

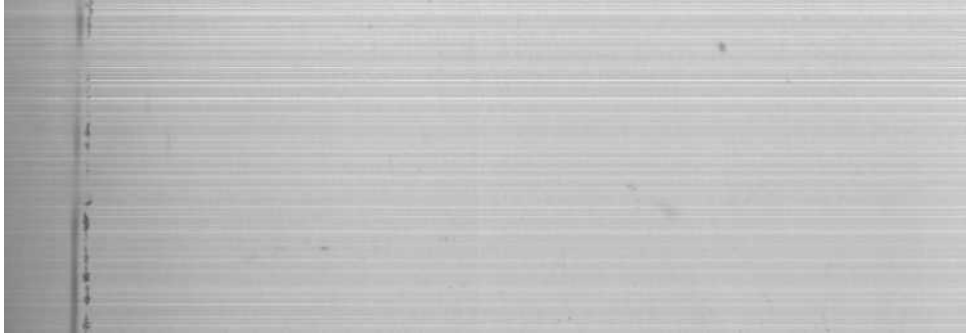
OUTLINE STUDIES

BY

GARDNER S. HALL

(1906—1978)





OUTLINE STUDIES

BY

GARDNER S. HALL

(1906—1978)



Copyright, 1982 by
Gardner Sewell Hall, Jr.

FOREWORD

The sermon outlines in this book should be a treasure house to those who want to benefit from and make use of some of the great lessons found in the word of God. They are the work of Gardner S. Hall, who devoted himself to many years of careful and independent study of the divine revelation. Because of the keenness of his perception he was most adept at using the simple objects of nature and life to teach profound lessons from the word of God.

Gardner Hall was born in Hall's Valley, near Trion, Georgia, in 1906, the son of Flavil and Martha King Hall. He was married to Gartrell Mitchell of LaFayette, Georgia. To this union were born four children, two boys and two girls. The boys are devoting their lives to preaching the gospel, and the girls are married to gospel preachers. In fact, the Hall family is a family of preachers, involving several generations, reaching from Gardner's father, who was preacher and song writer, to his sons and grandsons, who are helping to take the gospel of Christ to various places throughout the earth.

It is our conviction that these outline studies will be of extraordinary help to all who are seeking the rich truths of the word of God.

Billy Norris



GARTRELL M. and GARDNER S. HALL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL STUDIES

They that Are Christ's	5
Work of Elders.....	7
Preachers' Duties	8
Conscience	10
People Who Should not Have Peace of Conscience	12
The Devices of Satan (1).....	14
The Devices of Satan (2).....	15
They Will Be Cone.....	18
The Polluted City	20
Why Make Converts to a Denomination?.....	22
One Thing.....	25
What Would Paul Say to Increase Contributions?.....	26

CHARACTER STUDIES

Dorcas.....	29
Disobedience—A Study of King Saul	31
Two Men Who Buried Jesus.....	32
Characters Connected with the Birth of Christ	34
Mary and Martha	36
Apollos	39

ADMONITIONS TO THE LOST AND STRAYING

Death	42
Weighed in the Balances.....	44
Never Give Up	47
The Moral Man	49
Mistakes of a Great Man	50
Remember Lot's Wife	53
God's Forewarnings.....	55

STUDIES IN THE BEATITUDES

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit	57
Blessed Are They that Mourn	58
Blessed Are the Meek	60
Blessed Are They which Do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness	62
Blessed Are the Pure in Heart	64
Blessed Are the Peacemakers	65
Blessed Are the Persecuted	67

STUDIES CONCERNING PRAYER

What God Seeks in Our Prayers	70
Influence with God	72
Prayer in the Assembly	73

STUDIES IN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

If I Were Young	77
Forgiveness.....	79
Would You Have Been There?.....	80
Don't Be a Fool.....	83
A Christian's Sacrifices	85
"Unstable as Water"	87
Men of Convictions.....	89
Look for a Man.....	91

STUDIES CONCERNING DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES

A Beautiful Spirit of Fairness	93
Let there Be no Strife	94
Observations Concerning Romans 14	96
Legalism	99
Faith and Opinion.....	102

STUDIES IN MARRIAGE

Preparation for Marriage	105
Making Marriage Successful.....	107
Influence of One's Companion	110

TO OUR SONS.....	113
-------------------------	------------

GENERAL STUDIES

THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A Chinaman, visiting the U.S., asked every person he met a very personal question, "How much are you worth?" I'm asking you a question, "Are you a Christian?"
- B. If you are a genuine Christian, you don't belong to yourself; you belong to Christ—I Cor. 6:19,20; Gal. 5:24; Acts 27:23.

DISCUSSION: I. One belongs to Christ as a slave to a master.

- A. Scriptures—I Cor. 7:22; Rom. 6:16-18,22.
- B. He becomes such of his own accord. He is not forced into this slavery—Rom. 12:1.

II. Slavery to Christ requires total commitment and subjection.

- A. This is implied in the term "slavery."
 - 1. A slave to tobacco will "walk a mile for a Camel." He allows nothing to hinder his use of tobacco.
 - 2. A slave to alcohol buys and drinks at tremendous sacrifice. He may lose his home, his job, his family. He may let his wife and children suffer. He may be humiliated and ashamed, and then promise to give up alcohol. But alcohol is still his master, and when it calls, the slave responds, regardless of the sacrifice. He allows nothing to hinder his use of alcohol.
 - 3. A slave to drugs will rob and kill to satisfy this master. He allows nothing to hinder his use of drugs.
 - 4. A slave to style and fashion will follow the fashion regardless of how ridiculous or sinful the fashion may be. Christians must often ignore the fashion (I Tim. 2:9,10; Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 11:1-16). Christian women will not wear the attire of a harlot (Prov. 7:10). But a slave to fashion allows nothing to hinder his following the fashion.
 - 5. A slave to a wife will give his wife his check and do any-

thing she requests. He allows nothing to hinder his service to his wife.

B. So it will be with the slave to Christ.

1. The slave to Christ recognizes service to be rendered—James 1:27; Eph. 4:28; Matt. 25:32-40; Titus 2:2-4; II Tim. 2:15; Heb. 10:25.
2. The slave to Christ will allow nothing to hinder his service to Christ: criticism; objections by husband or wife; ridicule; persecution; entertainment; bad weather; slight impositions.
3. The slave to Christ, if he becomes involved in secular activities, will see to it that those secular activities will not tie him up so as to hinder his service to his Master.
4. The slave to Christ will always place God's will and work ahead of his own. Are you His slave if you don't study? If you don't attend Sunday night and Wednesday night meetings? If you miss a service to see a show, or to please a companion, or to please company?

III. Slavery to Christ requires a rejection of all other masters.

A. A Christian cannot serve two masters—Matt. 6:24.

B. One is trying to serve two masters:

1. When he acknowledges Christ as his Master and sometimes seeks to please Him; but at other times lets pleasure or companions or company hinder him from doing His will.
2. When he acknowledges Christ as his Master but allows fashion to cause him to dress immodestly.
3. When he acknowledges Christ as his Master, but allows a love for money to hinder him from contributing freely to the support of the gospel and the care of the needy.

C. Every time one allows money, pleasure, entertainment, friend, companion, or visitor to prevent his doing the will of Jesus, he is holding to one master and despising the other - and the one he is despising is Jesus Christ.

D. The Lord's slave must not tie himself up with secular interests that will keep him from responding whenever his Master calls—II Tim. 2:4.

CONCLUSION:

A Christian does not belong to himself. He belongs to Christ; he is Christ's slave. Let each one conduct himself as a loyal slave to his Master.

WORK OF ELDERS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. I claim no new lesson; I offer nothing unique, no fresh approach to this subject. I simply hope to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.”
- B. Discussing work of elders. Churches are more peaceful when they understand the work of elders.

