's eternity, his wisdom, his power. A prominent characteristic is his love (1 John 4:8). The object of his love is "the world"—not the inanimate creation, not the world of sin, but the world of humanity (Rom. 5:12). Divine love knows no barrier—social, racial, or moral (John 6:37).
  
- II. *The stream*—flowing from the spring or fountain (Pa. 46:4). "God so loved... that he gave." This is divine love in action, in expression.
  1. Note the gift of his love: "his only begotten Son."
    - (a) As a teacher (Matt. 7:28, 29).
    - (b) As a wonder-worker (John 3:2).
    - (c) As an example (1 Peter 2:21-23).
    - (d) As a sacrifice for our sins (John 1:29). —This is the prominent thought of the text.
  2. Divine love might have been proclaimed by an angel, or written with golden letters in the sky; but neither would have cost anything and, for that reason, would not convey the message. The language of love is best understood in terms of sacrifice; so the supreme sacrifice was made.
  
- III. *The 'pitcher (dipper)*: "Whosoever believeth." The stream might flow on forever and not reach us, if we don't take the pitcher. God keeps the stream flowing; man should appropriate the blessing. God's grace is universal; man's salvation is conditional. —It is for the believer. Not all believers are alike. The Bible speaks of two kinds:
  1. Inactive (John 12:42; James 2:19).
  2. Active (Gal. 5:6; John 3:36—*belief* and *obedience* are used interchangeably). Example: Luke 17:11-17. —The lepers were cleansed while in the very act of obedience!
  
- IV. *The drink*: "Should not perish, but have eternal life." The love of God has a twofold purpose:
  1. Negative: "Should not perish." God loves us that he may restrain us (Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9; Rom. 2:4).
  2. Positive: "But have eternal life." Love and life are associated. It is love that gives life. The stream of love is untouched by death. Eternal life is more than eternal existence. —Who desires to live forever in the misery of the present evil world? It is a life of unending bliss.

Because God loves us, we ought to love him (1 John 4:19). We ought to love him with our entire being (Mark 12:30). It is only when love is reciprocal that we can be happy. Love, we need to remember, is an expressive thing (John 14:15).

**THE TRUE WORSHIPERS**  
**John 4:20-24**

To worship means to pay honor; to adore; to venerate; to perform acts of homage to a person or an object. The desire to worship is innate. —The American Indian. Like other natural desires, this one must be properly guided or directed (Jer. 10:23).

Let us enquire:

- I. *Where?*
  1. "In this mountain" (Mount Gerizim), said the Samaritans.
  2. "In the city of Jerusalem," said the Jews.
  3. Jesus taught that the place is immaterial—the Object of our worship is not local. His presence cannot be confined to places or times. Wherever our fellow-disciples assemble, there we should assemble and participate in the worship (Matt. 18:20; Heb. 10:25).
  
- II. *Whom?* Much is depending! —We cannot rise above the object of our devotion.
  1. Not our inferior. A good of stone, of wood, of gold, a living creature.
  2. Not our equal. It is unbecoming for a man to worship a man. Like Cornelius, some worship a preacher or a pope (Acts 10:25, 26).
  3. But our Superior: "The Father" (Matt. 6:8; Col. 3:17; Rev. 22:8, 9).
  
- III. *Why?*
  1. Because he made us. By right of creation, we are his (Ps. 100:3). How becoming for the creature to look up to his Creator in adoration! (Rev. 4:11).
  2. Because he loves us (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:20). Because the Father loves the child, the child should love and adore the Father.
  3. That we may become like him. For we grow into the image or the likeness of the object of our constant devotion.
    - (a) If we worship an idol, we shall become like the idol: *dumb, blind, deaf, dead!* (Ps. 135:15-18).
    - (b) If we set our hearts upon God, we shall grow into his likeness. Illustration: *The Great Stone Face.* (2 Cor. 3:18. )
  
- IV. *How?*
  1. "In spirit." In sincerity, with an undivided heart. "God is a Spirit." We need to worship in accordance with his nature.
    - (a) God is a *righteous* Spirit. Therefore, we should worship in the spirit of humility and contrition (Isa. 1:15-17).

- (b) God is a *kingly* Spirit. Therefore, we should worship in the spirit of fear and reverential awe (Isa. 6:1-5; Rev. 1:12-18).
  - (c) God is a *loving Sprit*. —"God is love." Therefore, we should worship in the spirit of love—love for God and love for man (Matt. 5:23, 24; 1 John 4:8, 11, 20, 21).
  - (d) God is a *fatherly* Spirit. Therefore, we should worship in a filial spirit—the spirit of a child. A child is dependent, trustful, hopeful (Matt. 6:9).
2. "And truth." This means that we should worship according to his word (John 17:17; Acts 2:42). In order to worship in "truth," we should continue—
- (a) In the apostles' teaching.
  - (b) In fellowship. This includes cooperation in the giving of our means (1 Cor. 16:1, 2).
  - (c) In the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11).
  - (d) In the prayers (Luke 18:1).
  - (e) In the praise. —This is included in the prayers. Our gratitude to God should find expression in songs of praise (James 1:17; Col. 3:16). Playing on an instrument is nowhere enjoined upon Christians, either by precept or example; therefore such practice is not in "truth."

In order to be true worshipers, people must worship the Father, they must worship "in spirit," and they must worship "in truth." "For such does the Father seek to be his worshipers."

## THE TWO RESURRECTIONS

### John 5:25-29

Religious leaders of our day are laying emphasis on the doctrine of the resurrection, especially the *first* resurrection. The language of the text speaks of two resurrections. The Bible says nothing about another resurrection—just these two. Between the passage in Revelation 20, which speaks of the first resurrection, and the passage before us there is no conflict. Both passages were written by the same author and inspired by the same Spirit. We know, therefore, that they must be in agreement and that each sheds light on the other. When we come to a better understanding of one, we also come to a better understanding of the other. Let us make a detailed study of the two resurrections, setting the one by the side of the other.

- I. *The first resurrection.*
  - 1. The time of it: "The hour cometh, and now is"—already here. The present, or the gospel age. When the Master spoke, the time of the first resurrection was at hand.
  - 2. The nature of it: It is spiritual; a resurrection of the

soul from the tomb of sin. "The dead in trespasses and sin" are raised. Some instances:

- (a) The saints in Rome (Rom. 6:1-11).
- (b) The saints in Ephesus (Eph. 2:1-16).
- 3. The quickening power: "The voice of the Son of God"—the word (Luke 8:11; John 6:63).
- 4. The participants. "They that hear (hearken or listen) shall live" (Mark 4:9, 20). This resurrection is not general or universal. It is conditional.
- 5. The blessedness of the participants:
  - (a) They are "raised together with Christ" (Col. 3:1, 2).
  - (b) They "sit in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6).
  - (c) They walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).
  - (d) They are happy and holy: they are immune from the second death; priestly and kingly privileges are theirs (Rev. 20:6).

## II. *The last resurrection.*

- 1. The time of it: "The hour cometh"—is coming. It is *not* here said, "and now is." —It is future. At the close of the gospel dispensation (John 6:44; 1 Cor. 15:23).
- 2. The nature of it: the resurrection of the body. They "that are in the tombs." Else, there is no victory over the first death—the death of the body. The apostle Paul gives a description of the resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:35-49).
- 3. The quickening power: "his voice," or the trump of God (1 Thes. 4:16).
- 4. The participants: "All," etc. It is not here said that "they that hearken shall live," for all shall hear. —In the first resurrection the hearers are *active*, in the last they are *passive* (Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:22; Rev. 20:11-13). This resurrection shall be unconditional, universal, simultaneous—in the last "hour." Those who come forth divide themselves into two groups:
  - (a) "They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life."
  - (b) "They that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."

Before there can be a comfortable resurrection of the body in the last day, there must be a resurrection of the soul from the tomb of sin in the gospel age. Therefore, we plead with you to hearken to the voice of the Son of God, who is calling upon you to come forth and enter the abundant life.

## A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS John 8:2-11

In the passage before us we have a drama. Let us draw near

and take a look at the setting. The *time* is early morning. The night has passed and another day has dawned. The *place* is the temple-court, in the city of Jerusalem. The actors are the scribes, the Pharisees, a sinful woman and Jesus of Nazareth. As we follow the narrative, we note that three acts are presented. And each is a trial—a judgment scene (v. 2).

*Act One* (vs. 3-6a). In this we have Jesus before the bar of the wicked men—the scribes and the Pharisees. Roman law said that life should not be taken without the sanction or consent of Roman authority. But Moses said that this woman, being an adulteress, should die. What will Jesus say? Will he become involved with Rome? with Moses? Jesus, not the woman, is now on trial. The sinful are set against the Sinless, the guilty against the Innocent!

*Act Two* (vs. 6b-9a). In the second act we have the wicked men before their own bar. How very wise and skillful was the Master! He managed the affair in such a way as to cause the self-righteous men to examine themselves, to accuse themselves, to condemn themselves, to withdraw themselves. They "went out one by one, beginning from the eldest." The Master did not dismiss them or drive them away—their withdrawal was a voluntary act. The weight of a guilty conscience caused them to hang their heads and to withdraw from the scene. Why were the eldest the first to withdraw? Perhaps because they had more sense. This has been called "a most ingloriously humorous thing."

*Act Three* (vs. 9b-11). In the third and last act we see the woman before the bar of Jesus. Here we have incarnate Purity standing face to face with "the saddest thing in human life—convicted impurity." After the Master's question and the woman's reply, he dismissed the case: first, with a word of mercy: "Neither do I condemn thee." He came into the world of humanity on a mission of mercy (Luke 19:10). Second, with an earnest admonition: "Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more." He reminded her of her personal responsibility. He placed her under solemn obligation to keep the law of purity. The drama is closed.

Until now, we have been spectators. We have looked and listened. What practical lessons have we learned from the drama? 1. That the self-righteous are often cruel in their dealings with men. They endeavor to entrap the saint, to crush the sinner. 2. The qualification of a stone-caster: sinlessness. Only the sinless has the right to hurl stones—words that wound and deeds that crush. In the language of a poet this thought is given power and emphasis:

Who then shall accuse or arraign us?  
 What man shall condemn or disown?  
 Since Christ has said only the stainless  
 Shall cast at his fellow a stone.



3. That of all the men who ever lived in this world, only One had the right to hurl a stone; but he refused to do so. We are amazed! 4. That those who are pure in heart exercise mercy, not severity, in dealing with sinners. 5. That the Son of God does not condone sin: he is anxious to save people *from* their sins, to wash them and to cleanse them, to give them newness of life. Not by purity alone and not my mercy alone, but by purity and mercy the lives of men are ennobled (Matt. 5:7, 8; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 6:1-3).

## THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE

### John 10:10

Man, by creation, is a twofold being. He is dust and spirit (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7); he has a body and soul (Matt. 10:28); he has an inward nature and an outward nature (2 Cor. 4:16).

Man is dependent by nature. His body is dependent and his soul is dependent. He is not self-sustaining. He is obliged, therefore, to look outside himself for sustaining power. The needs of the inward man correspond to the needs of the outward man. So, let us consider:

#### I. *The necessities.*

1. Food.
  - (a) For the body. Starvation weakens the physical frame, making it susceptible to disease and death. Food sustains and revives it.
  - (b) For the soul. The soul of man must be fed, else it will perish (Matt. 4:4; John 6:48-51).
2. Water.
  - (a) For the body. Water also sustains and revives the outward man. Without it we cannot long survive.
  - (b) For the soul. The gospel is "living water." It sustains (Ps. 1:1-3), revives (Ps. 46:2), satisfies (John 4:13, 14). It is for all (Rev. 22:17).
3. Light.
  - (a) For the body. Gloom, danger and death reign in its absence. Where there is no light there can be no life.
  - (b) For the soul. The Word (Ps. 119:105; John 1:4; 8:12). The Word may not reveal the end from the beginning, but always guidance for one step more. "Lead, Kindly Light."
4. Air, atmosphere.
  - (a) For the body. Without it man can live only a few seconds. Impure air is injurious.
  - (b) For the soul. Wholesome atmosphere (influence) is needful for man's spiritual nature. How very necessary is the association of good people! (1 Cor. 5:6; 15:33; Heb. 10:25).
5. Shelter.
  - (a) For the body. Preservation depends very largely on

- protection. Exposure is detrimental to health,
- (b) For the soul. God is a roof to shelter us, a hearth to warm us, a refuge from the storm (Ps. 90:1; 91:1; Matt. 23:37).
6. Rest.
- (a) For the body. If we continue with life's program, we must have periods of rest. Burdens must be lifted.
- (b) For the soul. Sin in its various forms is a heavy burden. It wearies man. Jesus gives rest—rest which the world can neither give nor take (Matt. 11:28, 29).
- II. *The necessities appropriated.* The necessities of life, in order to be enjoyed, must be properly appropriated.
1. The necessities of the body. Though food, water and air are at hand, they must be personally appropriated. We must take them and use them—eat the food, drink the water, breathe the air. And this we must do daily, perpetually.
  2. The necessities of the soul. Salvation and all things pertaining thereto are available, but must be personally appropriated (John 6:58; 7:37; 1 John 1:7; Matt. 11:28). It is in obedience to the Father's will that the necessities of the soul are received and applied (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8, 9; Rev. 22:14). And this we must do daily, perpetually.

## JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES' FEET

### John 13:1-17

Let us observe:

- I. *The motive of it* (vs. 1-3).
  1. Love for "his own." Though his "hour" was at hand, his thoughts were of the disciples. "Knowing... he loved."
  2. It is only in the light of the noble motive that prompted it that the deed glows in brightness and beauty (1 Cor. 16:14).
- II. *The completeness of it* (vs. 4-9). How thorough the deed! Without assistance from any source, he gave himself to the work. We note:
  1. The preparation for the deed. The expressions are graphic: he "riseth"; he "layeth aside his garments"; "he girdeth himself"; he "poureth water," etc.
  2. The execution of it:
    - (a) Without partiality. The Master knew the intention of Judas, yet he washed his feet!

- (b) With loving determination. He refused to allow the protest of Peter to halt him. He went right on with the loving service.

III. *The purpose of it* (vs. 10, 11).

1. To cleanse the body of dirt. Jesus desired to cleanse and refresh their bodies by the application of the water. This was accomplished in the twelve. But this was not the only purpose.
2. To cleanse their hearts of sin—pride, ambition, strife, selfishness. This was accomplished in the eleven. Judas' feet were as clean as John's, but his heart was foul.

IV. *The example of it* (vs. 12-17). After the service, Jesus explained: "I have given you an example."

1. An example of love. Love found occasion to express itself in a deed of helpfulness (1 John 3:18).
2. An example of humility. The disciples had been quarreling about rank (Luke 22:24); Jesus had explained (Matt. 20:25-28); but they did not understand, so he gave them an abject lesson. Though aware of his power and dignity, he did the work of a slave. Humble service to humanity was entirely in 'harmony with the dignity of his personality.
3. An example of the treatment we should accord an enemy. What a picture! We do not see Jesus at the throat of an enemy trying to choke him, but at his feet rendering loving service. Our mission is not to destroy our enemies beneath our feet, but to serve them (Rom. 12:20, 21),

True greatness consists not in power or position or preeminence among our fellows; but in humble service, in deeds of helpfulness. Christianity consists not in ruling with a rod of iron, but in helping our fellowman (3 John 9, 10; 1 Peter 5:5, 6).

## THE CROSS OF CHRIST

### John 19:17, 18

The cross of Christ is the central figure of the ages. It is our hope. It is our peace (Col. 1:20). And in the cross of Christ, we glory (Gal. 6:14). Six scenes are before us.

I. *Under the cross.* Jesus, the weary pilgrim, on the way to Golgotha.

1. Exhausted by agony and sleeplessness (Luke 22:44). Lingered pain inflicted by scourging (Matt. 26:67; John 19:1-4). Burdened with weight (Luke 23:26).
2. Accompanied by soldiers and robbers.
3. Followed by a multitude (Luke 23:27, 28).

II. *Upon the cross.* Jesus, the sacrificial victim. On either side

a robber, proclaiming him the worst of the three. A painful and shameful position. Loneliness and mockery contributed to his sorrow (Mark 15:29-32).

- III. *Above the cross*: A title (John 19:19-23).
  - 1. Its conspicuous position—observed by all.
  - 2. Its threefold language—to be read by all.
  - 3. Its significance: It pointed out—
    - (a) Jesus' humanity: "Jesus of Nazareth."
    - (b) His messianic dignity: "King."
    - (c) Israel's sin: They had crucified their King.
  
- IV. *Over the cross*: Mysterious darkness (Mark 15:33). Not an eclipse—the Paschal moon at full orb. A sign from heaven. The darkness in the realm of nature emblematic of Jesus' pain and sorrow. Forsaken by earth and heaven (Mark 15:34). For him a dark hour!
  
- V. *Beneath the cross*: The soldiers gambling, fulfilling Scripture (John 19:23, 24). A picture of moral insensibility, heartless cruelty, unconscious instrumentality.
  