DISCUSSION: I. What do we mean by churches?

- A. Not denominations.
- B. Local assemblies of Christians.
 - 1. Seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1-3).
 - 2. I Cor. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; Acts 13:1; Acts 8:1.

II. Each church had elders.

- A. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
- B. Churches whose elders are mentioned:
 - 1. Ephesus had elders (Acts 20:17).
 - 2. Philippi had a plurality (Phil. 1:1).
 - 3. Jerusalem (Acts 15:2).
- C. We read of no church having just one elder. Nothing of *the* Bishop or *the* pastor.

III. What are their duties?

- A. To rule (I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17).
- B. To oversee (Acts 20:28).
- C. To tend the flock (I Peter 5:2).

IV. What is involved in this work?

- A. Ruling—governing.
 - 1. Not legislators. They make no laws (Jas. 4:12; Matt. 23:18-20).
 - 2. Lead the church in carrying out the law given by Christ.
 - 3. Make decisions in matters of judgment; e.g. preacher, meeting facilities, hours of services, order of services, names to be submitted as elders and deacons.
 - 4. Some argue that these should be put before the church for their vote. Then the elders would have no authority. This would not be “elder rule” but “majority rule.”
 - 5. Do members have no voice at all? Elders should consider the wishes of the members, for they must avoid “lording it over the charge allotted” (I Peter 5:3).

- B. Overseeing.
 1. They should oversee the worship—see that it is carried out scripturally, in an orderly manner and so as to be edifying.
 2. They should oversee Bible classes—visit the classes; check the teaching material.
 3. They should observe behavior in classes and assemblies.
- C. Tending—as a shepherd.
 1. This involves spiritual care of individual members.
 2. They should check up on those whose attendance is slack.
 3. They should lead in exercising discipline when a member is overtaken in sin.
 4. They should keep up with illness among members.
 5. They should be always aware of the account they must give (Heb. 13:17).

CONCLUSION:

Hebrews 13:17 teaches all of us that:

- A. We should identify with a faithful congregation.
- B. We should recognize the authority of elders and obey them.
- C. We should avoid being troublemakers or rebellious so that we may not create problems for them.

PREACHERS' DUTIES

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We have studied the work of elders. This lesson will be on the duties of preachers.
- B. We need such a discussion occasionally.
 1. A preacher may need to defend himself. People may think he is getting out of his place.
 2. Of course, preachers may get out of their place.
- C. So we need to know what he should do and what he should not do.

DISCUSSION: I.

Negative.

- A. He is not to rule the church.
 1. That is the elders' work. (I Tim. 5:17; I Pet. 5:1-5).
 2. In some cities they have a mayor and council. They also have a city manager, a professionally trained administrator. They turn the administration of the city's affairs over to him. This system is being followed in many congregations.

- a. Elders think the preacher has had special training and is more in touch with brotherhood activities and methods. He was trained under prominent preachers in a “Christian college,” so they do almost anything he asks. They make him the church manager.
 - b. This is where current innovations had their origin and how they came to be accepted by churches. Almost every false theory and immoral practice finds acceptance in the colleges and universities. Many originate there. They are hotbeds of liberalism of every kind.
 - c. So-called “Christian Colleges” have led the way in all of the innovations. Preachers trained there bring liberalism to the churches. Elders give them too much rein.
3. My suggestions should be regarded on the same level as those of any other member. Elders should weigh them and use them only if they have merit. B. A preacher should not do all of the visiting of the sick and negligent. These are not particularly preacher duties. They are Christian duties. Gal. 6:1; Jas. 1:27.

Positively, what are a preacher's duties?

- A. To study. II Tim. 2:15; I Tim. 4:13-16.
- B. To “preach the word.” II Tim. 4:1-4. (Note the solemn charge.)
 - 1. Excludes the doctrines of men. Rom. 16:17,18.
 - 2. Excludes one's opinions.
 - 3. Preach *all* of the word. Acts 20:20,26-27; Matt. 28:18-20. Preachers are tempted here. Members who are wrong often befriend a preacher. There was once an alcoholic who bestowed gifts on a preacher, making it difficult for the preacher to deal with his sin. Preachers like crowds and fear we will lose members. We are all aware of touchy subjects and touchy members.
- C. To “reprove, rebuke and exhort.” II Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:12,13; 2:15. *New Berkley Version*: “Assert these things and exhort and reprove with all authority. Allow no one to think little of you.”
 - 1. I am not out of my place when I rebuke misbehavior in the assembly, or when I rebuke immodest attire. Or any wrong. I have that authority—that command.
 - 2. If you become angry, you are wrong—rebellious. True if one rejects any duty or truth preached from the word.
 - 3. There will be opposition if we “reprove, rebuke and exhort.” See II Tim. 4:3-4. I will make enemies if I do my work.

- D. To guard the true doctrine.
 - 1. Timothy was left at Ephesus to charge some (I Tim. 1:3).
 - 2. I have the duty to warn men who teach false doctrine. (Titus 1:10,11).
- E. To “persuade men.” II Cor. 5:11.
 - 1. To believe, repent, confess Christ and be baptized into Christ.
 - 2. To add to their faith virtue, etc. (II Pet. 1:5-7).
 - 3. To deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” etc. (Titus 2:11,12).

CONCLUSION:

- A. I get very little encouragement from the results I see. This is a time that is “out of season.”
- B. But I am not responsible for the results.
- C. You, as listeners, are responsible for that.

CONSCIENCE

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Suppose you should make a visit to your doctor. Suppose he makes an electrocardiogram, listens to your chest, and says, “Your heart is not good.” That would worry you, wouldn't it? Suppose he says, “Your lungs are in bad shape.” This would also concern you.
- B. God placed in your head a faculty called conscience. You should be more concerned about its health and soundness than about your heart or lungs. We'll talk about this today. Read I Tim. 1:19.

DISCUSSION: I. Illustrate conscience.

- A. I'll not try to define conscience. I will try to illustrate it. Suppose you are driving your car and approach a railroad. Suddenly a warning signal begins flashing. You press your brake pedal, but it goes right to the floor. So you ram into a moving train. *2/ you lived to explain*, you would say, “*My brakes were faulty and would not stop me.*”
 - 1. Your conscience is your moral brake. If good, it will stop you when you are tempted to do wrong.
 - 2. If it is not good, you are headed for a wreck, or maybe lots of wrecks. Comment on I Tim. 1:19.
- B. But your conscience works positively as well as negatively. It is a starter as well as a stopper.
 - 1. A car without a battery will not function.

2. Without conscience you would have no power to make you attend to obligations and duties.
- C. Buick used to advertise: *Power to start, power to stop.* That is what conscience is.

II. Your conscience is God's only means of motivating you.

- A. He could force you to start and stop. He will not. He could police the world with giants or angels. Constantine forced soldiers to be baptized. God will not.
- B. If you have a good conscience and learn what God wants, you will promptly obey.
 1. You will promptly obey in baptism. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:18).
 2. You will perform all Christian duties such as: attending, worshiping, giving, helping the poor, studying, praying, teaching others.
 3. You will avoid whatever you learn is contrary to God's will such as: cursing, lying, cheating, fornication, adultery.
 4. A good conscience is more effective in keeping one from sin than an army would be. An army could not keep out evil thoughts, but a good conscience can.
 - a. A little boy's mother was trying to force him to sit down. He replied, "You can make me sit down, but I will still be standing up on the inside."
 - b. If one keeps free of evil thoughts, he will not engage in overt acts of sin.
- C. If you do not have a good conscience:
 1. Preaching and reading the Bible will not help you. Preaching the word does good only when the conscience is tender.
 2. Your father's and mother's appeals will not be heeded.