- VI. *By the cross*: Those who loved Jesus.
  - 1. The Galilean women (John 19:25). Their position indicates courage, fidelity, affection. —They were there to comfort and console him. They were the last at the cross, the first to the tomb, the first to proclaim the glorious resurrection.
  - 2. Mary, the mother (John 19:26, 27). In her we have helpless sympathy. —Jesus' peace was bequeathed to the disciples (John 14:27), his garments to the soldiers, his mother to John.

### **WHEN THREE THOUSAND WERE ADDED** **Acts 2:14-22**

Here we have:

- I. *A powerful proclamation* (vs. 14-36). To the great multitude, composed of "Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven," the apostle Peter proclaimed the Christ:
  - 1. The approved Christ.
  - 2. The crucified Christ.
  - 3. The risen Christ.
  - 4. The ascended Christ.
  - 5. And the exalted Christ.
  
- II. *Conviction* (v. 37). Having listened attentively to the matchless discourse, they became painfully aware of sin (John 16:7-11). This led to an earnest enquiry. When the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, and when the precious seed

falls on good soil, there is a spiritual agitation; a sense of guilt is awakened.

- III. *Direction* (vs. 38-40). Unto men whose hearts had been pierced and who realized their lost condition, the inspired speaker pointed out in clearness the way of life: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you," etc.
- IV. *Acceptance* (v. 41). They believed the word. They obeyed the word. Resulting from this hearty response to the direction that had been given, they were made free from sin and "added" to the family of God.
- V. *Newness of life* (v. 42). Let us note the manner in which their new life found expression:
  - 1. In attachment to truth: "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching," They continued to study, to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).
  - 2. In fellowship—with one another, also with God. This means that they walked in the light of the word (1 John 1:7).
  - 3. In the breaking of bread. This was the weekly observance of the Lord's supper (Luke 22:14-20).
  - 4. And the prayers and the praise (v. 47). Prayer and praise make the very atmosphere in which God's children live and move and have their being.

## THE SAVING NAME

### Acts 4:11, 12

- I. *"The stone"* (Ps. 118:22). Jesus is so called because of his stone-like qualities. He is strong, durable, dependable, fit for a foundation (Isa. 28:16; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; 2 Tim. 2:19).
- II. *A rejected stone*: "Set at nought of you the builders." The Jews were the builders. They were erecting the building of their national life. When they came to Jesus, they found no place for him. They set him at nought.
  - 1. They rejected all that Jesus in mercy offered: his word (John 8:37); his reign (Luke 13:34); the abundant life (John 10:10; 5:40).
  - 2. Not content with this, they put him to death. They spurned the message and murdered the Messenger.
- III. *A chosen stone*: "Made the head of the corner." The blunder of the builders did not hinder the plan of the Almighty (1 Peter 2:4, 7b).
  - 1. Angels sang at his birth (Luke 2:14).
  - 2. He was shielded in his infancy (Matt. 2:13-23).
  - 3. He was acknowledged by the Father (Matt. 3:13-17).

4. He was approved by his miracles (Acts 2:22).
  5. He was transfigured on the "Holy Mount" (Matt. 17:1-8).
  6. He was raised from the sealed and guarded tomb (Rom. 1:4).
  7. He was laid in Zion for a foundation (Isa. 28:16).
- IV. *A stone of salvation*: "In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."
1. He is our example to guide us (1 Peter 2:21-23).
  2. He is our high priest to atone for us (Heb. 9:24).
  3. He is our advocate to intercede for us (1 John 2:1, 2).
  4. He is our mediator to stand between us and God (1 Tim. 2:5).
  5. It is through him alone that we have certainty of a happy immortality (2 Tim. 1:10).

Those who are building upon the sand have need of this Stone— of the security he offers, of the salvation he gives. Unto all who live in obedience to his word, he is the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:8, 9).

### MAN'S ANGEL FACE

#### Acts 6:15

Against Stephen charges had been made. Then the eyes of the judges were turned upon him. Even to them—his foes—his face had the appearance of an angel (Ex. 34:29ff; Matt. 17:1, 2). What is the appearance of an angel's face? Brightness, serenity, calm dignity. What gave Stephen's face this appearance? The face is the mirror of the soul.

- I. *Fullness of faith* (Acts 6:5).
  1. A faith obedient. Likely, he was among the number who obeyed the Lord on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41).
  2. A serving faith. In time of need, he was selected as a deacon (a special servant) to relieve the poor (Acts 6:1ff).
  3. An eloquent faith. He had been teaching God's word. This must have given to his countenance a luster (Dan. 12:3—marginal reading).
- II. *Innocence*. He had been accused of evil (Acts 6:11-14). When men are conscious of no wrongdoing, their faces radiate brightness. It was so with Stephen. No guilty look registered on his countenance.
- III. *Fearlessness*. He served the Lord during an era of persecution—when it was unsafe to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. 1. As a free man, he withstood the foes of Christ with an irresistible eloquence (Acts 6:8-10).

2. As a prisoner, *he* stood in the center of the Sanhedrin— 71 men—and denounced them (Acts 7:51-53). The man who stands alone is a man of courage.

IV. *Love.*

1. With all of his faith, courage and eloquence, his face would not have appeared angelic without love (1 Cor. 13). Of all the graces, this one is most heavenly, for "God is love."
2. Stephen demonstrated his love in his dying hour when he prayed for those who were stoning him (Acts 7:59, 60; Luke 23:34). The love of the heavenly had made him heavenly.

If faith, courage and love make one's face angelic in appearance, what will unbelief, cowardice and hatred do for one's face? The angel-faced man sees heavenly things, says heavenly things, enters the heavenly rest (Acts 7:54-60).

### CONVERSION OF A NOBLEMAN Acts 8:26-40

In this passage two personalities are directly involved: the gospel preacher and the sinner.

The preacher is Philip—to be distinguished from the apostle by the same name. He is introduced as one of the seven deacons of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6), fleeing from the city during the persecution, he went to Samaria where he did his first work as an evangelist (Acts 8:1-5).

The sinner was "a man of Ethiopia," likely a Jew who, like Daniel and Nehemiah of Old Testament times, had attained a high position in a foreign land; for he was "of great authority under Candace... over all her treasure." He must have been a man of integrity and fidelity. He was deeply religious—either a Jew or a Jewish proselyte; for Jerusalem was the place of his worship, Isaiah the roll of his reading. He was also zealous, for he had traveled a long distance to worship; he was in search of light.

As the interesting story opens, the preacher is in the land of Samaria, the sinner in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

We note:

- I. *Converging paths* (vs. 26, 27).
  1. Though Philip knew not the purpose of the call, he arose and went. Like Abraham, "he went out, not knowing whither he went." Like Paul, he was not "disobedient to the heavenly vision."
  2. The nobleman was leaving Jerusalem, headed for his faraway home. Thoughts sublime must have filled his mind.
  3. The Lord brought the two men together, timing the steps of each so that they would meet at a given point. A wonderful lesson on the providence of God!

- II. *The interview* (vs. 28-38). The meeting place was Gaza, 31/2 miles from the sea; a "desert" place, on the highway leading from Phoenicia to Egypt.
1. Philip was ready to help—for he "ran to meet him"; the nobleman was anxious to receive help. When two such personalities meet, good is always accomplished.
  2. The man was reading Isaiah 53, but did not understand it. Why? Because he knew nothing of Christ. Unless we know something of Christ, the Old Testament is a mystery-
  3. Philip preached unto him Jesus.
    - (a) Jesus of the cross: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter."
    - (b) Jesus, a man of meekness: "So he opened not his mouth."
    - (c) Jesus, a victim of injustice: "In his humiliation," etc.
    - (d) Jesus of a wicked generation: "His generation who shall declare (describe)? For his life is taken from the earth." The Suffering Servant was hurried to a violent death (Matt. 12:39-42).
  4. Results. Interest was awakened—a mystery was solved, the Savior revealed. This interest grew into inquiring faith—evidently, Philip had taught Christ's command of baptism, else how would he have known? It terminated in obedience—the man was baptized.
- III. *Diverging paths* (vs. 39, 40).
1. "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." For a period of 18 years we lose sight of this remarkable man of God; our last glimpse of him is presented in Acts 21:8, 9.
  2. The nobleman did not bewail the loss of the guide, for he had found the Savior. "He went on his way rejoicing."
    - (a) Because he had learned of the love of the Lord for him.
    - (b) Because the burden of his guilt was rolled away (Heb. 8:12).
    - (c) Because he believed that in faraway Ethiopia he would have a companion who would never leave him nor forsake him (Heb. 13:5).
    - (d) Because his name was written in heaven (Luke 10:17-20).

*Let us learn:* 1. That God does not work independently of human means (1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:7). 2. That the Lord has an interest in one man (Luke 15), especially when that one man is seeking the light. 3. That faith must precede New Testament baptism. The voice or the vote of the church is unnecessary. 4. That joy comes after obedience in baptism, and is a result of having obeyed—not evidence of pardon.



## CONVERSION OF A PERSECUTOR

### Acts: 1-19a

Next to the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, the conversion of Saul is perhaps the greatest event in history. In order to properly evaluate his conversion, we need to know something of his early life and attitude toward Christ and the church.

So, we shall consider:

- I. *The persecutor.* It is as a persecutor that he is introduced (Acts 7:58; 8:1).
  1. A zealous persecutor (Acts 8:3). He scourged the disciples; imprisoned both men and women; voted for their execution (Acts 22:4, 20; 26:10, 11). He didn't stop with the cities of Judaea; he "persecuted them even unto foreign cities."
  2. A persistent persecutor. He had seen the angelic face of Stephen before the Jewish court; he had heard that man's unanswerable defense; he had heard him pray for his murderers; yet he was unchanged.
  3. A conscientious persecutor (Acts 23:1; 16:9). This explains why he was so zealous and determined.
  
- II. *The persecutor's last journey* (vs. 1, 2). He had no forebodings. Little did he realize whom he would meet on the way!
  1. His mental attitude. "Breathing threatening and slaughter," etc. A most unlikely subject for conversion!
  2. His mission: to find disciples in Damascus and bring them bound to Jerusalem.
  
- III. *His arrest on the way* (vs. 3-7).
  1. The place of it: "nigh unto Damascus." Within sight of the ancient city. The Lord allowed him to get almost near enough to strike.
  2. The manner of it:
    - (a) By a light (v. 3; Acts 22:6, 7a; 26:13).
    - (b) By a voice (vs. 4-7; Acts 26:14). All heard the voice, but only Saul understood (Acts 22:9). For a parallel, see John 12:28, 29.
  3. The purpose of it: to make him a witness and a minister, or an apostle (vs. 15, 16; Acts 26:16-18).
  
- IV. *The journey resumed* (vs. 8, 9). All, but what a different man!
  1. He had intended to use his eyes to ferret out Christians, but now he is blind.
  2. He had led others to the persecution, but now he is led by them.
  3. He had purposed to dispel Christians from the city, but now he will be obliged to lodge with one of them.

4. He had made the journey to persecute, but now he prays. His fast was emblematic of his spiritual condition. He was truly penitent.
- V. *The destination* (vs. 10-19a). The call and mission of Ananias show the divine use of human agents in conversion. Let us now turn our attention to Saul—his needs and how they were supplied.
1. Sight—he had been blind three days. By the hand of Ananias sight was restored. —The hand of Ananias was the hand of God.
  2. Forgiveness—he had been "the chief of sinners." By obedience in baptism his sins were washed away (Acts 22:16).
  3. A guide and comforter—his great work with all of its trials was before him. —The Holy Spirit answered this need.
  4. Bodily strength—he had fasted three days. Strength was supplied with food.

### A BEAUTIFUL LADY

#### Acts 9:36-42

Dorcas was an early disciple. She lived in Joppa, by the sea. All the Biblical information we have concerning her is contained in the passage before us. The life of this great woman may be described by one word—that word is *beautiful*.

- I. *Her name was beautiful.* The name *Tabitha* or *Dorcas* signifies *Gazelle*. Said an eminent writer: "The gazelle, or antelope of Judah, celebrated for its slender and agreeable form, its graceful motion, its fiery and beautiful eyes, was not infrequently employed by Hebrews and other Orientals as a type of female loveliness."
- II. *Her soul was beautiful.* She was a disciple of the Lord Jesus. It is not improbable that she had seen the man Jesus and listened to his words. At all events, she was a follower of the Lord Jesus. By the doctrine of the Lord her soul had been adorned. Scenes of sorrow and suffering moved her heart with compassion. Dorcas considered the poor. It is written, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: Jehovah will deliver him in the evil day" (Ps. 41:1).
- III. *Her dress was beautiful.* The pity in her soul did not perish for want of action. She was "full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." Perhaps as nearly as humanly possible, Dorcas had attained the ideal of feminine beauty and perfection as outlined by both Peter and Paul (1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10). Her lovely life displayed itself especially in the making of coats and garments for poor widows in the

community. It is not unlikely that she purchased the materials with her own savings, then wove them with her own fingers into articles of apparel. With this we have a strong hint of what is preeminently the woman's circle of activity within the Lord's church: it is not that of public preaching or ruling or usurping authority over men, but of teaching the young, of ministering to the sick, of caring for the poor and needy.

Notwithstanding the beauty of her soul and the usefulness of her hands, Dorcas fell sick and died. The grim monster of death is no respecter of persons—he lays his icy hand on the good as well as the evil. But, through the instrumentality of the apostle Peter, she was raised by divine power. But why was Dorcas raised? She was raised from the dead to prove to the people of that generation and succeeding generations the divine origin of the gospel (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:4). Undoubtedly, this was the main reason. And, perhaps, she was raised from the dead to show that women like Dorcas never die, that goodness is immortal. It has been said that "a stitch in time saves nine," but this lady got her needle into the fabric of eternity.

What is beauty? Not the show  
Of shapely limbs and features; No!  
These are but flowers  
That have their dated hours  
To breathe their momentary sweets and go.  
'Tis the stainless soul within  
That outshines the fairest skin.

## THE NAME CHRISTIAN

### Acts 11:26

- I. *The meaning of it:* Belonging to or pertaining to Christ or the religion based on his teaching. In that name, the name of Christ is embedded and honored—Christ-ian.
- II. *The origin of it.* Let us ask—
  1. When was it given? Prior to the establishment of the church in Antioch, the name was unknown. The followers of Christ had been called by other names: believers (Acts 5:14); brethren (Acts 6:3); disciples (Acts 9:1); men of the Way (Acts 9:2); by way of contempt they had been called Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) and Galileans.
  2. By whom was it given? By one of three parties: the disciples themselves, the enemies of the disciples, or the spokesmen of the Lord. By a process of elimination we can arrive at the answer:
    - (a) Not by the disciples themselves. This is clear in the text: They "were called."

- (b) Not by their enemies. It is unlikely that a name so honorable and inoffensive began with them. It is unreasonable to suppose that a name given by enemies should be so universally approved by the disciples themselves.
- (c) Therefore, the name must have originated with the Lord's spokesmen—Paul and Barnabas. This is implied in the context: Acts 11:25, 26.

- III. *The fitness of it.* For a number of reasons, the name is fitting for a disciple of Christ:
  1. He receives his teaching from Christ. —The student wears the name of his Master.
  2. He has been redeemed by the Christ. —The redeemed wears the name of the Redeemer.
  3. He is married to Christ—joined in spiritual wedlock. The bride wears the name of the Bridegroom. By wearing the name of the Bridegroom, the bride honors him! (1 Peter 4:16).
  4. He partakes of the nature of the Christ. —Christ is in him; he is in Christ (Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- IV. *The acceptableness of it.* The name is acceptable to all professed followers of Christ. If ever the different religious groups unite, in answer to the Savior's prayer (John 17), they will unite under the name Christian—not under any other name.

It is a distinct honor to wear the name of Christ. But before a person begins to wear the name of Christ, he should yield himself to Christ's authority, imbibe his spirit, partake of his nature (Gal. 3:26, 27). What is a Christian in character? A Christian is:

- C—Charitable in disposition (Eph. 4:31, 32).
- H—Humble in attitude (Eph. 4:1, 2).
- R—Reliable in his dealings (Rom. 12:17).
- I—Immaculate in his personal life (James 1:27).
- S—Sincere in motive (Col. 3:22, 23).
- T—Truthful in speech (Col. 3:9).
- I—Industrious with his hands (Eph. 4:28).
- A—A new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).
- N—Neighborly with his fellows (Luke 10:30-37).

### **THE BEATITUDE OF THE GIVER** **Acts 20:35b**

This is a beautiful saying—of the Master, snatched for us from oblivion (it is not found elsewhere in the New Testament) by the inspired Paul, and handed down by him for the use of every Christian (John 21:25). "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The glory of it is exhibited in an epistle he wrote to the Christians

in the city of Corinth (2 Cor. 9:6-15). Let us ponder well the following points:

- I. *That it is blessed to give.* "What you give you lose," says the selfish soul. "What you give you invest, you sow," says the Lord. When you give according to the divine plan, you receive back the gift with multiplied interest. The giver is blessed:
  1. With returns in proportion to the gift (v. 6). The more generous the gift, the richer will be the returns. When you stint your seed for sowing, you stint your harvest; when you sow with a generous hand, you increase your harvest. Be not afraid to give bountifully; be afraid not to give bountifully.
  2. With a fuller measure of divine love (v. 7). God himself is a cheerful giver. There is no grudging of his benevolence. In the cheerful giver, he sees a reflection of his own personality (Matt. 5:7).
  3. With the power to give (vs. 8-11). If we really wish to be liberal, God will give us the ability to be liberal. Behind the generous soul is a great Reserve (Prov. 11:24, 25).
  4. With a fuller life. Instead of losing when we give, we make room in the soul for something better. Giving enlarges the affections of the giver, making him more like the Master, fitting him for heaven.
  