III. What destroys the starting and stopping power of conscience?

- A. Consider the Bible description of the condition.
 1. I Tim. 4:2. Conscience seared.
 2. Heb. 3:7,8. Hardness of heart.
 3. Eph. 4:17-19. Past feeling. This means one can commit all kinds of sin and not care.
 4. Jer. 8:12. Could not blush; might even glory in and boast of their wickedness (See also Phil. 3:19).
- B. This condition develops as we disregard our conscience.
 1. Every time one yields to temptation over the protest of conscience the conscience is weakened. It will raise less objection next time and yielding will be even easier.
 2. Every time one shirks his duty, it becomes easier to shirk it next time, for the conscience is weakened.
 3. One even gets to the point where sin does not seem so bad.

- C. Another thing that brings on this state of conscience is failure to recognize the deceitfulness of sin. See Heb. 3:13.
 1. Satan would have you believe that you can enjoy the pleasures of sin till you tire of them, then it will be easy to repent and turn to Christ.
 2. Satan knows that as you get your fill of sin the conscience is being seared and hardened. Bad habits are being formed—maybe even addictions.

IV. Function of conscience misunderstood.

- A. Some tell us it is a guide, that it tells us what is right and wrong.
 1. This is a false conception. God did not give us the conscience for this.
 2. God gave us his word to tell us what is right and wrong. Ps. 32:8; II Tim. 3:16,17.
- B. Conscience can lead us wrong.
 1. If you accept a faulty standard conscience will tell you to stop at the wrong place. It may instruct you to start when you should not. Many books of philosophy, magazine articles by modern psychologists, and newspaper columns try to remove all warning signals; tell us there is no danger anywhere.
 2. A good conscience is like a good watch. No matter how accurately it runs, it must be set by the right time. *Just so, the conscience must be properly educated.*

CONCLUSION:

- A. One important lesson today, “Do not turn a deaf ear to your conscience when it appeals to you to yield to God's will.”
 1. Do not let any friend influence you to put off your duty.
 2. You will never be a real man or woman if you allow school mates or fellow-workers to determine your manner of life. You will be only a puppet.
- B. If you are accountable to God today for your conduct, come to obey Him.

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NOT HAVE PEACE OF CONSCIENCE:

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The Bible teaches that one should (must) have a good conscience to be acceptable with God - I Tim. 1:19.
- B. To have a good conscience is to be satisfied with one's conduct; to believe one is doing right in everything. To have a bad conscience is to know one is *not* doing what is right.

- C. The Bible suggests several examples of people with troubled consciences: *Peter* after he denied the Lord; the *Pentecostians* when they learned they had crucified the Messiah; the *Ephesians* when they learned the sin of magical arts.
- D. Each of these, however, made correction and obtained good consciences. They enjoyed peace of conscience.
- E. There are people who should not have peace of conscience.

DISCUSSION:

I. Bible examples of people who had peace of conscience when they should have been troubled in their consciences.

- A. Saul of Tarsus—Acts 23:1; 24:16. Saul should have been in tears every day.
- B. The proud Pharisee—Luke 18:9-14.
- C. The Jews—Rom. 10:1-3.
- D. The church at Sardis—Rev. 3:1-6.
- E. The foolish virgins—Matt. 25:1-13. They slept without a worry. Their consciences were good, but they were not fully prepared. Many will be like the foolish virgins when they come to the judgment—Matt. 7:21-23.

II. Why does this condition exist?

- A. Lack of knowledge—Rom. 10:1-3.
- B. Lack of study and diligence — 1 Tim 2:15. They take spiritual things too lightly. They assume that anything will do in religion as long as one is sincere.
- C. Lack of understanding—Matt. 13:19. This often results from a lack of meditation—Eph. 5:15-17.
- D. Lack of spiritual graces listed in II Peter 1:5-11. When Saul learned the truth his conscience was no longer at ease, for he would not eat or drink.

II. Some in our day who should not have peace of conscience.

- A. Those not born of water and the Spirit—John 3:5. The final outcome of such people is described in II Thess. 1:7-9.
- B. Those who do not attend faithfully—Heb. 10:25.
- C. Those who fail to eat and drink worthily—I Cor. 11:23-30. If we could know and tell the truth at a funeral, we might say, “He never missed a Lord's day, but he ate and drank damnation to himself.”
- D. Those who spend more time and money on pleasures than for the Lord's work—II Tim. 3:4; Luke 16:10-12; Matt. 6:33.
- E. Those who are lukewarm—Rev. 3:15,16. These are members who don't take much interest in spiritual things. They just belong. They let other things come first—Matt. 13:22.

CONCLUSION:

- A. All such people who have peace of conscience and are satisfied with themselves are deceived.
- B. They need teaching and they need to heed the teaching. They need exhortations, such as those of Heb. 2:1,2; Jer. 48:10; II Peter 1:5-11.
- C. It all boils down to this. Many who are not worried at all about their standing before God should become concerned. Something needs to disturb their consciences. We apply Matt. 7:21-23 to people in doctrinal error, but it will be worse for those who know and do not.

THE DEVICES OF SATAN (1)

TEXT: II Cor. 2:11.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Some think that Satan is not a real person, that he is just the principle of evil in the world.
- B. The Bible teaches otherwise (I Peter 5:8). He carried on a conversation concerning Job. He talked with Eve. He requested that he might sift Peter. He met Jesus and tempted Him.
- C. In this passage Paul warns us not to let Satan get an advantage over us. Avoid the things that would give him the upper hand, the things that would make his work easier.

DISCUSSION: I. Instances when Satan had an advantage.

- A. The Corinthians gave him a break when they neglected to discipline the fornicator within their number (I Cor. 5:6).
- B. The Corinthians gave him another break when they refused to fellowship the same man after he repented (II Cor. 2:6-11).
- C. David gave Satan an advantage when he committed adultery and murder. Consider God's statement in II Sam. 12:14.
- D. Satan was given an advantage through the ungodliness of Israel in Paul's day (Rom. 2:21-24),

II. How we can give Satan the advantage.

- A. Satan gets a break when a church quarrel develops.
 - 1. Strife and bitterness and division are some of his favorite tools for working evil.
 - 2. So Satan is adept at introducing those things that cause strife: foolish and unlearned questions (II Tim. 2:22,23);

- jealousy among leaders (James 3:14-16); new doctrines and practices (Rom. 16:17,18).
3. A church will be doing well until someone introduces an institution or a social program or an athletic program. Objections arise over such unauthorized programs, then strife and division.
 - B. Satan gets a break when young women refuse to be keepers at home (Titus 2:4,5).
 - C. Satan gets a break when a child's mother and father are not both Christians.
 1. He gets a break when children don't have good examples set before them (Deut. 6:2; Eph. 6:4).
 2. When they are not taught the Bible.
 3. When they are not taken to all the services of the church.
 4. When dads and mothers are more concerned with academic grades than with their knowledge of the divine word.
 5. Parents who neglect these things hand Satan the key to their children's souls.
 - D. Satan gets a big break when one marries a person who will discourage his zeal in serving the Lord and who will not help in bringing up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

- A. In this great battle against sin, don't give Satan the breaks. Don't make it easy for him to win.
- B. Paul: "Neither give place to the devil." (Eph. 4:27)
- C. James: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)
- D. Peter: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (I Peter 5:8)
- E. Don't let him get the upper hand. Rather, say as Jesus did, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

THE DEVICES OF SATAN (2)

TEXT: II Cor. 2:11.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In our first lesson on this subject we emphasized the expression, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us." In this lesson we will consider the latter part of the verse, "For we are not ignorant of his devices."
- B. Satan does not give up when we become Christians; he still

uses his devices on us.

- C. "Devices" comes from a word meaning "thought—that which is thought out, hence a purpose, device." In speaking of Satan's devices, then, we are referring to his cunning plans, his craftiness, his deceptive schemes by which he takes advantage of men and women, and influences them to turn away from the truth.
- D. Consider other translations; *Amplified*: "To keep Satan from getting the advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions." *Revised Standard*: "Designs." *New American Standard*: "Schemes."
- E. If I were going to paint a picture of Satan, I would paint one representing him in deep thought.
- F. If you are resisting one or more of his devices at the present time, he is thinking up one that he hopes will get you in the future.
- G. Let us then be aware of his devices.

DISCUSSION: I. He slanders the people of God, belittling them.

- A. He slandered Job, Jesus ("gluttonous"), John the Baptist ("hath a devil").
- B. He will cause someone to belittle your Christian life, if he can; to try to discourage you. It might be someone at home, or at work.

II. He implies that God is unfair.

- A. His approach to Eve: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Implied: "You mean God is all that narrow? That unreasonable?"
- B. He promotes similar questions today: "Nobody saved but believers in Christ?" or "Just one church?" or "Folks have to be baptized to be saved?" or "Baptism is just by immersion?"
- C. Then he convinces people, "You don't want a God who is that narrow."

III. He denies in an outright way God's word.

- A. He said to Eve, "Thou shalt not surely die."
- B. Today he says, "You don't have to be baptized," or "You don't have to be buried in baptism," or "There are many bodies."

IV. He appeals to man's three basic weaknesses.

- A. These are listed in I John 2:16: the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the vain glory of life.

B His approach to Eve was on the basis of these three weaknesses (Gen. 3:6). C. His approach to Jesus was the same (Matt. 4:1-11).

V. He finds fault with the Bible.

- A. He questions its historical and scientific accuracy.
- B. He points out apparent contradictions.

VI. He tries to counteract the preaching of the pure word.

- A. His plan is: "I'll not try to stop preaching; I'll promote preaching, but I will fill the world with false teachers." He has succeeded (II Cor. 11:13-15; Matt. 7:15; II Pet. 2:1-3; I John 4:1; Jer. 23:16,17,21,22). So he promotes lots of preaching and false doctrine, so that people who want to serve God will be led away from God.
- B. He once tried to destroy the church, but failed; so now he promotes churches. He had to do something about people who were determined to engage in worship and Christian fellowship, so he built churches to keep people away from the church Jesus built.
- C. In all of this he is successful (II Tim. 4:1-4).

VII. He catches the word out of the hearts of many who hear.

- A. Scriptures: Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12.
- B. Satan is disturbed when a sinner goes to hear the pure word of God or when a faithful Christian is invited into a home to teach the pure word.
- C. So he puts his "thought machine" into action, and finds ways to keep the people from studying and understanding the pure word of God.

VIII. He persuades young people that they can have their fling first, and then become Christians.

- A. God teaches otherwise (Eccle. 12:1).
- B. But Satan knows the hardening power of sin, and if he can get the young person to have his fling, that young person will likely never become a Christian (Heb. 3:13).

CONCLUSION:

How cautious we must be concerning the devil's devices, lest he succeed in destroying our souls.

THY WILL BE DONE

TEXT: Matt. 6:5-13.

INTRODUCTION:

A. For our consideration today we are studying one of the petitions in the prayer Jesus gave to His disciples, “Thy will be I done on earth, as it is in heaven.” B. It is delightful to meditate on what this world would be like if God's will were done by all, as it is in heaven. What a different world! What a happy world!—a real outer court of heaven. C. Just suppose every responsible person should believe in Christ and obey the teaching of Acts 3:19; Rom. 10:10; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Then suppose each went on to obey such passages as Acts 4:12; I Cor. 1:10-13; Heb. 10:25; Mt. 7:12; etc. There would be no crime, no war, no broken homes, no drunkards, no strife between employers and employees, no starvation.

D. Everything does the will of God but man. His will is done in nature; seasons, fields, flowers, trees, sun, moon, stars, rain, snow. His will is done within the animal creation.

E. Only man, God's highest order of earthly creation, refuses to bow in submission to God's will for him. Man has brought upon the earth all its ills, and he has done it by rebellion against God.

F. There is only one remedy: man must say, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” He must not only say these words, he must say them from the heart and live up to them.

G. In our lesson we will discuss three areas in which we must maintain the attitude: “Thy will be done.”

DISCUSSION: I. **This must be my attitude toward my own life.**

A. It is fundamental to knowing God's teaching—John 7:16, 17; II Thess. 2:10-12.

B. It is fundamental to entrance into Christ's kingdom — Matt. 7:21.

1. Right at the threshold of the kingdom one must lay aside his own will—none is inside except those who do His will.

2. No one is converted who cannot truly say, “Thy will be done.”

3. No one can get in who complains about baptism.

4. No one can get in who, having learned that God says, “Buried in baptism,” holds out for sprinkling.

- 5 No one can get in who, having learned that Jesus built His church, holds out for a choice of churches.
- 6 No one can get in who complains about attending worship.
7. People who can truly pray this prayer would choose to do God's will, even if God would let them by with something different. C. It is fundamental in being Christ-like.
 1. Scriptures: Heb. 10:7; John 4:34.
 2. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, He said, "Let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."
 3. He had drunk the cup of joy on the mount of transfiguration; He had done so when Mary anointed Him.
 4. But here was a bitter cup of grief and sorrow such as we cannot comprehend, sufficient to atone for the broken law, to meet the demands of justice. Three times He prayed that this cup might pass if possible, but each time adding, "Thy will be done." It was God's will that He drink it, and He did.
 5. We must manifest that same attitude to be Christ-like.

II. This must be my attitude toward life's experiences.

- A. The Bible furnishes many examples of acceptance of God's will in this area.
 1. The example of Eli — I Sam. 3:18.
 2. The example of Job — Job 1:21.
 3. The example of Christians at Caesarea — Acts 21:14.
- B. We can accept His will, for He has given divine assurance that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord — Rom. 8:28.

III. This must be my attitude as I pray for others.

- A. I must not only pray that God's will may be done in the lives of others, I must labor to bring others to submission to His will.
- B. This must be true as I work with those in my own home, with my neighbors, and in the preaching of the gospel throughout the world.

CONCLUSION:

Are you willing to say, "Thy will be done?" We learn His will by studying His word. He wants you to accept His will, for He is "not willing that any should perish." Thus, His will is for you to be saved. Will His will be done in your life?

THE POLLUTED CITY

TEXT: Zeph. 3:1,2.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In recent years we have heard much about pollution. Air pollution, water pollution. Drastic action is being taken and great expense incurred to clean them up. When I was a boy, and even when middle-aged, I had heard nothing of such a thing.
- B. But one of the prophets wrote about a polluted city 2500 years ago. In Zeph. 3:1 we read, “Woe to her that is rebellious and *polluted!* to the oppressing city.” (ASV)
- C. Zephaniah was not writing about air pollution or water pollution. If those old prophets lived now I think they would write about air pollution—pollution by radio and television.
- D. This lesson will be a study of Zephaniah's description of that polluted city.

DISCUSSION: I. **Rebellious.**

- A. “Woe to her that is rebellious.” (ASV)
- B. Their sin.
 - 1. Not altogether that of neglect, lukewarmness, or weakness of the flesh. People fall into these and see their error and repent. They still have a respectful attitude.
 - 2. Theirs was a spiteful, rebellious spirit or attitude. Willful, stubborn, determined. (For parallels, see Isa. 65:2; Jer. 5:23; Ps. 107:11; Jer. 6:16,17) Ps. 78:7,8.)
- C. Rebellious persons.
 - 1. Assume a “You-can't-make-me-do-it” attitude.
 - a. Some children toward parents.
 - b. Some members toward what is preached.
 - c. Some members and non-members toward some of God's word.
 - 2. They take delight in showing that they can't be made to act contrary to their wishes. Opposite of Isa. 66:2.
 - 3. They are deceived. They think they are winning, whereas, in fact, they are losing.
 - a. Eph. 6:1,2. Rebel against parents, you rebel against God.
 - b. Heb. 13:17. Rebel against elders, you rebel against God.
 - c. If you have no fear of rebelling against God, you are traveling toward destruction.
- D. God could *make* you do anything He wants you to do.