- II. *It is blessed to receive.* Through the liberality of God comes every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Through the gift of Jesus of himself, we enjoy the hope of eternal life (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:9). Let us ask, What does our liberality do for others?
  1. Provides temporal relief—"fillet up the measure of the wants of the saints." It fills empty stomachs; hushes the sorrows of the distressed; heals the wounds of the afflicted.
  2. Awakens in their hearts the grace of gratitude (vs 11, 12). It revives the spirit as well as the body. The generosity of the saints often causes sinners to turn to the Savior.
  3. Unites them with the giver (vs. 13, 14). Until this time the Jewish brethren doubted the conversion and spirituality of the Corinthians; but the gift from the Corinthians erased that doubt. Confidence replaced suspicion; love took the place of hatred.
  
- III. *That it is "more blessed to give than to receive."* For the truthfulness of this statement we have a threefold assurance: first, from him who gave utterance to the statement; second, from the great Paul; third, from all saints who have been generous with their means. Said a great English poet:
 

The quality of mercy is not strain'd.  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest;  
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.

**A BRAVE CONFESSION**  
**Romans 1:16, 17**

In the words before us the apostle Paul makes a brave confession—that he is not ashamed of the gospel. When we read the story of his great life, we know that he is telling the truth. And now he tells us why. Let us listen.

- I. *It is a power.* Not an impotent thing, but a dynamic thing. Not material, or muscular; but mental, moral and spiritual in nature.
- II. *It is the -power of God.*
  1. Satan has a power, or an influence.
  2. The world has a power—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, etc. (1 John 2:15, 16).
  3. But the gospel is divine power—God's mighty influence which works in the heart of man.
- III. *It is the -power of God unto salvation.* Many powers are destructive in nature—the flood, the storm, the earthquake, evil literature, falsehood, etc. But the gospel is the saving power—it saves man from the most deadly enemy—sin.
  1. From the power of sin.
  2. From the practice of sin.
  3. From the pollution of sin.
  4. From the guilt of sin.
  5. From the fearful wages of sin (Rom. 6:23).
- IV. *It is the power of God to save without partiality:* "To every one," etc. (Mark 16:15; Acts 10:34). This blessed fact commends the gospel to the hearts of all men. Other religions are national, racial. The religion of the Jews, for example.
- V. *It is the power of God unto salvation on the simplest terms:* "To every one that believeth." Saying belief (or faith) is not a lifeless thing, but a living principle (Gal. 5:6; James 2:17).
- VI. *It is a revealing power:* "For therein is revealed the righteousness of God," etc. God's character—his goodness, justice, mercy, wisdom, will—is revealed in the gospel. Blessed gospel! It brings God very near! (Matt. 1:23; John 14:8, 9). Having been saved by the gospel, we should not be ashamed of it. We should not be ashamed to declare it, to defend it, to manifest its power in our daily lives. The man who is ashamed of Christ (or his gospel), of him Christ will be ashamed when he comes (Mark 8:38).

**WHISPERERS**  
**Romans 1:28-32**

In these verses and in the preceding verses the apostle Paul presents a word-picture of the moral state of the Gentiles when the Savior was born. This is, perhaps, the darkest picture on the pages of history. Sin in all of its varied forms seems to have reached a full fruition. Sinful thoughts and sinful words and sinful deeds, all are specified. Three times it is said that "God gave them up." This means that he abandoned them to their own sinful course of thinking and speaking and living. "Taking off the bridle of restraining grace," he allowed them to suffer the unspeakable consequences of their own folly.

It is interesting, also profitable, to note that the different types of sinners are specified. Among them are people whom the apostle designates as "*whisperers*." Concerning them, let us ask and answer a few questions.

- I. *Who are they?* A whisperer is one who whispers, who talks quietly, privately, secretly; a gossip; a tattler, a talebearer; a slanderer; one who spreads scandal; one who goes from place to place, from person to person, speaking things which he ought not (1 Tim. 5:13).
  
- II. *With whom are they listed? classified!* In the passage before us the answer is found: with malicious men; with murderous men; with unmerciful men; with haters of God; with haughty men; with inventors of evil things, and such like. We know their character by the company they keep!
  
- III. *What havoc do they work?*
  1. They separate chief friends (Prov. 16:28; 26:20).
  2. They destroy reputation, which is of more value than capital (Prov. 22:1). What do you think of the person who robs you of money?
  3. They violate a great law—the law of brotherly love (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:10). This law requires us to bear the infirmities of the weak, to restore the fallen (Rom. 15:1; Gal. 6:1, 2).
  4. They isolate themselves. They are subject to the law of reaction or recoil. Society instinctively avoids the people who are known to be whisperers, talebearers, scandalmongers. The whisperer becomes very lonely in life!
  5. They become objects of suspicion. People speak evil of the evil speaker. Men reap what they sow (Gal. 6:7, 8).
  6. They incur the displeasure of him who said, "Speak evil of no man" (Titus 3:2).

**DIVINE IMPARTIALITY**  
**Romans 2:11**

Impartiality is a trait to be admired in a parent, in a teacher, in a business manager, in any person. It is a necessary quality of a judge. No amount of knowledge or ability can substitute for it. Yet, a rare quality—so seldom found! The language of the text speaks of the impartiality of God. Since all men are his creatures, he must make no difference in them. Now, we shall note some instances of his impartiality.

- I. *He has declared all under sin* (Rom. 3:23). Sons of men justify this declaration in that they admit they are sinners. The sins of God's most faithful servants are not concealed: Abraham, Moses, etc. Though David was a man "after God's own heart," his sins are mentioned.
- II. *A common Savior is provided for all*. Jesus is not the Savior of a particular race or class. He died for all (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:6). The gospel is a universal theme, the great commission world-wide (Matt. 28:19, 20). Jesus the great sower, scatters seed upon every kind of soil (Matt. 13:1ff).
- III. *The same gracious invitation is extended to all*. To the weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11:28). To the thirsty (John 7:37). To all who will come (Rev. 22:17). No man who comes to him will be rejected (John 6:37).
- IV. *The same conditions of pardon are required of all*. Man-made religions frame the conditions of salvation in favor of the rich and powerful; but God has one plan for all (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Rom. 10:12, 13).
- V. *There is one standard of conduct for all*. Sons of men have various standards. A man has one standard for himself, another for his fellows; one for the male, another for the female; one for a church leader, another for the non-church leader. But God, in his Book, has made no difference.
- VI. *A common church for all*. The Lord did not build a church •for each race, class or fancy of man. The word *church*, when employed in the universal sense, is always in the singular (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4). In Christ, all distinctions are erased (Gal. 3:26-28).
- VII. *In the manner of judging* (1 Peter 1:17). He will not judge the people as nations, or as classes, 'but as individuals (Rom. 14:12). He will not judge man according to his wealth or influence, but according to his deeds (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12).

While God is no respecter of persons, he is a respecter of char-



ter; for only those who revere him and work righteousness are acceptable to him (Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Peter 3:12). How very necessary it is for us to remember this!

### **THE LOVE OF GOD** **Romans 5:6-8**

Love is of many kinds. There is a love that is pure and a love that has degenerated into lust. There is a love that ennobles and a love that degrades. There is a love that is fleeting and a love that many waters cannot quench. There is a love that elevates and a love that drags men down to the mouth of hell. What kind of love, then, is the love that God commends or exhibits or demonstrates toward man?

- I. *A spontaneous love.* There was no power above him to command him to love us. There was no person below that was lovable (Rom. 3:10, 23). Yet, he loved us—he loved the unlovable (1 John 3:1).
- II. *A timely love.* It was expressed "in due season," "in the nick of time." When all human efforts and ingenuity had utterly failed—Jewish morality, Greek culture, and Roman law; when man had brought himself to the very verge of disaster (Gal. 4:4, 5).
- III. *An unparalleled love:* "For scarcely for a righteous man," etc. Great love is required to die for friends. —Jesus did this when he died for the disciples. Greater love is required to die for the indifferent. —Jesus did this when he died for Pilate and his kind. Greatest love is required to die for enemies. —Jesus did this when he died for the ungodly, for Judas and others like him.
- IV. *A condescending love.* It stooped and became incarnate. It reached to the lowest depth of humanity. Not merely for the flower of manhood; not merely for unstained childhood; but also for the depraved did Jesus die. No wonder that Paul said that divine love "passeth understanding."
- V. *An uplifting love.* This is seen in the lofty purpose it creates. To be an object of love is either a blessing or a curse, depending on the character of the person who loves us. The love of God is a blessing because of his high and holy character. It lifts us to the lofty level of his own blessed being (2 Cor. 5:14).
- VI. *A forgiving love.* God forgives both the alien and the backslider. Deeper love is required to forgive the latter than the former. A deeper love is required to reclaim a prodigal wife than to woo and wed her. When we obey the gospel of

Christ, we are joined to him in spiritual wedlock; but when we backslide we commit spiritual fornication; yet the Lord continues to love us and, on our return, will receive us (Isa. 1:18; 55:6, 7).

- VII. *And an unending love.* No flood can submerge it. Though he hates sin, he loves the sinner. And this love cannot die. The apostle does not say that God commended or has commended—he employs the perpetual present and says, "God commendeth." It does not end where difficulties begin (Rom. 8:35-39).

The love of God is as broad as the world of humanity, as deep as the ocean of sin and human misery, as high as the heavens, and as long as eternity. Be afraid of this love that loves you: It is either your heaven or your hell—your heaven if you lovingly respond to it, your hell if you spurn it. John lovingly responded to God's love and thereby brought heaven into his heart. Judas spurned God's love and thereby brought hell with its horrors into his heart. It is only when love meets love, when love responds to love, that you can be happy in time and in eternity.

## **REDEMPTION REPRODUCED**

### **Romans 6:1-11**

The great historical facts of the story of redemption are these: the death, the burial, the resurrection, the manifestation, the ascension and the glorious reign of the Christ. Before the sinner can be saved, he must re-enact these facts, I. e., draw a parallel to them in his own life. Though the reproduction is not literal, it is nevertheless real. So, we shall observe the facts of redemption and how they may be reproduced in the life of an individual.

#### I. *The death.*

1. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:1-3). His death was preceded by intense sorrow (Matt. 26:36-46).
2. The sinner is "crucified with Christ" (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 6:14). This is repentance. It is preceded by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10).

#### II. *The burial.*

1. After Jesus died, he was buried in Joseph's new tomb (John 19:38ff).
2. The penitent is "buried with him through baptism" (Rom. 6:4a; Col. 2:12).

#### III. *The resurrection.*

1. Jesus was raised from the grave by divine power (Matt. 28:1ff). His new life did not emerge from the cross, but from the tomb.
2. The penitent is "raised with him" from the watery grave.

He is "planted" in the likeness of *his* death, raised in the likeness of *his* resurrection. The burial and resurrection of Christ are reproduced in baptism. The new life does not emerge from the cross of repentance, but from the grave of baptism.

IV. *The manifestation.*

1. After his resurrection, Jesus manifested a new or different life (Acts 1:3).
2. After his resurrection, the individual lives "with him" (Rom. 6:6-6). He is a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17), and "walks in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

V. *The ascension.*

1. At the end of forty days, Jesus ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11).
2. At the end of the age, the Christian shall ascend to the better world (1 These. 4:16, 17). Leaving beneath him the world on fire, he shall arrive in heaven (John 14:1-3).

VI. *The glorious reign.*

1. When Jesus ascended, he took his seat on the right hand of God to reign in glory (1 Cor. 15:25; Rom. 8:34).
2. When the Christian ascends, he will be "glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17), and "reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21).

Thus, the individual follows Christ from darkness to light, from sin to salvation. In every step he is "with" the Lord. The Master's challenge was and is, "Follow thou me." Paraphrase: "Follow thou me in my death, burial and resurrection, in living in newness of life, and eventually you will ascend and live and reign with me in glory."

### **WAGES OR GIFT? Romans 6:23**

Though brief, this passage is very meaningful. It is a summation of the gospel. As we read, we note that it abounds in contrasts: sin versus God; wages versus gift; and death versus life. In our study of the passage, we shall lay emphasis on three points:

I. *Sin.*

1. It is missing the mark—God's target.
2. It is a fall—a drop from a high position.
3. It is iniquity—a zigzag course or a departure from the straight line.
4. It is lawlessness—a disregard of divine law (1 John 3:4).
5. It is unrighteousness—an ungodly manner of living (1 John 5:17).
6. It is a failure to do good (James 4:17).

- II. *The wages of sin.* Sin is here personified: he is a master paying his slaves for service.
1. "Wages" originally meant a soldier's small allowance for toilsome and dangerous service (Luke 3:14).
  2. The hard-earned "wages of sin is death." God is the source of life (Acts 17:28). And from the source of life, sin separates us (Isa. 59. 1, 2). This results in death.
    - (a) Adam's sin brought physical death (Rom. 5:12)
    - (b) Our own sins, unless we turn from them, will bring the second death (Rev. 21:8).
- III. *The gift of God.* It is called "the free gift of God," that is, the gift of God's grace.
1. What is it?
    - (a) It is life. Life in any form is God's gift (Gen. 1). Of all the gifts in man's possession, he prizes life most highly.
    - (b) It is eternal life. It is eternal in duration. But it is vastly more than that; for eternal life in a world of sin is not desired (Ps. 55:6; Job 7:16). It is a better life (John 10:10). It is a life of joyful fellowship with the Eternal (John 17:3).
  2. Where is it found? "In Christ Jesus our Lord." Note the power of these four great passages: "In him was life"; "I am the life"; "He that hath the Son hath life"; and God "hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." So, this precious gift of God is found "in Christ" or his body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22, 23).

In order to receive this gift, we need to enter Christ and to abide in him. We enter Christ when we believe and obey (Gal. 3:26, 27). We abide in Christ when we keep his commandments (John 15:10; Rev. 2:10b).

### **DAWN OF THE DAY** **Romans 13:11-14**

In this passage the apostle makes use of a material illustration to set forth a lesson of life. He presents an early morning scene. The darkness of the night is thinning, and the blackness is turning to grey. Light begins to stir and to whisper. An army of soldiers lies asleep, and, as the day begins to dawn, the clarion call of the bugle is heard—it summons them to awaken, to arise, to cast aside their night-garments, to gird themselves with armor. In the words of the apostle we have our bugle call—a call to awaken, to arise, to bestir ourselves, to get ready for the coming day. A directory for a day's work is presented. Note the four items that follow.

- I. *The waking hour.* That hour is the present: "And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep." This is the sleep of listlessness, of negligence, of carnal security. The call is urgent and imperative.
  1. "The night is far spent." The sleeping time is gone—it is forever in the past. Already you have overslept. Arise! Never again should you sleep the sleep of indolence, of carelessness.
  2. "And the day is at hand." The day is the time to work, to battle, to receive full reward. "For now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed." Salvation is secure when we obey "from the heart." Salvation is perfected at the coming of the Savior.
  
- II. *The working garments.* When awake and up, we must think of our working garment, our armor. Let us consider:
  1. What we must lay aside: "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness." These are the night clothes, which men are ashamed to wear during the day (John 3:19; Col. 3:5-11).
  2. What we must put on: "Let us put on the armor of light." The *armor* implies that a Christian is a soldier, that he has a battle to wage. *Of light* indicates the nature of the conflict—it is a conflict of righteousness. In another letter the apostle completes the picture (Eph. 6:13-19).
  
- III. *The manner of walk:*
  1. Stated in the positive: "Let us walk becomingly, as in the day." We should walk as Jesus walked—in purity, in love, in humble submission to the Father's will (Acts 10:38).
  2. Stated in the negative: "Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy." These works fall into three classes, namely:
    - (a) Indulgence in sensual acts.
    - (b) Indulgence in unholy thoughts and desires.
    - (c) Indulgence in acts of hatred.
  
- IV. *Wholesome provisions:*
  1. The necessity enjoined: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27). Christ is here described as a robe—a robe of beauty, of purity, of gentleness, etc. He who puts on Christ is fully equipped: for in him we are complete.
  2. The luxuries forbidden: "And make no provisions for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Said an eminent scholar: "The necessities of the body must be considered, but the lusts of it must not be gratified. Natural desires must be answered, but wanton appetites must be checked and denied."