1. But He made you with a mind to think and endowed you with power to choose.
 2. One day when God says, "Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," you will not give Him a dirty and contemptuous look and say, "You can't make me do it."
- II. "She obeyed not the voice."
- A. Whose voice? There are many voices. In verses 5 and 7 we learn that it is the voice of God.
 - B. They did not respect His authority. Chapter 1:12. They treated His word as the fallible words of men.
 - C. True even of prophets and priests (vs. 4). They were not serious enough to earnestly teach and warn. They were light, frivolous, wanted no enemies and were eager to be popular. Like modernists of today who teach and write books.
- III. "She received not correction."
- A. Compare with Jeremiah's scroll (Jer. 36:23,24).
 - B. The Bible has quite a bit to say about those who will not receive correction.
 1. Prov. 15:5; 23:9; 12:15; 15:32.
 2. So you can tell the wise from the fools by the way they receive correction from those in authority.
- IV. "She trusted not in Jehovah."
- A. God had delivered Israel from enemies many times:
 1. From Egypt.
 2. From Midian with 300 men.
 3. From Canaanites who had 900 chariots of iron (Jud. 4).
 4. From the Assyrians in Hezekiah's reign (II Chr. 32:20-23).
 - B. But now they were afraid to trust Him. They called on Egypt for help.
- V. "She drew not near to her God."
- A. They still went through their forms of worship, but insincerely. Is. 1:11-18; 29:13.
 - B. There is lots of religion now, lots of profession. But the word of God is ignored.
 1. Multitudes call themselves religious but do not "Take time to be holy, etc."
 2. There is ten times as much enthusiasm over a ball game or a Country Music show as there is in a gospel meeting.

CONCLUSION:

- A. We live in a polluted country. Our lawmakers and courts allow pollution. I admire anyone who will stand against it in the face of opposition and persecution.
- B. We need to fight pollution in our homes. We must guard our children as much as possible. (See Mt. 24:12)
- C. If we fight pollution we will be criticized, called cranky, squares, etc. But pollution will kill; it will destroy—bodies and souls.

WHY MAKE CONVERTS TO A DENOMINATION?

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Some may be disappointed to learn that our subject has to do with the church. Might not have come if they had known it.
- B. Modern preachers have minimized the importance of the church—called it non-essential. Led the people to believe they are all good, so there is no need to spend time on what the New Testament says about it.
- C. *What else can such preachers do?* They preach for churches not mentioned in the Bible. So their only defense is to say, “Oh, it doesn't matter about the church; it is all right to be a member of one the Bible does not mention.”
- D. First of all, then, we must remind you of Christ's relation to the church:
 1. He built it and it is His (Matt. 16:18).
 2. He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28).
 3. He loved it and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25-27).
 4. It is His body (Col. 1:18).
- E. With this in mind, let us approach our subject, “Why Make Converts to a Denomination?”

DISCUSSION: I. Historical background.

- A. Jesus born about 4-6 B.C.
 1. Twenty centuries have passed since that time.
 2. The church Jesus built had its beginning in the *first century*.
- B. Now a little history of the Catholic Church.
 1. Apostasy was foretold. II Thess. 2:3,4. It was **gradual**.
 2. No universal Bishop or Pope until 606 A.D.
- C. Indication of approximate beginning of Protestant Bodies.
 1. Popular idea is that everyone ought to join one of these.
 2. They persuade people to join one. Each tries to get people to join their own.
 3. Our question: *Why?*

- II. Some things to be prayerfully considered.
 - A. The leaders in these churches admit that one can be saved without being a member.
 - B. We know that thousands were saved before they existed.
 - 1. Three thousand on Pentecost. Acts 2.
 - 2. The Samaritans. Acts 8:5-13.
 - 3. The Ethiopian. Acts 8:26-39.
 - 4. Cornelius and family. Acts 10.
 - 5. Lydia and the jailer. Acts 16:12-34.
 - C. Denominationalism is contrary to our Savior's prayer. John 17:20-21.
 - D. Denominationalism is contrary to apostolic teaching. Col. 3:15; I Cor. 1:10; 12:12-13; 12:20; Eph. 4:3-6.

III. “But can we have Christianity without denominations?”

- A. Try to imagine the possibilities.
 - 1. Suppose a man became a Christian and joined none. Would he be saved?
 - 2. Suppose 100 became Christians and joined none. Would they be saved? If one would be, 100 would be.
 - 3. Well, let's make it a million.
- B. Suppose millions became Christians and no one joined a denomination.
 - 1. What would become of denominations. None would be left.
 - 2. Quotations:
 - a. *Charles Spurgeon*: “I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the 'Baptist' name will soon perish, but let Christ's name last forever.”
— Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. 1, page 168.
 - b. *Martin Luther*: “I pray you to leave my name alone, and not call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for any one. St. Paul would not permit that any should call themselves of Paul, nor Peter, but of Christ. How, then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; let us call ourselves only Christians after him from whom our doctrine comes.”
 - 3. These men had a vision of Christianity without denominationalism.

IV. “But would you just leave them all unchurched?”

- A. Yes, I would — I surely would.
- B. But *the Lord would not*.
 1. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached Christ to a crowd of unbelievers. They thought Jesus was still in the grave, or dead somewhere. Peter convinced them that He was risen; they were His murderers. They believed and asked, “What shall we do?”
 2. Acts 2:38, 41. Then 47.
 3. The Lord added them to His church. *He will add all who render the same obedience today to the same church*. He has done the same for every obedient one through the ages.

V. Consequences of joining a denomination.

- A. If the Lord adds the saved to *His church*, and if some join Luther's church or Wesley's church, they would be members of two churches, providing Christ would keep them.
 1. A denomination would not keep one who was a member of two.
 2. Christ will not either.
- B. Joining a denomination would *sectarianize* a group of genuine Christians.
 1. Suppose 500 believed, repented, confessed faith and were baptized in a gospel meeting. They would all be members of the Lord's church, added by Him.
 2. But suppose 100 were persuaded to join a denomination, etc. They would then be sectarianized.
 3. Sects and parties are condemned in the Bible. Gal. 5:19-21, etc.

VI. If all saved people refused to join a denomination, what would God expect of them?

- A. Heb. 10:25. Assemblies in various neighborhoods for convenience. As in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, seven churches of Asia.
- B. Be called “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16), “churches of God” (I Thess. 2:14).
- C. Do the things they did in their assemblies (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Eph. 5:19, etc.)
- D. No earthly headquarters. Elders in every church (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28).
- E. Live as directed in New Testament (Acts 2:42), not by human creeds.

CONCLUSION:

- A. These things possible in our day.
- B. If God was pleased then, He will be now as we duplicate their practice.

ONE THING

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Write “ONE THING” on chalk board.
- B. Do you suppose we can make a sermon from these two words?
- C. They are used together several times under different circumstances that should suggest some worthwhile thoughts.

DISCUSSION: I. David

(Psalms 27:4).

- A. Context indicates this was written when David was a fugitive.
 1. Saul sought his life as he would that of a wild animal.
 2. David was forced to live away from cities or settled areas for Saul's friends would report his whereabouts.
 3. He lived in mountains, caves, even in foreign countries.
- B. One thing he desired of the Lord.
 1. Not comfort—not the throne—not city life.
 2. But to dwell in the house of the Lord. This was what he missed most, for he loved the house of the Lord. Ps. 122:1; Ps. 100.
- C. How I wish all professing Christians loved the times of worship and study that way. Glad to come every time. Glad to stay and sing and pray and hear the word.
 1. There is one thing you will sacrifice more to obtain than anything else; one thing that you will brave the worst of weather to attend; somewhere that you will go when you are feeling too bad to go any where else.
 2. What is that one thing for you?