When we carry into execution this four-point directory, we shall

be ready for the day—the full-orbed day, the Lord's coming, the brightness of eternity. We have slept long enough! *Let us awaken. Let us put on the working garments and move onward and upward!*

**YOUR BODY IS GOD'S TEMPLE — DO NOT DEFILE IT!**  
**1 Corinthians 6:18-20**

This passage from the pen of the apostle Paul deals with a particular sin, namely, *fornication*. In plainest terms the apostle rebukes this sin, saying, "Flee fornication." The shame was not in the rebuke, but in the sin which called forth the rebuke. From that he went on to lay emphasis on the sacredness of the body and how it should be used (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Let us observe:

- I. *A wonderful fact*: "Ye are bought with a price." By two prominent items our attention is arrested:
  1. The ones purchased: "Ye" Corinthian Christians; "ye" Christians in every place and in every age of the world.
  2. The purchase price: "with a price." With a *great* price. The Father gave his Son; the Son gave himself (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9). Jesus is both the ransom and the ransomer (1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14). The great price reveals—
    - (a) The divine estimate of man.
    - (b) The love of God (Rom. 5:6-8).
    - (c) The awfulness of sin.
  
- II. *The consequences*: "Ye are not your own" (Rom. 14:7-9). The one purchased belongs to the Purchaser. The divine ownership involves two things of immense importance, namely:
  1. Responsibility.
    - (a) Your body is not your own to injure, to abuse, to defile, to waste in shameful living (Luke 15:11-13).
    - (b) You are not your own to hire to another master (Matt. 6:24; 1 Cor. 7:23).
  2. Blessings.
    - (a) You are not your own savior; Jesus is (2 Tim. 1:12).
    - (b) You are not your own provider: By the Shepherd the sheep are fed (Ps. 23:1).
    - (c) You are not your own guide: By the light of the Word you are guided (Ps. 119:105; John 8:12).
    - (d) You are not your own protector: God is your "refuge and strength" (Ps. 46:1).
    - (e) You are not your own rewarder: God is (Rom. 6:23).
  
- III. *The conclusion*: "Glorify God therefore in your body." To *glorify* means to pay honor or reverence or dignity to a per-

son. This admonition from the pen of inspiration points out two things, namely:

1. The object: "Glorify God"—
  - (a) The Omnipotent God.
  - (b) The Omnipresent God.
  - (c) The Omniscient God.
  - (d) The Loving Father.
2. The instrument: "In your body."
  - (a) An obedient body.
  - (b) A working body (John 5:17; Phil. 2:12).
  - (c) A dedicated body (Rom. 12:1; Matt. 16:24).
  - (d) A well-controlled body (2 Peter 1:6; Acts 24:25). The body of a Christian is a temple of the Spirit. For this reason it should be kept clean and beautiful and ready for service.

### **THE LORD'S SUPPER**

#### **1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Luke 22:14-20**

The public ministry of Jesus had come to a close. Across his path had fallen the shadow of the cross. On the night of his betrayal, the Master entered "a large upper room" of some house in the city of Jerusalem. It was in this place that he met with his disciples—Peter, James, John and the others—to bid them farewell, to eat the Passover with them the last time, and to institute the Lord's supper. The occasion was one of sadness yet of sweetness.

Around the feast of the Lord's supper the Christian worship is built. The Biblical portions before us speak of the origin of this sacred institution. With four meaningful words we shall describe it.

- I. *It is a memorial.* "This do," said Jesus, "in remembrance of me." —The bread reminds us of his body, the fruit of the vine of his blood. We partake because we remember him, also to nourish the memory of him. By the memories we nourish and cherish, our lives are ruled and regulated. How important it is, therefore, that we keep alive in our hearts the most precious memories! Our memory of the Savior helps us to build our lives around him.
- II. *It is a communion* (1 Cor. 10:16) —A communication, an intercourse. A communion brings us into a more intimate relationship with the person with whom we commune. When we partake of the Lord's supper, the communion is twofold in nature:
  1. We commune with the Lord. He is a silent and unseen communicant at the table. It is "the Lord's table" (Matt. 26:29).
  2. We commune with each other. We "come together to eat" (1 Cor. 11:33).

- III. *It is a proclamation.* "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death." The death of Jesus is the supreme expression of divine love—the depth of it, the breadth of it, the height of it, and the length of it. All men should know of this matchless love. When we observe the Lord's supper we proclaim to the world the love of God. Though silent, it is a powerful proclamation.
- IV. *It is an anticipation.* "Till he come." The sacred supper turns our thoughts to the past, also to the future. The observance of it is an expression of faith, also of hope. God's people entertain a wonderful expectation. They eat with their faces toward the rising sun.

The observance of the Lord's supper should be preceded by a self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28). Examination before eating and drinking! Let each ask himself—

1. "Am I in the kingdom?" The table is there (Luke 22:29, SO).
2. "Have I life?" The dead do not sit at feasts.
3. "Have I known the Lord? If not, how can I eat and drink in his memory?"
4. "Am I clean?" How unbecoming to eat with filthy hands! Penitence and prayer should precede the observance.
5. "Have I appetite?" Unless we delight in the feast, it will not profit.
6. "Am I aware of the Lord's presence?" He eats and drinks with us, adding to the sweetness and joy of the occasion.

### **MAJORS AND MINORS**

#### **1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Matthew 22:34-40**

As students in the College of Christ, our majors are these: Justice, Mercy, Faith, Love for God, Love for Man. Our minors include those subjects which are binding, though not listed along with the majors. Though tithing was binding on the Jews, the Master gave it a minor listing (Matt. 23:23). Customs, Traditions and Matters of Judgment may be good, but they can never be listed with the major subjects.

- I. *Negative admonitions.*
  1. Do not major in minors. Do not exalt a minor or secondary matter to a place of prime importance in your teaching or manner of life.
  2. Do not minor in majors. Do not give to a major subject a minor place in your program of life. This will dwarf you.
- II. *Positive admonitions.*
  1. You should major in majors. Give to Justice, Mercy, Faith, Love to God and Love to Man your major consideration. Make first things first in your teaching and in



your manner of life (Matt. 5:23, 24; 6:33; 7:1-5; 23:25, 26).

2. You should major in minors. The minor things need consideration—they should not be left "undone." But we should give them minor or secondary consideration.

When we major in majors—place the emphasis where it belongs —we *become* major men, we *make* major men. When we major in minors—give undue consideration to lighter things—we *become* minor men, we *make* minor men. So, let us major in majors, and minor in minors!

### CONCERNING THE COLLECTION 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2

In the preceding chapter the apostle Paul wrote on the subject of the resurrection. Closely following, in the language before us, he writes on the subject of giving. He passes from one subject to another without any sense of impropriety. He thinks of each as God's message to God's people.

Let us notice:

- I. *The command*: "Lay by him in store." *Store* means "an accumulation of supply regarded as kept in reserve or ready for use." Contributions should be made at regular intervals to be used as needs arise. This command is just as plain and positive as the command to repent, etc. We should be as cautious and conscientious in the observance of this command as any other (2 Cor. 8:7).
- II. *Who should give*: "Each one of you." No Christian is left out of God's blessing; therefore, no Christian is left out of the giving. The rich and the poor, male and female, the young and the old—all should give. The same instruction had been given to the congregations in the province of Galatia, showing that the same command was intended for universal application.
- III. *The time of the giving*: "Upon the first day of the week." Giving should be done with regularity—with the same regularity as we observe the Lord's supper.
  1. A convenient time—a time when the disciples meet (Acts 20:17). —The custom of meeting on the Lord's day is implied.
  3. An appropriate time—the resurrection day. On that day a blessed hope was born. On that day the gift of life and immortality was bestowed. —The day of receiving should be a day of giving.
- IV. *The measure of giving*: "As he (we) may prosper," I. e., according to our ability. A wonderful rule! Every Christian

can comply. If this principle justifies our giving less in the day of adversity, it should compel us to give more in the day of prosperity. —Not only does the inspired expression provide us with a measure for giving, but also a motive. God prospers us—we do not prosper ourselves. We give through a sense of gratitude (2 Cor. 9:8). When we count our blessings, we become more liberal with our means.

- V. *Why we should give:* If we fail to give, we sin.
1. We sin against our dependents—those people who are looking to us. The church is God's benevolent institution.
  2. We sin against the fellow-members of the church. The church has obligations. The Christian who does not give, imposes an extra burden upon his brother (2 Cor. 8:13).
  3. We sin against ourselves. We deny ourselves the blessings that come to the cheerful giver (Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:7).
  4. We sin against God who gave the command. The person who fails to obey the Lord, becomes involved in sin (James 4:17).

### **"TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER"** **2 Corinthians 1:1, 2**

Timothy was Paul's companion and helper in the gospel. The apostle thought of him as his brother in the Lord Jesus. In our present lesson we shall be thinking of Timothy as any fellow-member of the church, as a representative brother. Because he is our brother, a wonderful relationship prevails.

- I. *We have the same Father.* The brotherhood of man implies the fatherhood of God. We cannot think of a brother in the Lord Jesus apart from God, the Father. To him we pray, "*Our Father*," etc.
  1. We resemble our Father; we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).
  2. We resemble each other. —People who resemble the Father, resemble each other.
  
- II. *We are members of the same family.* This family is the church, the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15). This involves certain privileges and responsibilities.
  1. We eat and drink at the same table (Luke 22:29, 30). We commune with the Father; we commune with each other.
  2. We wear the same name (Eph. 3:14, 15; 1 John 3:1; 1 Peter 4:16).
  3. We are the recipients of the Father's loving care (Ps. 90:1; 1 Peter 3:12).
  4. We are under solemn obligation to uphold the Father's name by living in harmony with his will.

- III. *We have a common foe.* That foe is sin. We do not fight each other; being fellow-soldiers, we fight the common foe. Our enemy is threefold:
1. The world (1 John 2:15, 16).
  2. The flesh (Rom. 7:21).
  3. The devil (Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8).
- IV. *We love him.* This love is reciprocal. We love Timothy; Timothy loves us. We suffer when he suffers; we are happy when he is honored (1 Cor. 12:26); we restore him when he falls (Gal. 6:1, 2); we forgive him when he does wrong (Eph. 4:31, 32).
- V. *We share the same hope.* We are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ (Rom. 8:17). All that the Father possesses —the mansions—shall be ours to share and enjoy throughout eternity (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

Timothy, O Timothy! You are very dear to us! Let us walk together, work together, weep together, rejoice together, kneel together, and go home together and forever live together.

### **CHRISTIAN SEPARATENESS** **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

The passage before us has to do with the Christian and the world about him. The Christian is in the world, but not of the world. By three items of interest our attention is arrested.

- I. *The moral obligations:*
1. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The divine order of things, whether physical, moral or spiritual, must not be confused with a mixture of species (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:10; 7:3; 1 Cor. 7:39). Any union or association which endangers Christian character is prohibited.
  2. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." With unbelievers, with the unfruitful works of darkness, have no fellowship. —When you "come out from among them," endeavor to rescue them (Luke 19:10).
  3. "Touch no unclean thing." This applies to anything that defiles the body, soul and spirit.
  4. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Defilement of the "flesh" means the superficial, the works of the flesh (1 Cor. 6:15-20; Gal. 5:19-21). Defilement of the "spirit" has reference to the thoughts. When we cleanse ourselves, we become more God-like.
- II. *The apostle enforces these obligations by pointing out five*

*contrasts, which illustrate the disagreement between Christianity and heathendom:*

1. Righteousness and iniquity: "What fellowship hath righteousness and iniquity?" None! Each an enemy to the other. Antagonistic forces.
2. Light and darkness: "What communion hath light with darkness?" None! (Eph. 5:11).
3. Christ and Belial (Satan): "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" None! These are two leaders of the opposing forces in the world.
4. A believer and an unbeliever: "What portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" Separateness involves a distinction between persons as well as principles.
5. The temple of God and idols: "What agreement hath a temple of God with idols?" None!

III. *The divine promises which inspire the observance of these things.* The reward is God himself: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

1. A loving reception: "I will receive you." The one who leaves the world of sin will be embraced by the Father (Luke 15:20; John 14:3).
2. A wonderful relationship: "I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters" (Heb. 13:5, 6).

### **CHRISTIAN EXAMINATION** **2 Corinthians 13:5**

In this passage the Holy Spirit enjoins an examination. In this examination, brother is not to examine his brother, but each is to examine himself. The Corinthians had been criticizing Paul, their great preacher; but the apostle turned upon them and said, "Examine (try) yourselves." In an effort to examine ourselves, let each one ask himself the following questions:

- I. *My Lord wants me to be pure in heart.*
  1. Like Jesus, am I clean in life? in heart? I may be clean outwardly but if my heart is impure I am vile before God (Matt. 5:8).
  2. When I find sin in my life, do I repent of it or go willfully on in the practice of it? (Luke 13:3).
- II. *My Lord wants me to have a loving heart.*
  1. Do I harbor hatred in my heart? If so, I am a murderer though the deed I have never committed (1 John 3:15).
  2. Do I realize that it is wicked not to forgive and that the unforgiving person shall not see salvation? (Matt. 18:21-35).
- III. *My Lord wants me to be humble.*

1. Do I minimize my own mistakes while I magnify the mistakes of others?
2. Do I count others better than myself, of myself better than others? (Phil. 2:3).
3. Do I trust in myself that I am righteous, and set all others at naught? (Luke 18:9; Isa. 65:5).
4. Do I sit in judgment of others, or do I commit all judgment to the great Judge? Do I usurp his high authority? (Matt. 7:1-5).

IV. *My Lord wants me to hate sin.*

1. Jesus hated sin with all the intensity of his soul. Am I like him in this particular?
2. Do I hate my own sins with the same degree of intensity that I hate the sins of others?
3. Am I, like the Savior, tender and merciful toward the sinner? (John 8:1-11).
4. In fighting the battle of life, on whom do I begin? on myself, or on others? (1 Cor. 9:27).
5. Am I in the habit of confessing my own sins, or the sins of others? (1 John 1:8-10). Many are forever confessing the sins... of the *other* fellow! (Luke 15:21, 30).

V. *My Lord has blessed me with the power to speak,*

1. Do I use this power to bless or to curse?
2. Am I a peacemaker or a peacebreaker? Am I a sower of discord? (Prov. 6:16-19). Do I divide God's people? (Gal. 5:19-24).
3. Am I a whisperer or talebearer? If so, I should repent.

VI. *My Lord has blessed me with the power to hear.*

1. Am I eager to hear good news or bad news?
2. When a word of gossip falls upon my ears, do I believe it and repeat it, or do I first of all investigate?
3. When a gossip pours gossip into my ears, do I encourage his wicked work or do I endeavor to restrain him? Do I hold him accountable for his gossip? Do I demand of him the testimony of witnesses?

VII. *My Lord wants me to love his body, the church.*

1. Am I making distinct contributions to the upbuilding of the sacred institution?
2. Do I contribute with my attendance? If the church should meet as often as I attend, how many times during the week would the church meet? Do I forsake the assembly in order to attend a place of amusement? (2 Tim. 3:4; Matt. 6:33).
3. Do I contribute my money? Do I contribute on the first day of the week as I have been prospered? Do I spend more money for luxuries than I do for the cause of Christ?
4. Do I pray for the church, with all of her members?

- VIII. *The Lord has made me my brother's keeper.*
1. How many souls have been led to the Savior through my influence?
  2. When a brother has been overtaken in a trespass, do I endeavor to restore him or to crush him? (Gal. 6:1, 2).
  3. When my brother sins against me, who is the first person I tell of his sin, my brother or others? (Matt. 18:15-20).
  4. If my loved ones were to follow my footprints, where would they spend eternity? (Rom. 14:13; Heb. 12:12, 13).
- IX. *My Lord Will call me to his judgment* (Rom. 14:12).
1. Am I willing to stand before him as I am?
  2. Am I living today as though this may be my last day? (Prov. 27:1).
  3. Is my house set in order? (Isa. 38:1).

Self-examination, in the light of God's word, results in our spiritual development. It causes us to be more humble before the Lord; it also creates in our hearts a more sympathetic attitude toward our fellow-man.

### **THE THING THAT AVAILS** **Galatians 5:6**

The word *avail* means to be of use, of value or advantage, of service. Numerous are the things that are of no use or value or advantage to us in the life we now live. We should not strive after these things, but for the things that are helpful. This is axiomatic.

What is the thing that avails?

- I. *Not an outward ceremony.* "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision."
  1. Though it is revered because of its age.
  2. Though it was introduced by the greatest of men.
  3. Though it has had the sanction of God's people over the centuries.
- II. *Faith.* —Faith in the Christ—his person, his nature, his teaching.
  1. Without faith —
    - (a) We cannot come to God (Heb. 11:6).
    - (b) We cannot be saved (Mark 16:16).
    - (c) We stand condemned (John 3:18).
  2. With faith —
    - (a) We are justified (Rom. 5:1).
    - (b) Our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9).
    - (c) We have access to God, the Father (Rom. 5:2).
    - (d) We can move mountains (Matt. 17:20).
- III. *An active faith:* "But faith that worketh."

1. Without activity—
    - (a) Faith is profitless (James 2:14-16).
    - (b) Faith is dead (James 2:17-19).
    - (c) Faith is barren (James 2:20).
  2. With activity—
    - (a) We are justified by faith (James 2:21).
    - (b) Faith is made perfect (James 2:22-24).
    - (c) Our faith is alive (James 2:25, 27).
- IV. *Faith motivated by love*: "Faith that worketh through (by) love."
1. Without love, faith amounts to nothing (1 Cor. 13:2).
  2. When faith is moved by love—love for God and love for man—life is of real value, of service; it will ascend to heights sublime: for "God is love."

### THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION

#### Galatians 6:7-9

This is a very meaningful passage. In it we find a warning, also an encouragement. On the eventful journey of life we need words of warning, also words of encouragement. The apostle reminds us of four things of major importance.

- I. *We are sowing*. This is true of all men. We began to sow when we began to live. Like the sower of olden times, we sow at every step. Thoughts, words and silent deeds are the seed. Before us there are two fields for sowing:
  1. The field of the flesh—spending our lives in doing the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).
  2. The field of the Spirit—living under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.
- II. *Sowing, we shall reap*. This reminds us that the present is linked to the future. As the seedtime is joined to the harvest, even so the life that we now live is joined to the life that is to come. A seed is a prophecy of the harvest, a sower of a reaper. Our works, like our shadows, are determined to pursue us. A man is followed by his deeds, to his joy, or his sorrow (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 14:13).
- III. *Sowing, we shall reap what we sow*. The reaping corresponds to sowing. The offspring resembles the parent, whether it be of men, of animals, of plants, of deeds. This law is universal.
  1. Sowing to the flesh yields a harvest of corruption. Sin is a disease—leprosy of the soul—that brings decay and dissolution to man's moral being. Hell is sin rotten ripe. Man is cursed by his evil deeds (Prov. 13:15).
  2. Sowing to the Spirit yields a harvest of eternal life. Man is blessed by his good deeds (Matt. 5:3-9).

- IV. *Sowing, we shall reap more than we sow.* We reap what we sow in kind, but not in quantity. From a seed we reap "thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold."
1. Of noxious seed. An evil word or deed has power to multiply sorrow and shame in our own lives and in the lives of others (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 5:6; 15:33). A little leaven of *evil* will leaven a whole lump.
  2. Of precious seed. If we, during this temporal life, sow unto the Spirit, we shall reap an abundant life—a beautiful life that has no end. A little leaven of *good* will also leaven a whole lump. How very fitting is the apostolic admonition: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

"Be not deceived."

—We are sowing.

"Be not deceived."

—We shall reap.

"Be not deceived."

—We shall reap *what* we sow.

"Be not deceived."

—We shall reap *more* than we sow.

## CHRISTIAN UNITY

### Ephesians 4:1-6

In the Ephesian church, to whom these words were written, there were members of different races, moods, and temperaments. Unity, therefore, was difficult to preserve. Hence the apostolic admonition. Every Christian should deplore division and do everything in his power to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Christ prayed for the unity of his people (John 17). An apostle of Christ tells us how this unity can be kept. He points out two essentials.

- I. *The Christian walk*: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." In order to "walk worthily" of the noble calling, virtues must be supplied.
  1. *Humility*: "With all lowliness and meekness." Most divisions are caused by men who are more anxious to be leaders of men than to be followers of Christ (Acts 20:29, 30).
  2. *Love*: "With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." A lofty moral standard, unless seasoned with mercy, works havoc with the church. As we raise our moral standard, let us not neglect to supply the grace of love (Col. 2:2; 3:14).
  3. *Diligence*: "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Passive virtues alone are not enough. —Active virtues must be supplied. Peace



does not always come of itself—it must be made (Matt. 5:9).

- II. *The Christian doctrine.* The inspired writer points out the seven fundamental unities, which cluster around the divine Trinity. Let us note them one by one.
1. *One body.* While on earth, the Master had one natural body; now he has one spiritual body, the church (Eph. 1:22, 23).
  2. *One Spirit*—the Holy Spirit. This Spirit animates the body. The body without the Spirit is dead; and the Lord cares nothing for a corpse.
  3. *One hope*, or aspiration. This is the heavenly home toward which we are moving. Hope quickens the step, gives sparkle to the eye, fills and thrills the soul with joyful expectation. This hope, devoutly entertained, will make all one.
  4. *One Lord*, the Christ. Unto him all authority has been given (Matt. 28:18). Unto him all our words and deeds and thoughts should be brought into subjection (Luke 6:46; 2 Cor. 10:5).
  5. *One faith*, or creed. This creed is the Christ or his teaching. The addition of man-made creeds to the system of faith brings divisions among Christians.
  6. *One baptism*, or immersion into the name of the Holy Three. All professed Christians, regardless of party affiliations, agree that immersion is Biblical; but sprinkling or pouring for baptism is a source of disturbance in the realm of religion.
  7. *One God and Father of all*, who is over all, and through all, and in all of his people. The grand object of our worship and devotion. We are to worship him in spirit and truth.

And so, the apostle admonishes us to preserve the unity of the church, then gives us the twofold secret of Christian unity—the Christian walk and the Christian doctrine. Not the *walk* alone, and not the *doctrine* alone; but the *walk* and the *doctrine*.

In division there is weakness.  
In unity there is power.

### **THE GRACE OF FORGIVENESS** **Ephesians 4:32 Consider:**

- I. *Why we should forgive.*
1. Because we have been forgiven. The fact that we have received mercy should teach us to give mercy (Matt. 18:23-35).

2. Because we often stand in need of forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10).
  - (a) From the Lord. —Every sin we commit is against him.
  - (b) From our fellow men. —We sin against one another. Only those who forgive are forgiven (Matt. 6:14, 16).
3. That we may experience the joy known only to the forgiving heart. —There is misery in rancor.
4. That others may have joy. The greatest need of the world is love and forgiveness. Hearts hunger for it, and rejoice when it is given.
5. Because it is Christ-like (Luke 23:23). We are never more like the Savior than when we forgive, or more unlike him when we are unforgiving. It is beneath the dignity of our calling not to forgive. Said a father to a son: "My son, treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you. For remember that you show courtesy to others, not because they are gentlemen, but because you are one." —We should forgive because we are Christians!

## II. *How we should forgive.*

1. "From the heart" (Matt. 18:35). Lip-forgiveness is a sham, a deception, a counterfeit. To forgive is to forget (Heb. 8:12).
2. Without limit (Matt. 18:21, 22). "There are no degrees of forgiveness. There are degrees in the holiness that follows forgiveness; but pardon must be perfect at birth."—*Great Texts.*
3. As Christ forgives (Text).
  - (a) The darkest sins.
  - (b) Completely.
  - (c) Freely.

## III. *The evil of unforgiveness.*

1. It crucifies the higher self—strangles the best within us. Like the termite, it eats away the finer elements of life. Like the saxifrage, it breaks the heart to pieces, wrecks one's health, etc. (The saxifrage, also called rock-breaker, thrusts its roots into the deep crevices of the rock and breaks it to pieces. )
2. It crushes friendship. Like a prison-wall, it isolates us from humanity and from God, giving to life a loneliness. —God does not forgive the unforgiving.

Joseph forgave his wicked brothers and did them good. David forgave Saul, who was seeking his life. Stephen forgave his murderers. Our Lord and Savior forgave his bitterest foes. Let us imbibe the same spirit and forgive one another (Luke 6:27, 28). If a brother has sinned, bring him to repentance and remember his sin no more (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1, 2).

**THE MINISTRY OF SONG**  
**Ephesians 5:19**

All, sweet ministry of song! To the listening ear, there is a song in all of God's creation. There is music "in the sighing of the reed, in the gushing of the rill," in the rustle of the leaves, in the patter *of* the rain, in the laughter of the child.

The melody of music began in the beginning, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Though interrupted by the tragedy of the fall, melodies were heard again as the light of divine love streamed through the clouds of sorrow. At the dawn of a better day, angels broke through the veil and were heard on wings of song. Singing is a ministry, a service. It is a blessing to him who sings and to him that listens—the lonely, the bereaved, the broken-hearted. Christians should sing.

1. "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30).
2. "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening" (Acts 16:25).
3. "Therefore will I give praise unto the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom. 15:9).
4. "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15).
5. "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and making melody with your hearts to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).
6. "Let the words of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16).
7. "Is any among you suffering: let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (James 5:13).

These passages have to do with the ministry of music—not instrumental, but vocal music. They teach us that we should sing, that we should sing spiritual songs—songs that teach and admonish, that we should sing with the spirit and understanding, that we should sing in the night of sorrow and in the day of gladness, that our songs should come from the heart and ascend to heaven.

**THE DIVINE NEARNESS**  
**"THE LORD IS AT HAND."—Philippians 4:4-7**

This little statement is found in the midst of other statements

which seem to cluster about it. All are connected, closely related. Let us ponder:

- I. *The meaning of it.* "At hand" means nearness, sureness, certainty. The Lord is near. That he dwells apart on a planet millions and millions of miles away is a childish idea. No person in all the world is as near as the Lord. Said a great poet, "Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." And the apostle Paul said, "He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27, 28).
  
- II. *The preciousness of it.* The Almighty One who loves us is within reach. He is always accessible.
  1. He sees us (Prov. 15:3; Jer. 23:23; Heb. 4:13).
  2. He speaks to us.
    - (a) Through nature. All nature declares his existence and his glory (Ps. 19).
    - (b) Through the Bible. God's plan for our lives is revealed in the sacred scriptures; when we read we hear his voice (Rom. 10:8).
  3. He listens when we speak (Ps. 116:1, 2a; Matt. 7:7-11).
  4. He helps us (Ps. 46:1; 55:22; Heb. 2:1; 4:15, 16).
  5. In every worthy endeavor, he will support and sustain us (Matt. 28:18; Heb. 13:5, 6).
  
- III. *How we should live in view of it.*
  1. In perpetual joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Hab. 3:17, 18). Why not, since he is always accessible?
  2. In gentleness. "Let your moderation (gentleness) be known unto all men." Let us be gentle in the treatment of all men—our enemies, our debtors, the unconverted. Let us forbear wrath and retaliation. The Judge is at hand. —Let us leave all differences for him to adjust.
  3. Above anxious care. "In nothing be anxious" (Matt. 6:25-34; 1 Tim. 6:8). If the Father is near, why should the child be over-anxious?
  4. In communion. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." How unbecoming to remain silent when One so dear is so near! Anxiety should be turned into prayer. By conversing with him, we find relief.

The grand consequences of such a course of life are seen in verse 7. Believe in God. Believe in God's nearness. Walk With him and talk with him. The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard you.

### **RECONCILIATION** **Colossians 1:19-22**

Reconciliation is a renewal of friendship between two or more

parties. It implies a previous alienation. For this reason, we shall divide the lesson into three parts, namely: alienation, reconciliation, and the divine purpose behind it.

### I. *Alienation..*

1. The meaning: an estrangement. —An alien is one foreign born.
  - (a) An alien in America has no political advantages.
  - (b) An alien among the Jews (Mark 7:28; John 4:9; 8:48).
  - (c) An alien in Rome had no authority, no protection (Acts 16:38; 22:25).
  - (d) A spiritual alien. —He has no spiritual privileges, no protection against the ravages of sin (Eph. 2:12; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thes. 1:5-9).
2. The cause: foreign allegiance. "Alienated... by wicked works." Sin alienates man from *God*, man from man, man from his higher self (Isa. 59:1, 2) But, what is sin?
  - (a) Not something we inherit (Ezek. 18:1-4).
  - (b) Something that originates in the mind: "Enemies in your mind" (Rom. 8:7a).
  - (c) Something we do: "In your evil works."
  - (d) Anarchy (1 John 3:4).

### II. *Reconciliation.* Christ, who is both human and divine, is the mediator or the great peacemaker (1 Tim. 2:5). The reconciliation wrought by him is threefold.

1. He reconciles man to God (2 Cor. 5:19a, 20b).
  - (a) By means of the cross (Eph. 2:13). The death of Jesus, an expression of divine compassion, draws man to God (John 3:16; 12:32).
  - (b) "In one body" (Eph. 2:16; 1:22, 23). The church is the meeting place for God and man. —There peace is made (Eph. 2:19, 20). When an alien becomes a member of the body, he is reconciled to God (Gal. 3:26, 27).
2. He reconciles man to man. Sin also separates man from man. Hence, reconciliation is needed. Man becomes reconciled to man:
  - (a) By means of the cross (Eph. 2:14-16). Jesus could not make peace between man and man during his life —he was a Jew. But in death he was not a Jew—he died for all. One arm of the cross extends to the Jew, the other to the Gentile, uniting them.
  - (b) "In the body." Not to divide but to unite mankind was the church established (Col. 3:11). Dissension or sectarianism defeats the loving purpose of the Father. —It divides (1 Cor. 3:1ff).
3. He reconciles man to himself. A sinner is an enemy to himself. Like the prodigal son (Luke 15). Like Saul of Tarsus (Acts 16:14b). The sinner works against himself

—he separates himself from God, from Christ, from life and hope. He needs to become reconciled to himself by making peace with God. Saul ceased to kick against the goad when he obeyed. —He became his own friend (Isa. 55:7).

4. Man is reconciled to God, to man and to himself by the same means, in the same place, at the same moment. How significant!

III. *The divine purpose behind it:* man's greatest good and highest happiness. This consists in the following:

1. Moral purity: "To present you holy." This expression has reference to the inward condition: purity of heart.
2. Personal blamelessness: "Without blemish." This has reference to the outward life. When asked just before his trial why he did not prepare himself for the defense, Socrates replied: "I have been doing nothing else all my life." A good life is its own defense.
3. Freedom from censure: "Unreprovable before him." His character is unchallengeable.

### **THE PRECIOUS NAME** **Colossians 3:17**

When we became children of God, we left our old name and took upon ourselves the name of the Lord. And now whatsoever we do, in word or in deed, we do all in his precious name, I. e., by his authority and for his glory.

In his name—

1. We "are gathered together" (Matt. 18:20).
2. We sound forth the word (Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 9:28, 29a).
3. We baptize believers (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 10:48).
4. We ourselves were baptized (Acts 2:38).
5. We approach the Father (John 14:13, 14; 15:16b).
6. We bow the knee and confess with the tongue (Phil. 2:9-11).
7. We suffer persecution, if need be (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:14; Rev. 2:3).
8. We glorify God, the Father (1 Peter 4:15, 16).
9. And we enjoy the blessedness of salvation (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:11, 12).

When a young lady marries, she leaves her old name and adopts the name of her husband. She wears his name, works in his name, writes in his name, speaks in his name, transacts business in his name, honors his name. In like manner, when we were married to Christ, we assumed his precious name. And now we wear his name, work in his name, honor his name.

In our own name we can do nothing—we remain in the back

ground. In the name of a fellow-member, we can do nothing—we are to love him and lift him, but we are not to bow before him (Acts 10:25, 26). The gospel calls for a change in focus of attention. We are not to be self-centered, but Christ-centered (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21).

**FLEE! FOLLOW! FIGHT!**  
**1 Timothy 6:6-12**

A Christian lives in an evil environment. Because this is true, he is admonished to be alert, to be active. This activity is expressed in three words: "flee," "follow," and "fight."

- I. *Flee*. Sin is our most dangerous and deadly enemy. Our surest safety is in flight. We should flee from it as a child flees from a rattlesnake, a hungry lion. In verses 9 and 10 we are warned to flee from the love of money and its attendant evils. Its danger is aptly expressed in three figures:
  1. A drowning man: "Such as drown men," etc.
  2. A tree. "The love of money," the root. Temptations, lusts, unbelief, sorrow, destruction, perdition, the offshoots.
  3. An entrapped animal: "Fall into a snare — pierced through with many sorrows."
  
- II. *Follow*. If fear is on the one hand, eagerness of desire is on the other. We are to pursue the good things of life in an effort to attain them. Life's best prizes are those which came as a result of earnest effort.
  1. Let us also follow after—
    - (a) Righteousness—just dealings with our fellowman (Prov. 14:34).
    - (b) Godliness—this has to do with our relationship with God. —Cultivate piety, reverence (Ps. 111:9).
    - (c) Faith—the root of both righteousness and godliness.
    - (d) Love—that by which faith works (Gal. 5:6; Rom. 13:8ff).
    - (e) Patience, which is needed as we pursue the other graces (Heb. 12:1; James 5:7, 8).
    - (f) Meekness, toward those who oppose us (Prov. 24:19).
  2. When we pursue these graces, we shall find ourselves in company with wonderful people (2 Tim. 2:22b).
  
- III. *Fight*. The figure changes from that of a runner to that of a pugilist. There are times when we have to face our foes. 1. Our enemy is threefold:
  - (a) External—the world (1 John 2:15, 16).
  - (b) Internal—the flesh (Rom. 7:21).
  - (c) Infernal—the devil (Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8).

2. Because the enemy is strong, we should arm ourselves with the divine panoply (Eph. 6:10ff).
3. The object of the encounter: "eternal life," the victor's wreath (2 Tim. 4:7, 8). It is placed within our reach, not within our hands—we must "lay hold."

## THE GOSPEL TENSES

### Titus 2:11-14

- I. *The past*: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." The grace (gospel) of God is a matter of history. It is a story of something that has happened to the world. Now, let us describe it.
  1. It was unconditional—unmerited on man's part (Titus 3:4, 5).
  2. It was visible: "Hath appeared." In human form. In the purity of manhood. In the unselfishness of a life. In marvelous power. In the beauty of wisdom. In a sacrificial death: "He gave himself for us."
  3. It was uplifting: "Bringing salvation." Within reach of all. It may be had for the taking (John 7:37; Rom. 1:16).
  4. It was universal: "All men." It has no barrier—racial, social, or moral (Acts 10:34).
  
- II. *The present*: "Instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world."
  1. The lessons of divine grace teach us the kind of lives we should live "in the present age." Let us note them:
    - (a) Negative: "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" (1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 2:11). The grace of the gospel of the Lord restrains us, controls us, even chastises us (Heb. 12:7).
    - (b) Positive: "We should live soberly and righteously and godly." *Soberly*—with self-restraint. *Righteously*—justly with our fellowman (Matt. 7:12). *Godly*—reverently toward God. The lessons touch every phase of life, whether toward self, our fellowman, or our God.
  2. Christ's gift of himself to us constrains us to give ourselves to him without reserve. Let us stand fast in this grace (Acts 13:43). If men do not respond to it in a noble manner, they are said to fall short of it (Heb. 12:15).
  
- III. *The future*: "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." To the person who puts into practice these great lessons, precious promises are given:
  1. "The blessed hope."



- (a) Of a perfect environment.
- (b) Of an endless life (Heb. 4:9; John 11:26; Rev. 21:1-3).
- 2. The "appearing of the *glory* of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." In order to quicken the desire for the Lord's coming, the apostle hastens to remind us of his (the Lord's) redemptive work (v. 14).
- 3. "The blessed hope" will be fully realized at Christ's coming. Hence, the connection of the hope and the glorious appearing (Rev. 22:12).
- 4. The future tense of the gospel is an antidote to "hist" and a stimulus to live the Christian life in this "present evil world."

### **EVIL SPEAKING**

#### **Titus 3:2**

*Speak evil of no man"—*

- 1. Because he is a man—an offspring of God, an object of God's love (John 3:16).
- 2. Because, if he is evil, you should earnestly endeavor to save him from evil. This you cannot do by speaking evil of him (Luke 19:10; Rom. 15:1; Gal. 6:1, 2).
- 3. Because evil speaking helps no man. It helps neither the speaker nor the man of whom the speaker speaks. Words that do not help should never be spoken.
- 4. Because you would have no man speak evil of you. —Break not "the golden rule" (Matt. 7:12).
- 5. Because evil speaking defiles the speaker. —Evil words emanate from an evil source (Matt. 12:34). The evil speaker is an evil person.
- 6. Because evil speaking hurts two men: the speaker and the man of whom the speaker speaks. To hurt another without hurting yourself is an impossibility.
- 7. Because evil speech provokes or invites retaliation. The judge will be judged, the critic will be criticized, the measurer will be measured (Matt. 7:1, 2).

### **BACK-BITING**

#### **Titus 3:2; Psalm 15:1-3; Romans 1:30**

- I. *What is it?*

B—Biting behind the back. —Secrecy is involved.

A—A work of the tongue. —Speaking maliciously of an *absent* person.

C—Cowardly and cruel in nature.

K—Kindness forgotten (Eph. 4:31, 32). II. *What it does:*

B—Breaks "the golden rule" (Matt. 7:12).

I—Inflicts injury. —on the teeth (tongue) as well as on the back!

T—Transgresses the law of love (Matt. 22:39; Rom. 13:10).

I—Invites retaliation. —Evil provokes evil, invites evil.

N—Never blesses any person.

G—Germinates. —It sprouts evil plants of various kinds (James 4:11, 12).

### **WHENCE? WHY? WHITHER?** **Hebrews 10:7**

There are three momentous questions which are as old as the human race, yet always as new as the baby in mother's arms. Here they are:

Whence do I come?

Why am I here?

Whither do I go?

The importance of these questions is self-evident. Let each one take them into his heart to ponder, to consider with utmost care. We shall take them up in order.

- I. *Whence do I come?* Life does not come from things inanimate. Life can only come from life, from pre-existent life. Before the chick there was an egg—in the egg there was a germ of life. Before the giant oak there was an acorn—in the acorn a germ of life. God is the origin of all life (Gen. 1:1, 27; 2:7; Acts 17:28).
- II. *Why am I here?* What is my mission in the world?
  1. Jesus came into the world to do the will of God, to fit into the divine plan (Heb. 10:7; John 4:34; 6:38; 9:4; Acts 10:38; Matt. 26:39).
  2. He is our great ideal, our example, our perfect pattern (1 Peter 2:21). His work should be our work, his mission our mission (Matt. 7:21, 24-27; Acts 2:38; Gal. 6:10; Titus 2:11-13).
- III. *Whither do I go?* Every cradle asks, "Whence?" Every grave, "Whither?" Life is a pilgrimage, a journey (Ps. 119:

54). This implies a destiny. There is a *high* destiny, and there is a *low* destiny (Jer. 21:8). The "way" we take determines our destiny (Matt. 7:13, 14). Man has a *high* origin. Man has a *high* mission. By fulfilling his mission—by fitting his life into the divine plan—he will attain the *high* destiny. Man came from God. Man can return to God (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

### **LET THE SAINTS ASSEMBLE** **Hebrews 10:24 25**

The people of God have always had their meetings. Old Testament saints assembled around rural altars, then in the tabernacle, then in the temple and in the synagogues. We recall that Jesus frequented the synagogues (Luke 4:16). When the risen Lord appeared, the disciples were assembled. When the Spirit descended, "they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1).

From other New Testament portions we learn that Christians assembled with regularity on the Lord's day. They also assembled on other days of the week. The Hebrew Christians, because of persecution, had been forsaking the meetings. Hence the apostolic admonition of the text.

In the same admonition the Lord lays upon us the duty of assembling. This is not an arbitrary command, but a loving admonition given in accordance with our nature and designed for our good. But why should we assemble?

- I. *That we may meet with the Lord, that we may commune with him and his people* (Matt. 18:20). In his presence there is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11). When we forsake the assembly, we miss the blessing.
- II. *Because the meetings afford an excellent opportunity for mutual helpfulness.* When a Christian begins to forsake the assembly he begins to grow cold. The church has been aptly compared to a heap of embers, which, when separated, soon languish, darken and grow cold; but if placed together, glow with a ruddy and intense heat; a just emblem of strength, happiness and security derived from fellowship and association (John 13:34, 35).
- III. *Because the meetings promote the growth and extension of the gospel.* The greatest institution that this old world has even known or ever will know is the church of the Lord. But if the saints should cease to assemble, the church would fail. —The greatest calamity that could befall mankind! Brother, when you deliberately forsake the meetings of the church, you vote for the extinction of the church! Forsake sin, but do not forsake the assembly of the saints!
- IV. *Because the meetings fortify us for the day of calamity—*

"the day approaching-" A question of importance is: What is "the day" of the text?

1. To the Hebrew Christians, this was the day of Jerusalem's doom, which came a year or two "after the Hebrew letter was written. The fellowship of the meetings would prove helpful in the preparation for the disaster.
2. To present-day Christians, this is the day of judgment. The destruction of the city of Jerusalem was a type of that day (2 Cor. 5:10). In view of the approaching day—the day of death and the day of judgment—let us not forsake the meetings of the Lord's people. The meetings fortify us.

But this remember: No matter how often we assemble, the assembling will be in vain unless the motive is pure, unless we worship the Father in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

### **LET LOVE CONTINUE** **Hebrews 13:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

#### *I. Love should continue:*

1. That unworthy qualities may discontinue. Divine love is the medication that heals the heart and causes vices to vanish:
  - (a) Envy. —"Love envieth not."
  - (b) Pride and vanity. —"Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." "Love does not brag and is not arrogant."
  - (c) Snobbishness. —"Doth not behave itself unseemly." Love offends not by rudeness.
  - (d) Selfishness. —"Seeketh not its own."
  - (e) Touchiness. —"Not provoked." Love is not oversensitive.
  - (f) Malice. "Taketh not account of evil."
  - (g) The disposition to gloat over evil. —"Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth."
2. That worthy qualities may be supplied. A loving heart is the fertile soil in which virtues thrive:
  - (a) Patience. —"Love suffereth long." It "endureth all things."
  - (b) Kindness. —"And is kind" (Rom. 12:19-51).
  - (c) Mercy. —"Beareth (covereth) all things" (1 Peter 4:8). Love is not picayunish.
  - (d) Generosity. —"Believeth all things." "Love is eager to believe the best," not the worst about people.
  - (e) Hopeful. —"Hopeth all things."
  - (f) Godlikeness. —"God is love." This is the sum and substance of all good qualities.

#### *II. Love will continue:*

1. When we contemplate divine love—the depth of it, the height of it, the width of it, and the length of it (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:19). We grow into the image of that person whom we constantly love and adore or worship. When we walk in the light, we become reflectors of the light (Jude 21).
2. When we give ourselves to a noble endeavor. There is warmth in activity. Unto a group of Christians who had left their "first love," the Master said, "*Repent and do the first works*" (Rev. 2:4, 5). The warmth of love will continue when we go about doing good.

### **PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED** **James 1:19-27**

There are numerous false religions, but only one true religion. Only by the knowledge of God's word can the discrimination be made.

We shall study:

- I. *False religions, impure and defiled:*
  1. Talkative (vs. 19, 20, 26; Matt. 23:3). The best talkers are usually the poorest doers.
  2. Auditory (vs. 22-25). To assume that a mere hearing brings divine approval is to "delude" ourselves.
  3. Partial (2:1, 8, 9). An illustration (vs. 2-4). If a creature is to be respected on account of his dress, the peacock deserves more respect than man.
  4. One-sin (2:10, 11). It is not necessary to violate every command in order to fall. God's law is a chain; when a link is broken, the chain is broken.
  5. Faith alone (2:14-26). In verses 15-17 we have an illustration of its futility.
- II. *True religion, pure and undefiled.* We shall note its three aspects:
  1. It looks *upward* to God: "Before (in the sight of) our God and Father." This is the devotional side. Everything is before him and should be done as unto him (Col. 3:22, 23).
  2. It looks *outward*, to man: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions." This is a visit of mercy (Luke 1:68, 78). This is religion on the offensive. When we minister unto man, we minister unto the Master (Matt. 25:40).
  3. It looks *inward* to self: "And to keep oneself unspotted from the world." This is the passive side of religion. This is religion on the defensive. And now comes the question, How can we keep ourselves unspotted from the world?

- (a) Not by shutting off all contact with the people of the world (John 17:15). A Christian is in the world, but not of the world.
- (b) By filling the soul with the word of God, the powerful preventive (Ps. 119:11; 1 John 2:14).
- (c) By walking in the light (1 John 1:7).
- (d) By going about doing good. As doctors and nurses are remarkably safe from contagion, so we find protection from temptation in a life of ministrations. An offense is often the best defense.

## ILL-GOTTEN GAINS

### John 5:1-6

Riches are not sinful, but the wrong use of them is. Money is not evil, but the love of it is "a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10a). —For the love of money people lie, steal, defraud, rob, commit adultery, murder, neglect sacred duty, etc.

In the first verse of our assignment, we are reminded of the woe that awaits the sinful rich: "Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you." In the verses that follow, we have the fourfold sin that they commit.

- I. *Hoarding*: "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. You have laid up your treasures in the last day" (Matt. 6:19-21).
- II. *Fraud*: "Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."
- III. *Luxurious living*: "Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your heart in the day of slaughter." They were fattening, all unconsciously of their doom, as beasts are fattened for slaughter (Luke 16:14-16).
- IV. *Heartless opposition*: "Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one; he doth not resist you." Like Judas Iscariot, they had betrayed the righteous for pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16).

Broadly speaking, there are three ways that men use their money. First, like the rich fool, some hoard it (Luke 12:16-18). Second, like the prodigal son, some waste it in riotous living (Luke 15:13). And third, some use it to gain for themselves a home in heaven (Luke 16:9).

With three timely admonitions, we shall bring our lesson to a close: First, *make* all the money you can—but make it honestly.

—But make it without neglecting "the great salvation." Second, *save* all you can—it is sinful to waste. And third, *give* all you can—but give it to promote the kingdom of God in this sinful world (Acts 20:35).

## A LIVING HOPE 1 Peter 1:3-5

In this beautiful passage the Father is praised: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. This praise is altogether justified: the Father has inspired his people with a wonderful hope.

- I. *The ground of it.*
  1. Not man's merit: "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves" (Titus 3:5).
  2. But by God's "great mercy." By his mercy he forgave us and made us his children (1 John 3:1). Because we are God's children, we are heirs (Rom. 8:17).
  
- II. *The nature of it:* "A living hope."
  1. It knows no death. No matter how bright and beautiful an earthly hope may be, it will fade away. But the hope of a Christian should never perish.
  2. It is full of life. It refreshes, inspires, invigorates. It gives sparkle to the eye, sunshine to the countenance, firmness to the step.
  3. It lays hold of the life beyond, the life unending (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 6:19).
  
- III. *The historical event by which it came:* "The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It was by his resurrection that he overcame death and brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14, 15).
  1. Peter and his fellow-disciples had hoped for an earthly kingdom; but this hope perished when Jesus was crucified (Luke 24:13-21).
  2. After his resurrection, they were begotten by "a living hope"—a hope that never perished in their hearts.
  
- IV. *The object of it:* "An inheritance." The child is begotten not only to life, but also to the Father's estate. If his future is secure, he can bear present disaster.
  1. The description of it.
    - (a) It is "incorruptible"—immortal in nature.
    - (b) It is "undefiled"—untarnished by sin.
    - (c) It "fadeth not away"—unfading in beauty.
  2. The certainty of it.
    - (a) It is kept for the heirs: "Reserved in heaven for you." A lovely place prepared and set apart for

them. No one can deprive them of it but the heirs themselves (Heb. 13:5,6).

- (b) They are kept for it. As heirs of the royal house, they are never without an attendant (Ps. 34:7). But how are the heirs preserved?

*First*, "by the power of God"—the system of grace (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is bread to strengthen, light to guide, hope to inspire.

*Second*, "by faith." This is the human side of the preservation. The heirs must keep their faith (1 Tim. 1:19, 20).

- (c) It is ready to be "revealed in the last time." It is veiled from us now. But in due time, the veil shall be lifted. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a land that reacheth afar" (Isa. 33:17).

Friend, the living hope may become your hope—to hold and to cherish. It belongs to all who come to the Christ and follow his steps (Acts 4:11, 12; Heb. 5:8, 9).

## HAPPY DAYS

### 1 Peter 3:10-12; Psalm 34:11-14

This is a precious portion of the Bible. As an indication of its eternal value, it is given a place in the Old Testament, also in the New. Happiness (a life of blessedness) is the grand theme.

Genuine happiness is that for which we sigh, for which the heart forever hungers. But it does not come by accident, or unbidden. Like all precious plants, it must be planted, watered, cultivated. "He that desireth life, and loveth many days" must do certain things, namely:

- I. *Lend his ear*: "Hearken unto me: I will teach you," etc. The Master said, "Take heed what ye hear." He also said, "Take heed... how ye hear." The first admonition lays emphasis on "what," the second on "how." We are to hear his word attentively, sympathetically (Ps. 1:1, 2).
- II. *Rule his speech*. Oh the sorrow that is caused by careless, uncontrolled speech!
  1. "Keep thy tongue from evil." The evils of the tongue are almost innumerable: the evil of profanity; of vulgarity; of falsehood; of slander (Titus 3:2); of fault-finding (Matt. 7:1); of talebearing; of sowing discord (Prov. 6:16-19).
  2. "And thy lips from speaking guile"—deceit, flattery, pretense, insincerity (1 Peter 2:21, 22).
- III. *Order his conduct*. Contentment and disorderly conduct do not go together. Note the twofold admonition:



1. Negative: "Depart from evil." This forbids every transgression, or evil deed—sins of the body, sins of the disposition.
  2. Positive: "And do good" (James 4:17). God has so ordered things that happiness comes only to those people who, like the Lord Jesus, go "about doing good." Strangely enough, when we bear the burdens of others we lighten our own. Happiness comes only to those people who make others happy (Acts 20:35).
- IV. *Promote peace*: "Seek peace, and pursue it" (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 14:19). Peace comes not to men who stand and wait for it, but to men who seek it. It is an elusive thing; those who find it must be on the alert.

Happy days will come when we make the proper use of our gifts and powers, namely:

Our *ears*

—when we listen to the Lord.

Our *tongue*

—when we keep it under control.

Our *feet*

—when we "depart (flee) from evil."

—when we "seek peace and pursue it."

Our *hands*

—when we go "about doing good."

## A CHRISTIAN

### 1 Peter 4:16

Thrice this beautiful name appears on the pages of holy writ: Acts 11:26; 26:28; text. In the name Israel, God's name was sanctified—Isra-El. So, in the name Christian, Christ's name is sanctified—Christ-ian. As important as the name is, our primary interest is centered in the character. Character should precede the name. —There must first be something to name! So, we shall ask, What is a Christian?