II. The rich young ruler.

- A. Tell the story from Mark 10:17-22.
- B. We learn here that there may be just one thing between us and heaven.
 1. Could be baptism into Christ. No matter how religious, how honest, how clean, how generous, you must be baptized into Christ or you will die in your sins. John 3:5; Eph. 1:6-7; Gal. 3:27.
 2. One thing may cause you who have been baptized to be lost. Jas. 1:4.
 - a. May be covetousness, pride, love of the world, neglect of the word.
 - b. II Cor. 13:5; Heb. 4:1; I Pet. 1:17; II Pet. 3:17,18.
 - c. I fear we think it is too easy.

III. Paul in Philippians 3:13-14.

- A. Pressed toward the mark for the prize.
- B. To do this he needed to forget the things that were behind, the things of the world that he had forsaken (note verses 7,8).
 - 1. Lot's wife couldn't forget the things behind (Gen. 19:26).
Too many in the church look back longingly on the city of sin.
 - 2. Israel could not forget Egypt (Num. 11:4-6).

IV. Martha (Luke 10:38-42).

- A. Similar to the preceding. We are troubled about too many things—luxuries, comforts, beautiful furniture, dresses, etc.
- B. But one thing is needful—to press toward the prize.
 - 1. These other things will seem so inconsequential when we come to judgment.
 - 2. Nothing of this world should be the chief end for living. The chief end should be that prize of the high calling of God. Every other thing should be made to contribute to that end.
- C. Illustration: Once I had been away from home. I started home. My only concern was getting home. A tire turned up flat. I stopped and tried to change it but my jack wouldn't work. I stopped in the next town and bought another tire. Soon it was half flat. Stopped again—new valve stem. Stopped and bought gas. Why all this? Was this the purpose of the trip? All of it was to help me get home.
- D. Martha, Martha, one thing is needful—get home.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Let everything else be to help us get home.
- B. In judgment you may think of this sermon.

WHAT WOULD PAUL SAY TO INCREASE CONTRIBUTIONS?

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Occasionally we preach a sermon on contributing to the church. Our design is to get every Christian to do his duty, and in doing so to prepare for heaven—Luke 16:10-12.
- B. Paul, in II Cor. 8 and 9 used various arguments in teaching the Corinthians concerning giving. The brethren in Judea had suffered reverses and were in need of financial assistance. Paul made a great effort among the Gentile churches to raise money for them. It was in this connection that he made his appeals to the church at Corinth.
- C. So, in this lesson we raise the question, “What would Paul say to persuade brethren to give?”

DISCUSSION:

- I. **They must give to follow the example of other good churches—II Cor. 8:1-5,**
 - A. The Macedonians' giving is described in these verses.
 - B. I like to feel that our members here are equal to any in our area in their generosity and desire to sacrifice. Certainly God wants us to be.

- II. **They must give to round out their spiritual lives—II Cor. 8:7.**
 - A. The need for “completeness” in our service to the Lord is emphasized in James 1:4 and Col. 4:12. This is what we want in a house, rather than one without a floor or without doors or without a roof.
 - B. One may practice self-denial, pray, study, attend. But if he is stingy with the Lord, he throws it all out the window.

- III. **They must give to prove the sincerity of their love—II Cor. 8:8.**
 - A. We are not to love just in word and tongue—I John 3:18. But this is what we do when we sing, "O How I Love Jesus," but fail to give generously.
 - B. To claim to love Him, but fail to give is to be hypocritical. Consider Matt. 15:8.

- IV. **They must give to follow the example of Christ—II Cor. 8:9.**
 - A. He gave up heaven where angels worshipped Him to come to earth where few would worship Him and where many would hate Him.
 - B. He became so poor that He had no place to lay His head—Luke 9:58. He did so *that we might be rich*.
 - C. Will He save me if I love my dollars so much that I will not give so others might have heaven's riches?

- V. **They must give to fulfill a previous promise—II Cor. 8:10,11.**
 - A. Christians are taught to purpose (II Cor. 9:7); to purpose according to their prosperity (I Cor. 16:1,2).
 - B. They must give to fulfill this purpose or pledge to the Lord. Contributions should be given for the Sundays they were away from the local church.

- VI. **They must give because of their confidence in the way the funds will be handled—II Cor. 8:18-21.**
 - A. Every church should see to it that money is handled honestly.
 - B. Every church should see to it that money is dispensed scripturally.

- VII. They must give because they have a reputation to live up to—
II Cor. 9:1-5.
 - A. They had freely promised a year before. Paul had used their willingness as an example to others.
 - B. Paul did not want them to embarrass him or themselves.
- VIII. They must give to sow bountifully, that they might be able to reap bountifully—II Cor. 9:6.
- IX. They must give recognizing God's ability to increase their power to do good—II Cor. 9:8-10. This increase would not be to provide more luxuries, but to increase the fruits of their righteousness.

CONCLUSION:

- A. While giving is important, no one can pay his way to heaven. Money can't pay for forgiveness now or later.
- B. Over and over the Word emphasizes that one must place his faith in Christ—trust Him.
- C. This is done only by obeying Him.

DORCAS

INTRODUCTION

- A. In this lesson, I will be talking of a woman I never saw; nor have I seen her picture; but I am sure she was a beautiful woman.
- B. She never entered a beauty contest. She didn't have a drug store complexion. She knew nothing of modern hairdos. But she was beautiful. She didn't display her body to attract others, but she was attractive.
- C. She had the beauty described in I Tim. 2:9,10 and I Peter 3:1-4.
- D. We are talking of Dorcas—Acts 9:36-41.

DISCUSSION: I. Dorcas was full of good works and almsdeeds.

- A. This made her beautiful.
- B. I know women full of complaining, contrariness, faultfinding, gossip, pride, worldliness, deceit, etc. Such women are not beautiful. They may have beautiful forms and faces, but those who know them know that they are ugly.
- C. I don't know how Sapphira looked physically, but her character was ugly. She and her husband formed a team for the devil and contrived together to lie to God and to deceive the church.
- D. Lying, deceitful women are a curse to their home, their husband, their children, their community; and if they are in the church, they are a reproach to it. It is a pity if such women become mothers. It is unfortunate for little boys and girls to have such a mother.

II. Dorcas died.

- A. Is it strange that such a fine woman should die?
 - 1. Yes, but doing good does not prevent sickness or death. We need this reminder lest we lose faith and become discouraged.
 - 2. Many great men suffered: Job (Job 1:6—2:10); Stephen

(Acts 7:54-60); James (Acts 12:1,2); Timothy (I Tim. 5:23); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-27); Paul (II Cor. 11:23-28); Trophimus (II Tim. 4:20). B. Tears were shed when she died.

1. Not as at Herod the Great's death; not as tears are shed for the lost.
2. Widows wept. They sent for Peter, and they showed him garments that Dorcas had made for them while she was with them.

III. Dorcas left something to show for her life.

- A. If you should die, what could your friends show? What could they say? "He helped me?" "He sat nights with me?" "Brought meals?" "Washed clothes?" "Washed dishes?"
"Carried us to services?" "Called me when I was negligent?" "Kept after me to attend?" Would any widows or homeless children weep? Will the Lord see anything? (Matt. 25:31-46).
- B. It costs something to leave a showing for life.
 1. Selfish people or lazy people won't leave anything. People concerned only with making money, entertainment, or display won't leave anything.
 2. Dorcas had to deny herself of comforts, of pleasures. Making garments costs in money and time. She didn't have time to join clubs, circles, organizations. She had no time to play bridge, etc. But she could have sung, "I want to be a worker for the Lord."
 3. The Bible teaches that there is a cost to serving the Lord—John 12:24,25.

IV. Dorcas was letting her light shine where neighbors could see.

- A. Jesus teaches us to do this—Matt. 5:16.
- B. If she had sent her money far away to a central organization it would have meant nothing at home.
- C. Good works should be done in the Lord's vineyard—Matt. 20:1-16.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Make your life beautiful.
- B. There is not much of life and opportunity left. Let us all redeem the time.

DISOBEDIENCE A STUDY OF KING SAUL

INTRODUCTION:

- A. King Saul is an outstanding example of disobedience and its consequences.
- B. Two instances of disobedience stand out: his usurpation of the priestly office (I Sam. 13:8-14), and his failure to utterly destroy the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:1-23).
- C. Samuel's rebukes were severe—I Sam. 13:13; 15:22,23.
- D. Observe the lessons we can learn from Saul's disobedience.

DISCUSSION:

- A. Saul's disobedience certainly revealed his character, character that would grow steadily worse through the passing years.
- B. Our disobedience reveals our character.
 1. It shows a lack of love—I John 5:3; John 14:15.
 2. It shows lack of respect for authority. This is true of children who disobey their parents and of citizens who disobey civil law. While Saul made excuses for his disobedience, his real failure resulted from thinking himself to be above God's law. The man who had begun his kingship with humility had now become proud; thus, disobedient.

II. Disobedience is foolish.

- A. Samuel told Saul he had done foolishly (I Sam. 13:13), and Saul himself admitted, "I have played the fool" (I Sam. 26:21).
 1. The person who comes to the judgment in a state of disobedience will say the same thing of himself.
 2. Jesus illustrated the foolishness of disobedience—Matt. 7:24-27.
- B. Disobedience is foolish because:
 1. It fails to take into consideration the terrible consequences of sin. Had Saul been able to look into the future to hear Samuel say, "God has taken the kingdom from you" (I Sam 15:28; 28:17); had he been able to foresee his disgrace before the people; had he been able to foresee his sons falling in battle; had he been able to foresee his own despondence to the point of taking his own life; he might not have disobeyed.
 2. It is a challenge to God. It dares God to carry out His threat against disobedience (II Thess. 1:7-9). We are inclined to think that our own sins are not so deadly; that we will somehow escape the grief and woe that others suffer; that we will escape reaping as we sow. How foolish to so think!

III. Disobedience is expensive.

- A. It was expensive to Saul.
 - 1. It robbed him of his kingdom.
 - 2. It robbed him of the company of his greatest friend. After Samuel rebuked Saul the second time, he left him and he never saw him again. After Samuel died, Saul became so desperate to see him that he illegally employed a woman with a familiar spirit to call Samuel up—the very man he wouldn't listen to when he could have done so.
 - 3. It robbed him of his life.
- B. It is expensive to the sinner now,
 - 1. It robs one of the peace of mind that he can enjoy when he is doing right. God gave man a conscience to make him feel uneasy when he sins, to drive him back to the right way. If one sins to the point that his conscience no longer functions and whips him, there is little hope of his salvation—Heb. 6:4-6.
 - 2. It robs one of fellowship with God, even on earth—I John 1:7. It seems so futile to pray when one is in disobedience and rebellion, for he realizes God is not near to hear—I Pet. 3:10-12.
 - 3. It robs one of the riches of heaven— II Cor. 8:9; Col. 1:18. It would be bad to be robbed of all earthly possessions—house, car, clothing, money, health, friends. How much worse to be robbed of heaven!

CONCLUSION:

Let us profit from the mistakes of Saul, and rid our lives of all disobedience, that we might have happiness both in this life and for eternity.

TWO MEN WHO BURIED JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The two men who buried Jesus deserve more attention and honor than they receive.
- B. In their work we definitely see the hand or providence of God. The disciples could not have buried Him. Had it not been for them, He would have been buried with the thieves in a common burying ground. They, however, gave Him an honorable burial and we owe them a debt of gratitude.
- C. Besides, the scriptures had prophesied that He would be buried with the rich (Isa. 53:9). Had He received a common

burial, the prophecy would not have been fulfilled. D. So, consider with me these two men who buried Jesus.

DISCUSSION: I. Joseph of Arimathea.

- A. Good things to be said of Joseph.
 - 1. He was a rich man—Matt. 27:57-60.
 - 2. He was an honorable councilor—Mark 15:43.
 - 3. He was a good and righteous man who had not consented to the death of Christ—Luke 23:50-51. This suggests a considerable contrast between him and his fellow-rulers—Matt. 27:59-67.
 - 4. He was waiting for the kingdom—Mark 15:43. This suggests that he was concerned about spiritual **things, not** just making an outward show for the praise of men. He must have often been among the crowd who **heard Jesus** and was attentive to His teaching.
 - 5. He was a man of discernment whose thinking could not be influenced by the masses. While others of his class were saying, “By Beelzebub”; “Thou hast a devil”; He eats with publicans and sinners”; “He blasphemes”; “A gluttonous man and a winebibber”; Joseph was believing in Him.
- B. A disappointing note concerning Joseph.
 - 1. John says that he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews—John 19:38.
 - 2. All of this kindness is shown; yet he is a secret disciple. How did he explain his kindness? **It could have been** purely on humanitarian considerations.
 - 3. He must have been one who did not submit to John's baptism—Luke 7:29,30.
 - 4. Jesus had many secret disciples—John 12:42,43. Was Joseph among those spoken of in these verses? Jesus made many appeals to these—Matt. 10:32,33; 12:30; Mark 8:38.
- C. Did Joseph remain a secret disciple?
 - 1. We have no record concerning this. If he did remain a secret disciple, all of his other fine qualities were insufficient to save him.
 - 2. So it will be with us if we refuse to confess Him openly—Eph. 2:8,9; Phil. 2:9-11; Rom. 10:10; Titus 3:5.

II. Nicodemus.

- A. John tells us that Nicodemus joined Joseph in burying Jesus—John 19:39.
- B. On other occasions he had demonstrated good qualities.
 - 1. He had gone to hear for himself what Jesus was saying;

thus not depending on the testimony of Jesus' enemies—John 3:1,2.

2. He had refused to be blinded by prejudice: “Rabbi, we know...” John 3:2.

3. He had rebuked his colleagues for condemning Jesus without an honest hearing—John 7:50-52.

C. Now, as Jesus dies, he shows his appreciation for the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

Let us appreciate the two men who buried Jesus and develop in our lives the good qualities which they demonstrated.

CHARACTERS CONNECTED WITH THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

A. Our lesson has to do with the birth of Christ—the characters connected with His birth.

B. Such lessons are often presented around the 25th of December. But nothing is known as to the date of Jesus' birth. Every month in the year has been assigned by some as His birth month. Bishop Lightfoot decided He was born in September. The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates Jan. 6. The 25th of December was already a great pagan festival, so it was appropriated by the Catholics as a time to celebrate the birth of Christ.

C. The characters surrounding the birth of Christ present an interesting contrast in attitudes.

DISCUSSION: I. **Mary,** the mother.

A. The greatness of her character.

1. “Highly favored”—Luke 1:28-30. She was not, as the Catholics suggest; miraculously conceived, without sin, too holy to be a wife, a mediator, taken to heaven with out dying.

2. Chaste—Luke 1:34.

3. Devout—Luke 1:46-49.

4. Her character was not modeled after the modern Hollywood characters. Who believes she would have appeared in public in the immodest attire of our times; or that she would have smoked, taken drugs to craze her brain, given herself to drink or dancing? Would God have selected YOU if He were bringing a Son into the world?