- I. *A mind through which Christ thinks* (Phil. 2:5). A Christian thinks the thoughts of Christ. In 'this mental exercise, he is guided by Christ's words (Phil. 4:8). When we think of "these things," Christ thinks through us.
- II. *A voice with which Christ speaks*. Not a voice of evil; but a voice of goodness—a voice of enlightenment, or prayer, of comfort, of kindness, etc. (Ps. 19:14). The psalmist's prayer should be our prayer.
- III. *An eye through which Christ sees*. Not an envious eye, or a sensual eye, or a covetous eye; but a compassionate eye (Luke 10:33), a generous eye—an eye more intent on finding good than evil (Rev. 2:2-4).

- IV. *An ear through which Christ hears.* Not an ear attuned to the voice of evil, but the voice of the Infinite (Mark 4:24a). An ear that hears discerningly and sympathetically (Luke 8:18a).
- V. *A hand with which Christ works.* Christ was an incessant worker (John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 10:38). The Christian is also a worker (Phil. 2:12, 13).
- VI. *A life in which Christ lives* (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20). Christ was God incarnate (1 Tim. 3:16). So, the Christian is Christ incarnate. He is a mind through which Christ thinks, a voice with which Christ speaks, an eye with which Christ sees, a hand with which Christ works, a life in which Christ lives. —This is the summation of our sermon.

*Christ is in the Christian.* What does this mean? Wholesome character; a radiant personality (John 8:12; Matt. 5:16); noble endeavor; hope immortal (Col. 1:27). *And a Christian is in Christ.* What does this mean? Security (Col. 3:3); peace that passes understanding; eternal rest (Rev. 14:13).

### THE CHRISTIAN GRACES 2 Peter 1:5-11

Where there is faith in the Lord, all that is needed to supply the graces is "diligence." With half the effort some expend on gaining material wealth, we may have them. By divine power they are furnished; but we are to supply them.

Let us study:

- I. *The quality of them* (vs. 5-7).
1. "In your faith supply *virtue*," This is courage, manliness, moral energy, strength to stand alone (Deut. 31:6; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:10).
  2. "In your virtue *knowledge*." Without knowledge, virtue is destructive (Matt. 26:51, 52). We need a practical discrimination of good and evil (Ps. 119:105).
  3. "In your knowledge *self-control*." This is self-management, passion's bridle It is to the soul what the governor is to the engine.
  4. "In your self-control *patience*." This is steadfastness— power to wait and to endure. With this quality we shall not be turned aside by trials and sufferings (Luke 8:15; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 10:36; 12:1). Let us be patient with man, with self, with God.
  5. "In your patience *godliness*." Piety, reverence for God and all that pertains to him (Ps. 111:9; Matt. 6:9).
  6. "In your godliness *brotherly kindness*." Piety without kindness makes an ill-balanced personality. This grace

looks toward the brotherhood, fellow-members of the family of God (Eph. 4:31, 32).

7. "In your brotherly kindness *love*." This grace looks beyond the brotherhood. It embraces all men, saint and sinner, friend and foe (Matt. 5:43-47; John 3:16). —This completes the list.

II. *The necessity of them* (vs. 8-11).

1. With them we are saved from the tragedy of an idle and a barren life (v. 8). If we supply these qualities we are active and productive.
2. Without them we are blind (v. 9). We see only what is near—things earthly. We forget the gracious cleansing (Acts 2:38).
3. With them:
  - (a) We are certain of divine approval (v. 10a).
  - (b) We shall never stumble. Every step is firm (v. 10b).
  - (c) We shall gain an entrance (v. 11). Christian character is the key that unlocks the door of the city.

## CHRISTIAN GROWTH

### 2 Peter 3:18

In the language of the text we have the last recorded words of the apostle Peter. Growth is the subject. The desire to grow is innate. Children have it. Men in all walks of life have it. Christians also have it.

Let us study:

- I. *The origin of it*. Growth begins with life. Without life there can be no growth. And without seed, there can be no birth or no life (1 Peter 1:23; John 3:1-5).
- II. *The nature of it*. It is a spiritual development, a growth in character, a growth in grace and knowledge of the Savior. Note its two aspects:
  1. Downward: "Rooted" in Christ (Col. 2:6, 7). "Faith is the substance," support (Heb. 11:1). This is first, vital. Downward growth is necessary to upward growth, steadfastness, fruitfulness (Mark 4:5, 6, 16, 17).
  2. Upward: "Built up in him." With faith in Christ as the foundation, we tower upward and bear fruit (2 Peter 1:5-8).
- III. *The means of it*.
  1. *Food*. Unless life is sustained and nourished, there can be no development. And food must come from *without* (Matt. 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2).
  2. Exercise. Though you may eat an abundance of food, you cannot grow without exercise (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12).

3. Environment. Evil surroundings may destroy all that wholesome food and exercise can give. Growing life needs good environment.
  - (a) Warm sunshine. Life cannot thrive in a dark, frigid climate (Jude 21).
  - (b) Pure atmosphere. Associations help to mold character. Let us seek the association of the best people (1 Cor. 15:33; Heb. 10:25).

IV. *The need of it.*

1. That we may live. Where progress ends, decay begins. And decay leads to death.
2. That we may fulfill fond expectations. When a child fails to grow, a feeling of anxiety steals upon us. It is pleasing to see a child act as a child, but how disappointing to see a man act like a child! Some Christians, like a wasp, are larger in infancy than at any subsequent time. The Father wants the child to grow!
3. That we may retain our vision (2 Peter 1:9). A failure to grow will result in a loss of spiritual perception and the memory of God's redeeming grace.
4. That we may not stumble (2 Peter 1:10). While growing there is no danger of apostasy.
5. That, at last, we may enter the eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:11). Heaven is a high and holy habitation. A pigmy cannot enter. Before we can enter, we must fit ourselves for it. It has been truly said that "heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

**THE NATURE OF GOD**  
**John 4:24; 1 John 1:5; 4:8**

Other Biblical writers tell us of the works and attributes of God; but no writer tells us as much about the nature of God as John. In the writings of this apostle there are three brief statements which stand alone as a revelation of the divine nature. Let us make a study of them.

- I. *"God is Spirit."* These words were spoken by Jesus, but they are recorded in the Gospel of John. Though manifested in the flesh, God is not flesh. He is not materialistic in nature. He is Spirit. His presence cannot be confined to a building, or to a city, or to a mountain, or to any particular place (1 Kings 8:27; John 4:19-23; Acts 17:24). His presence permeates the universe and by his presence we are encompassed (Ps. 139:7-12; Acts 17:27, 28).
- II. *"God is light."* In the physical realm, light is the splendor in which all else is revealed. In the realm of intelligence, light is knowledge. In the realm of morals, light is purity.

God is the supreme expression of intelligence and moral excellence. He is intelligence without limit, purity without stain. Light is God's garment (Ps. 104:2; Isa. 6:3; John 8:12; Heb. 1:3). "In him, is no darkness at all"—no darkness of ignorance, of sin, of deceit.

- III. *"God is love,"* Love is God's motive power. In the creeds of heathendom God is said to be *Cruelty*, and *Lust*, and *Caprice*. In the book of inadequate religions, "God is *Force* without heart, and *LAW* without pity." It was not until the beloved John had learned upon the Master's bosom and had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit that any man was able to say, "God is love." When we come to know him, as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, he warms our hearts, draws us unto himself, casts out the demon of fear (Jer. 31:3; John 3:16; 12:32; 1 John 4:18, 19).

How very much is embedded in the three three-word statements in the writings of the apostle John: "God is Spirit," "God is light," and "God is love"! All the collective wisdom of man does not teach us as much about the divine nature as these little expressions.

The practical lessons are obvious: 1. Since "God is Spirit," let us worship him "in spirit and truth." Seeing that we cannot escape his presence, let us learn the blessedness of living with him, of conforming our lives unto his will. 2. Since "God is light," let us arise and walk in the light—the light of his word (Ps. 119:105; 1 John 1:6, 7). 3. Since "God is love," let us reflect his love—let us love him and all mankind (John 14:15; 1 John 4:19-21).

### **A MESSAGE FROM GOD**

#### **1 John 1:5-7**

This is a message of God to God's people. It is therefore a message of vital importance. The writer speaks of light, of movement, of benefits. Upon these three things let us focus attention.

- I. *Light.* This is the most pure and unsullied of all things. It stands for purity, intelligence, wholesome influence. God is light. The Son of God is light (John 1:4; 8:12). The word of God is light (Ps. 119:105, 130). All the moral and spiritual instruction that God gives through his word is light.
- II. *Movement.* The word "walk" expresses not merely movement, but habitual movement or action. It refers not to isolated words or deeds, but to the settled manner of life.
1. We may "walk in darkness." This we do when we walk in ignorance, in sin; when we disregard divine instruction and walk according to our own judgment (Prov. 14:12).  
"If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

2. We may "walk in the light." And this we assuredly do when we are guided by the example of Christ or the teaching of Christ—in manner of life, in the service we render, in the worship or devotion we offer (Gen. 5:24).
- III. *Benefits.* On the condition ("if") that we walk in the light, two great blessings enter our lives.
1. Fellowship. We have fellowship with God, with God's Son, with God's children—"one with another." This implies unity, cooperation, association. Illustrate by the light bearer.
  2. Cleansing. Oh, the necessity of cleaning! God's children sin—in thought, in word, in deed—by neglecting to do good (1 John 1:8-10). The blood of Christ is the cleansing power. When we walk in the light, the cleansing power is applied. In obedience we are purified (1 Peter 1:22). Illustrate by the stream of water.

The alien is cleansed when he obeys from the heart that form of teaching (Rom. 6:17, 18). The erring Christian is cleansed as he continues to follow the light of the word.

### **"WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE"**

#### **1 John 2:1-6**

The Bible student will not overlook the connection between these verses and the last verse of the preceding chapter. John declares that the child of God should not sin and must not sin. At the same moment he recognizes the fact of human frailty—that the child of God does actually sin. (Though he sins, he is not a habitual sinner. ) The apostle has before him the very delicate task of saving the erring Christian from despair without encouraging him in his sin. To this end he points out two things, namely:

- I. *The gracious provisions* (vs. 1, 2). "If any man sin, we have an Advocate (Paraclete) with the Father." A Comforter, a Helper (John 15:16). He pleads our cause before the Father and secures a kindly dealing with our faults and failings. For this work he is eminently qualified:
  1. Because of his nearness to the Father:
    - (a) In office: "Jesus Christ." —The anointed of God.
    - (b) In character: "The righteous."
  2. Because of his nearness to man: "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." He is the sacrificial victim (John 1:29; 3:16).
- II. *The necessity of earnest endeavor* (vs. 3-6). The blessed reality of the Advocate in the Father's presence is no encouragement to sin; for in these verses John points out the necessity of an obedient life.

1. To *know the Father*, we must keep his commandments (vs. 3, 4).
2. To have *the love of God perfected* in our souls, we must keep his word ((v. 5).
3. To *abide in the Father*, we must walk as Jesus walked while he was in the world (v. 6). We should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21-23; Acts 10:38).

*Remember:* 1. If you fall, do not give up and despair of life; you have an Advocate with the Father (Heb. 4:14-16). 2. This gracious provision was not intended to encourage you in your sins, but to save you from your sins—the fearful consequences of your sins, from the blight of despair. 3. John does not set forth any apostle or saint as an advocate or mediator, but Christ only (1 Tim. 2:5). 4. As a child of God, you should rise with hope and courage and exert yourself in Christian service. The active life is purified (1 John 1:7).

My hope for pardon when I call,  
My trust for lifting when I fall;  
In life, in death, my all in all,  
Is the wonderful love of Jesus.

## WORLDLINESS

### 1 John 2:15-17

Worldliness is not a matter of a person's environment, but a state of mind. In the heart of every man is an innate affection which will fasten itself upon some object: Christ, or the world. The man who loves Christ supremely is a Christian; the man who loves the world supremely is a worldling.

Let us consider:

- I. *The world.* The world of John's language consists not of the people of the world (John 3:16), but those things which rival and exclude the love of God, namely:
  1. "The lust of the flesh," or the lust that is seated in the flesh. —Lust is wicked love. It includes sensuality (Matt. 5:28; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 2:3).
  2. "The lust of the eyes"—the lust that has its origin in the sense of sight. It is a fondness for glitter, for glare, for glow, for show (Josh. 7:21; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10).
  3. "The vainglory (pride) of life," or the desire for praise, for power, for preeminence, for popularity (3 John 9).
- II. *The prohibition concerning the world:* "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Set not your heart upon it. Do not allow it to control your thoughts, to lead your life, to determine your destiny. The prohibition itself implies the possibility of controlling the affections. In order to stifle the affection of the world, we must cultivate a greater affection (Col. 3:2).

III. *Reasons for the 'prohibition;*

1. The love of the world excludes the love of God: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The love of the world is incompatible with the love of God. No heart is big enough to love the Lord and the world, or good and evil, at the same time (Matt. 6:24; James 1:8; 4:4).
2. The things of the world are radically wrong: "All that is in the world... is not of the Father, but is of the world." God is not the author of lust (perverted love) or of pride.
3. The world is transient. Is it wise to fix your affections on fleeting and fading-things?
  - (a) In its objective aspect: It "passeth away." The world was destroyed by water, Sodom by fire, the world that now is will be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12). Some love the world as though they think the world will last forever!
  - (b) In its subjective aspect: "And the lust thereof." The glory of the world will lose its power and charm. Desire shall fail. Passions will burn themselves out (1 Peter 1:24). The world may not change so much while you live, but *you* will change!
4. There is an occupation more noble, a way that leads to a higher life—the way of obedience to the divine will: "He that doeth the will of the Father abideth forever" (Matt. 7:24-27).

**"LOVE ONE ANOTHER"****1 John 4:7**

We are beloved of God; beloved of God's Son; beloved of holy angels; beloved of great and good men. Now, "let us love one another!"

## I

Because "love is of God,"  
 "Let us love one another."  
 Because God loves us,  
 "Let us love one another" (1 John 4:11).  
 Because love will make us like God,  
 "Let us love one another" (1 John 4:8).

## II

In spite of difference in temperament,  
 "Let us love one another" (Eph. 4:2).  
 In spite of diversity of opinion,  
 "Let us love one another" (Heb. 13:1).  
 In spite of slights and injuries,  
 "Let us love one another" (Eph. 4:31, 32).



## III

That we may pass from death unto life,  
 "Let us love one another" (1 John 3:14).  
 That the unity of Christ's body may be preserved,  
 "Let us love one another" (Col. 3:14).  
 That we may know the joy of divine forgiveness,  
 "Let us love one another" (Matt. 6:14, 15).  
 That we may work and worship together,  
 "Let us love one another" (2 Cor. 6:1).  
 That men may know that we are Christ's disciples,  
 "Let us love one another" (John 13:34, 35).  
 Lest the cancer of malice devour the finest qualities of the  
 soul and fit us for the horrors of hell,  
 "Let us love one another" (1 John 3:15).

## IV

Loving one another,  
 We will cover one another's faults and uncover one another's virtues (1 Peter 4:8).  
 Loving one another,  
 We will find a larger measure of joy in life: for love is the mother of joy  
 (Gal. 5:22).  
 Loving one another,  
 We will enter the gates together: for heaven is a city of love—  
 God is there and "God is love."

**"CHILDREN OF GOD"****1 John 3:1, 2**

This expression, so full of tenderness, is frequently found in the Bible. It designates those people who have answered God's call and are living in harmony with his will (Gal. 3:26, 27).

What does the appellation imply?

- I. *That we are like God.* Of him we were born (John 3:1-5). When we were born of God, we became partakers of the "divine nature." The child bears the image of the Father. —"God is light" and "God is love."
- II. *That we are objects of his love:* "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," etc. (Ps. 103:13). What child is there whom the Father does not love? There is no good thing that God would not do for his children (1 Peter 5:7; Rom. 8:28).

I know not where his islands lift  
 Their fronded palms in air;  
 I only know I cannot drift  
 Beyond his love and care.

- III. *That we are dependent on him.* What can the child do without the Father? He must look to the Father for everything —food, shelter, comfort, etc. (Deut. 33:27; Ps. 46:1; 90:1; Acts 17:28; James 1:17).
- IV. *That we are members of his family.* Having the same Father, we are brethren. Because we are brethren—
1. We are united (Ps. 133:1).
  2. We work together with the Father (2 Cor. 6:1).
  3. We intercede for one another (1 Tim. 2:1, 2).
  4. We bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:1, 2).
- V. *That we are immature.* The child has not attained the full stature of manhood—his Father. In no way have we attained perfection. We are stammering, stumbling, blundering children, longing and striving for manhood when we shall put away "childish things." This is no encouragement to weakness, but a statement of a fact of life.
- VI. *That wonderful possibilities reside within us.* "Now are we children of God, and it is not manifest what we shall be." The boy wonders what he shall be when he becomes a man, but never knows until he reaches manhood. Though inspired by the Spirit, John did not know all the possibilities awaiting God's children. We do not know all the possibilities to be unfolded. But it is enough to know that we can grow and at Christ's coming "we shall be like him" and that we shall share with him the glories of the eternal world (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21-23).

"Children of God!" What a beautiful expression! What does it imply? That we are like God, that we are objects of his love, that we are dependent on him, that we are members of his family, that we are immature, that wonderful possibilities reside within us!

## A TWOFOLD INDWELLING

### 1 John 4:12, 13

- I. *God dwells in us.* Through a door of implicit faith he enters (Eph. 3:17a). Because he abides (lives) in us, he is manifested in our daily lives.
1. In the love that emanates (1 John 4:8).
  2. In the light that radiates (1 John 1:5; Matt. 5:14-16).
  3. In the work that we do (Phil. 2:12, 13).
- II. *We abide in him.* When we believe and obey, we enter his body (Gal. 3:26, 27). And what a wonderful dwelling-place is our God! (Ps. 90:1).
1. God is over us—a roof to shelter us (Ps. 91:1).
  2. God is before us—a hearth to warm our cold hearts (1 John 4:19).

3. God is around us—a strong wall to shield us from the foes that threaten (Ps. 46:1, 2).
4. And God is underneath—with the everlasting arms he holds us (Deut. 33:27).

## THE LETTER OF JUDE

- I. *The greeting* (vs. 1, 2).
- II. *The writer's purpose* (vs. 3, 4).
  1. Original: "To write unto you of our common salvation." A general theme had been contemplated.
  2. Final: "I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith," etc.
  3. Why the change? An emergency arose—evil "men crept in privily." Note what they were doing:
    - (a) "Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" —mistook liberty for license. The Galatians went to the other extreme—contracted the liberty of Christians (Gal. 2:4). —Both had destroyed Christian liberty.
    - (b) "Denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
- III. *He warns against these seducers* (vs. 5-7). This he does by pointing out instances of divine wrath.
  1. Against Israel (v. 5).
  2. Against rebellious angels (v. 6).
  3. Against Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7).
- IV. *He describes these men* (vs. 8-13).
  1. By comparison.
    - (a) Like Sodom and Gomorrah, they "defiled the flesh."
    - (b) Like the rebellious angels, they "*set at naught dominions*"—recognized no restraints.
    - (c) Like rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, they "railed at dignities," defied church leadership, followed natural inclinations.
    - (d) Unlike Michael, who didn't rail even at the devil while in dispute with him.
    - (e) Like Cain, they were murderers—leading others to destruction.
    - (f) Like Balaam, they were covetous. Their interest was "hire."
    - (g) Like Korah, they were rebels—they challenged the leadership of God's people.
  2. By types and figures.
    - (a) "Hidden rocks in your love feasts." The purpose of the feasts was wrecked by them. They "fed themselves without fear"—not to suffice nature but to pamper appetite.

- (b) "Clouds without water," etc. A disappointment!
- (c) "Autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."
- (d) "Wild waves of the sea, foaming out of their own shame" (Isa. 57:20).
- (e) "Wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness," etc. They did not follow an orbit; they were erratic.

V. *He predicts their doom.* This he does by a prophecy of long standing (vs. 14-16).

VI. *He earnestly exhorts* (vs. 17-23).

- 1. By reminding them of the words of the apostles (vs. 17, 18).
- 2. By again calling their attention to the character of the seducers (v. 19).
- 3. To build up their "most holy faith" (vs. 20, 21).
- 4. To save others (vs. 22, 23).

VII. *Doxology* (vs. 24, 25).

### **"BEHOLD, HE COMETH!"**

#### **Revelation 1:7**

The history of mankind, in its essential character, may be summed up in three expressive statements: "He is coming, he has come; he will come again" (Godet). Our text is very meaningful. From it we learn:

- I. *That the Lord is coming.* We are living between two visitations of our Savior: one is a matter of history, the other is prophecy. John had heard a voice saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Now he says, "Behold, he cometh!" What an anticipation is awakened!
  - 1. A prophecy of long standing (Jude 14).
  - 2. His angels have promised it (Acts 1:11).
  - 3. His ambassadors have asserted it (Phil. 3:20; James 5:7; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 John 3:2, 3; Jude 20, 21).
  - 4. He himself has warned us of it (Rev. 22:12).
- II. *That his coming will be attended by a sign: "With the clouds."* A token of divine presence (Ex. 24:15; 34:5; Num. 9:15-17; Acts 1:9; Matt. 26:64).
  - 1. Clouds of judgment. Dark, angry clouds warn of impending danger (2 These. 1:6-8). "Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and voices of thunder" (Rev. 4:5).
  - 2. Clouds of mercy. The same clouds that bring destruction to some, bring gentle rain and cooling shadows to others (Num. 10:34; Ps. 105:39). The Lord will have mercy on his people (1 These. 4:16, 17).
- III. *That his coming will be known.*

1. By mankind in general: "Every eye shall see him." Those who saw him in the flesh and those who did not. Those who are living and those who are dead (Rev. 20:12). Those who desire to see him and those who do not.
  2. By his foes in particular: "And those that pierced him."
    - (a) With a literal sword (John 19:34, 37).
    - (b) With the sword of alien sins (Rom. 3:23).
    - (c) With the sword of apostasy (Heb. 6:6).
- IV. *That his coming will bring sorrow.*
1. This sorrow will be general: "All the tribes of the earth," etc. Meaning: All who are earthly minded.
  2. It will be intense: "Shall mourn (or wail) over him."
    - (a) A wail of a guilty conscience.
    - (b) A wail of regret (Jer. 8:20).
    - (c) A wail of fear—a prophecy of doom (Rev. 6:15-17).
    - (d) Indicating that all will not be converted, that they will not be expecting deliverance.
- V. *That his coming will receive the hearty sanction of his people: "Even so, Amen."* Men have no fear of meeting a friend to whom they have been true.
1. With the beloved John, all friends of Jesus will say, "Amen: come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).
  2. With the great Paul, all who are faithful to the end will love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).
  3. Let us all, then, be true friends of Jesus (John 15:16). A crown awaits us.

## **"THE LORD'S DAY"**

### **Revelation 1:10**

The Lord Jesus is the center of all things biblical. The New Testament is replete with things that bear his inscription: "The Lord's supper"; "the Lord's body"; "the church of the Lord"; "the Lord's day."

"The Lord's day" is the first day of the week, a New Testament institution, the day of Christian worship. The sabbath of the Old Testament times was never called "the Lord's day."

Let us ask:

- I. *Why observe this day?*
  1. On this day Jesus was raised from the dead (Matt. 28:1-7). It is his glorious birthday.
  2. On the first day of the week natural light appeared (Gen. 1). On the first day of the week the light of immortality appeared (2 Tim 1:10; 1 Peter 1:3, 4).
  3. On the resurrection day the disciples assembled and the risen Lord appeared (John 20:19). On that day a week

later, the disciples were again assembled and Christ appeared (John 20:26).

4. On this day the great Pentecost fell. Day of Pentecost signifies fiftieth day from the first day of the Passover, and always fell on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:11, 15, 16). And what does this mean?
  - (a) That the Holy Spirit came on this day (John 14:16; Acts 2:1ff).
  - (b) That the gospel began to be preached as an accomplished fact on this day (Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 2:14-36).
  - (c) That the church was born on this day. On the first day of the week the first-fruits of a great spiritual harvest were gathered (Acts 2:41).
5. On this day the early disciples "were gathered together in various places (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2).
6. In keeping with the biblical idea of giving to the Lord the first-fruits of life and labor, it seems fitting that we should dedicate the first day of the week to the cause of Christ.

## II. *How observe this day?*

1. In spiritual enjoyment. On the Lord's day we should be "in the Spirit," a state of spiritual ecstasy (Ps- 122:1; Phil. 4:4). We should joyfully celebrate the resurrection of the Savior, a most meaningful event!
2. In worship at Jesus' feet (Matt. 28:8, 9).
3. In communion with the living Christ (Luke 24:13-31; Acts 20:7).
4. In Christian fellowship. We should commune with Christ, also with one another—we should "come together to eat" (1 Cor. 11:33; Heb. 10:25).
5. In the giving of our means for the support of the Lord's work (1 Cor. 16:1, 2).
6. In the hearing of the word. On that day, John heard "a voice." On that day, Paul preached and the disciples listened (Acts 20:7).

Since it is the Lord's day, let none of us claim it as "*our* day" and use it in accordance with *our* will. Since it is the Lord's day, it should be used in harmony with the Lord's will. The person who takes a thing and uses it against the will of the owner, sins against the owner. —And the Lord's day is as long as any other day of the week!

## **WHEN TEARS ARE WIPED AWAY** **Revelation 7:13-17**

This wonderful word-picture from the pen of the beloved John closes with a tender expression: "God shall wipe away every tear

from their eyes." Herein are found life's two extremes—the deepest sorrow on the one hand and the supreme comfort on the other. Embedded in the expression are three things upon which we shall focus attention.

- I. *Tears.* These are not the tears of all men, but the tears of God's people. —With robes of white they are arrayed (vs. 13, 14). Out of "the great tribulation" they had come and tears had fallen. The pages of history are stained with their tears.
  1. There are tears of pity—compassionate people weeping the fearful doom of hardened sinners (Luke 19:41, 42).
  2. There are tears of sympathy—tenderhearted friends who share sorrow, who weep with the ones who weep (John 11:35).
  3. There are tears of bereavement—a David weeping for his son Absalom (2 Sam. 18:35), a Rachel weeping for her children because they are not (Matt. 2:16-18). Every day and every hour of the day such tears are falling.
  4. There are tears of penitent people, who weep over the memory of sad mistakes (Luke 7:36-38; 22:54-62).
  5. There are tears of anxiety—earnest workers who are deeply concerned with the moral and spiritual condition of the people for whom they live and labor (Acts 20:31).
  6. And there are tears of sacrifice—tears of God's people who suffer privation to the end that the church may grow. —They sow in tears; they serve with tears (Ps. 126:5, 6; Acts 20:19).
  
- II. *God.* On the pages of history we also find God. Every way we turn manifestations of him are seen—in the realm of nature (Ps. 19), in his great Book, in the lives of his people (Eph. 4:6). As the bird is encompassed by the atmosphere in which it flies and the fish by the water in which it swims, so we are encompassed by the divine presence (Acts 17:28). He is presented—
  1. As a God of pity (Ps. 103:13).
  2. As a "God of love and peace" (2 Cor. 13:11).
  3. As a "God of mercy and comfort" (2 Cor. 1:4).
  4. As a God of consolation (Rom. 15:5).
  
- III. *The hand, of God.* Though unnamed in the text, it is clearly seen. It is a symbol of his power, his wisdom, his infinite compassion. In all ages of the world, it has been touching the lives and shaping the destinies of men.
  1. It is seen as a hand of supplication (Isa. 65:2); as a hand of deliverance (Ex. 13:3; Col. 1:13); as a hand of protection (John 10:28, 29); as a hand of chastisement (Ps. 38:1, 2).
  2. In our text it is seen as a hand of comfort. Life with its great tribulation is past. As a loving shepherd, he dwells in nearness to his people. He wipes away their tears—

tears of pity, tears of bereavement, tears of penitence, etc. This means that he removes the cause of sorrow. Sin and pain and death are no more. All the wants of his people are supplied.

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD

### Revelation 14:13

What wonderful words! In the hour of bereavement, no words are more helpful. Over the lifeless forms of countless thousands they have been read. To the believer, they offer a full measure of consolation. They point out a number of things of supreme value. Upon these let us focus attention.

- I. *The source of this consolation.* It was not a satanic voice, not the voice of man, but "a voice from heaven" that John heard. It was not a voice of nature, not a voice of reason, but a clear voice of divine revelation that fell upon the ears of the aged seer, now a lonely exile on the isle of Patmos.
- II. *The state of the dead.* They are not in a state of grief or of pain, but of happiness supreme—"Blessed are the dead!" This thought implies conscious existence. Though death fell as a curse upon the human race, it is here mentioned as a blessing. The blessedness of death is due to the marvelous works of him who conquered death, bringing life and immortality to light.
- III. *A reservation.* But not all who die are happy—only those who die "in the Lord." Meaning: who die *in* union with him, *in* his body, *in* the faith, *in* the love, *in* the service of the Lord. Lying "in the Lord" implies a previous living with him or *in* him. It is still a curse to die in sin, or out of harmony with the will or the way of the Lord.
- IV. *The affirming voice:* "Yea, saith the Spirit." Thus, the Holy Spirit affirms and emphasizes the truthfulness of all that the beloved John had heard.
- V. *The nature of their blessing:*
  1. They "rest from their labors," or painful service. They also find rest from illness, disappointments, temptations, persecutions and all the painful experiences of the life that now is.
  2. "Their works follow with them." This may mean that their worthy works, as a mighty procession, follow them to the judgment seat of Christ and there testify on their behalf (1 Tim. 5:24); or, that their works follow them in perpetuating their influence in the hearts they leave behind (Heb. 11:4). In either or both of these senses these wonderful words of God's great man may be taken.



**STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE**  
**Revelation 20:11-15**

The scenes of history are approaching completion. Very definitely they present the characteristics of the end of the world and the finality in the affairs of men. In the paragraph before us, we have a word-picture of the last judgment. Let us stand in awe and make a few observations.

- I. *The authority of it.* It is a "great" throne. The decisions that issue therefrom are immutable. The Judge holds "all authority" both in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).
- II. *The sanctity of it.* It is a "white throne." In the book of Revelation "white" is a key word. We read of *white robes*, *white clouds*, *white horses*, a *white throne*, etc. *White* is a symbol of immaculate purity. On the throne righteous decisions are made (Rom. 2:2).
- III. *The dread terribleness of it.* This is indicated in the statement that the "earth and heaven fled away" from the face of the Judge. The very thought of it fills the heart of the wicked with consternation (Rev. 6:16-17).
- IV. *The universality of it.* John saw "the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne." From the sea, from death and Hades they come. Because the Judge is impartial, the judgment of one means the judgment of all (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17).
- V. *The individuality of it.* "They were judged every man." There is no escape in the multitudes. They are assembled as nations, but not as nations are they judged: for he separates them one from another, "as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31ff; Rom. 14:12).
- VI. *The justice of it.* Not according to rank, or race, or riches, or social standing, or political power; but "according to their works" are men judged. "In the books" their "works" are recorded.
- VII. *The stern finality of it.* The fact that the judgment is upon "the dead" indicates that the final issue of human society has come. "If any was not found written in the book of life (the Father's family record), he was cast into the lake of fire." That the scene represents the termination of the present order of things is clearly seen by the destruction of death and Hades; the present, the temporary, is swallowed up in the final.

We note that only one side of the judgment is depicted—that is of the wicked. They have as their fellow-sufferers the beast (the

spirit of worldliness), the false prophet (the corrupt church), and the dragon (the devil). Other scripture portions depict the security and rapture of the righteous. They "enter in by the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). There the curse is lifted (Rev. 22:3). And there their wants are supplied and their tears are wiped away (Rev. 7:13-17).

### **The Final Invitation—**

#### **COME TO THE FOUNTAIN**

#### **Revelation 22:17**

Note the circumstances under which these words were written: John was ready to seal the book he was writing, when an angel said, "Seal it not." Among the things written after the angel had spoken was this precious invitation—the final invitation of the Bible.

The invitation carries with it some definite implications: that man is on a desert, dry and dreary. —He is separated from God, the fountain of life (Isa. 59. 1, 2); that God loves man and desires to refresh him, to prolong his days; that man is able to respond— to come and drink.

Let us enquire:

- I. *Who invites?* The persons who do the inviting lend dignity and importance to the invitation.
  1. God, the maker of man (Isa. 55:1). In compassion he calls: "Come ye to the waters."
  2. The Son of God (John 7:37). He came all the way from heaven to earth to extend the invitation. Through pity and compassion he calls (Matt. 11:27, 28; Luke 19:10).
  3. The Spirit. He is grieved when men refuse to come. "Grieve not the Spirit" (Eph. 4:10).
  4. The bride (the church). To this end her members go forth. —They teach, they persuade, they warn, they pray (2 Cor. 5:10, 11).
  5. The hearer. The hearer of the invitation is not only to accept it for himself, but also to pass it on to others.
  6. The angels. They sang at the Savior's birth, shielded him in his infancy, ministered to him in the wilderness, announced the glorious resurrection, minister to the heirs of salvation, rejoice when sinners repent (Luke 15:8-10).
  
- II. *Who is invited?*
  1. "He that is athirst"—for spiritual refreshment. All who have a craving, a longing for something the desert of this world cannot supply—pardon, purity, the joys of the abundant life.
  2. "He that will." God desires the salvation of all men (2

Peter 3:9), but he does not override the freedom of will. He loves, he warns, he urges, in tenderness he calls; but leaves man to act for himself.

- III. *To what are they invited?* To the living fountain, where they may "take the water of life freely." That they may find satisfaction for their inward craving; that they may receive that which the world cannot give (John 4:13, 14). The Lord calls men that he may rescue them, refresh them, give them life eternal.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Come in simple trust. Come in humble obedience (Luke 5:32; Rom. 10:10; Matt. 10:32, 33; Acts 2:37, 38; Rev. 22:14). Come hopefully— you will not be disappointed or put to shame (John 6:66-68; Acts 4:12; Heb. 11:6).

Look unto me, and be ye saved,  
all the ends of the earth;  
For I am God, and there is  
none else (Isa. 45:22).