B. The greatness of her honor.

1. She was honored to be the mother of the Lord.

2. Honor from the people of the world came later. No doubt she had trouble convincing her neighbors of how she came to be with child. The Jews later said that Jesus was born of fornication (John 8:41). Even Joseph doubted the story and needed confirmation. But it was God's plan that His Son be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), and no doubt there were honest and informed people who believed.

II. Joseph.

- A. A man of mercy. He had found his betrothed to be with child. He felt that he had been wronged. His confidence was shaken. But he planned to put her away privily, without exposure, seeking no revenge. This was his plan in spite of the fact that the law required stoning.
- B. A man of patience. He was willing to make the long, tedious journey to Egypt. God could have miraculously preserved Jesus, but He laid the burden on the parents.
- C. A man desirous of doing God's will. He was one of God's obscure, lowly, humble servants.

III. The wise men.

- A. The wise men were “an order of priests and philosophers from the far east,” east of the Euphrates River, more than 1000 miles from Bethlehem. These were Gentiles who still knew something of God and sought to serve Him. To guide them to the Christ, a miraculous star was placed in the heavens by God Himself.
- B. When they found Jesus:
 1. They rejoiced with exceeding joy.
 2. They fell down and worshiped Him. They worshiped the child, not the mother.
 3. They opened their treasures. No person truly worships Christ who is not willing to open his treasures. Our giving proves the sincerity of our love—II Cor. 8:8.
- C. Some of the first known worshippers of Christ were Gentiles—a token of the future obedience of the Gentiles—John 10:16.
- D. Through the star God found a way to let the hungry and thirsty know that Jesus was born—Matt. 5:6.

IV. The chief priests and scribes.

- A. These were summoned by the jealous Herod to learn where the Christ should be born.
- B. They knew the answer. They quoted Micah 5:2. Why did they fail to understand Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 9:6 as referring to the Messiah?
- C. They manifested total indifference to the birth of Christ—in

contrast to the wise men, the shepherds, and Herod.

1. The word of God often stirs religious leaders the least; they are the blindest, last to see, least concerned.
2. These who knew the most did the least. It was a time when the people were in expectation (Luke 3:15), but the shepherds of the people did not share their excitement.

V. Herod.

- A. This was one of the most cruel tyrants known to history. In addition to his wicked deeds on this occasion, he murdered two high priests; his uncle Joseph; his favorite wife, Mariamne; three of his own sons; and many other innocent persons. Before his death he had many prominent citizens imprisoned, ordering that they be killed at the time to assure mourning.
- B. He demonstrated his wicked disposition on this occasion.
 1. He was jealous.
 2. He sought to defy God. He knew the birth of Jesus was of God, for he had consulted prophecy. But he moved immediately to defy God—Gal. 6:7,8.
 3. He manifested deceit toward the wise men.
 4. He murdered the infants in his effort to destroy the Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Had you been living when the Lord was born, would you have been a friend, a foe, or one of the indifferent, unconcerned ones? Which characterizes your present attitude toward Him? Where do you stand in relation to the Lord?

MARY AND MARTHA

TEXT: Luke 10:38-42.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We are studying today about two of the best known women of the Bible, Mary and Martha.
- B. They are mentioned several times. Most of a long chapter (John 11) is devoted to this family. A brother, Lazarus, was raised from the dead by Jesus.
- C. The lesson today has to do with a visit which Jesus made on an earlier occasion, during which a controversy arose between the two sisters.

DISCUSSION: I. Martha's hospitality.

- A. Our text says that “Martha received him.” Why “Martha” is not explained.
- B. Her hospitality is commendable, for Jesus had no place to lay His head—Luke 9:58.
- C. Similar hospitality is needed today.
 - 1. Gospel preachers in meetings need somewhere to lay their heads.
 - 2. Years ago I had some very unpleasant experiences, from which I should have been guarded.
 - 3. When we entertain the servants of Jesus, we entertain Jesus—Matt. 25:35-40.
 - 4. The Shunammite woman serves as a wonderful example of hospitality—II Kings 4:8-10.

II. A Disagreement.

- A. The cause of the disagreement.
 - 1. Martha was very busy preparing a meal (“cumbered about much serving”), while Mary was listening to Jesus.
 - 2. Martha's complaint was directed at Jesus and Mary both.
 - 3. This would have been embarrassing to me had I been in Jesus' place.
- B. Homes today are often troubled by disagreements.
 - 1. I have been in much worse situations than Jesus was in—husband and wife quarreling, both talking at the same time. I wished for the wisdom of Solomon.
 - 2. When such quarrels arise someone is not doing right. Both in fact may be doing wrong.
 - a. Someone is not living by the beatitudes.
 - b. Someone is not living by the scripture which says, “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted...” (Eph. 4:32).
 - c. A husband may be failing to love his wife, or a wife may be failing to be in subjection to her husband. (Eph. 5:22,25).
 - d. Selfishness over clothes or money may have caused the quarrel—or contrariness.

III. Jesus' Answer.

- A. Recorded in verses 41, 42.
- B. This is not the answer I would have given.
 - 1. I likely would have suggested, “Mary, go on and help your sister; we can talk later.” I would have wanted the dinner to be plentiful and good.
 - 2. Jesus, however, took the occasion to teach Martha and all of us a lesson.

- C. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things."
 - 1. Martha had taken on too much of the temporal cares. She had too many "irons in the fire." I doubt if she could have heard had she been at Jesus' feet. Her mind was too troubled about dinner.
 - 2. Many today can hardly read their Bibles or listen to a sermon because they are troubled about temporal cares: shopping, entertainment, organizations, showers, doctor and dental appointments, making a living, keeping records, school affairs.
 - 3. They are like those described in the parable of the sower -Matt. 13:22.
 - 4. We need to preach on "Thou art troubled about many things."
- D. "One thing is needful."
 - 1. What is the meaning of this expression? One dish? Surely the one thing to which Jesus refers is learning and doing God's will.
 - 2. As the sun dims out the stars, so serving God should out shine temporal affairs.

IV. Mary's choice.

- A. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
- B. Many things will be taken away, wealth, sensual pleasures, creature comforts, home.
- C. The spiritual things which Mary chose will abide forever.

CONCLUSION:

The following poem says well what we have been trying to say in this lesson. We regret that we do not have the author's name.

My Martha Side

My house is a tyrant,
 Demanding each hour,
 Imperiously ordering:
 "Sweep, mop and scour!"
 Do the dishes, the laundry,
 Then iron, dust and cook!
 And there's mending to do
 If you'll take a look!
 No, Martha, get busy
 And don't waste a minute:
 Dirt is a sin, and
 You're wallowing in it."

My Mary Side

My housework can wait...
There's a friend I must see,
Who's lonely and frightened,
She's looking for me.
Then I'll tidy up quickly
And hurry to hear
That fine missionary
We support every year. Home
again, Father, thank Thee,
Please help me to care For the
hungry and homeless
Who live in despair.

Martha, Mary, and Me

Martha nags me to keep
My house spotless each day;
And Mary says gently,
"I need time to pray."
Martha's concerned with
What neighbors might think
If they dropped in and found
Dishes stacked in the sink.
While Mary chides, "Selfish!
I think it's a crime, If you
don't share with others
Your talents and time."

APOLLOS

TEXT: Acts 18:24-28.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. How much do you know about Paul? About John? About Peter? We know quite a lot about these.
- B. How much do you know about Apollos? Probably not very much.
- C. There is food for thought, however, in the life of Apollos.

DISCUSSION: I. His origin.

- A. He was a Jew, born in a great city, Alexandria. Alexandria was in northern Africa; the second most important city in the Roman Empire; a chief seat of Hebrew learning; the home of Origen, Clement, and several Gnostic leaders.
- B. Somehow we think preachers are better if they come from a big city. We tend to think the same of doctors and lawyers. This is not always the case, however.

II. His personal traits.

- A. He was eloquent.
 - 1. He could speak with ease and great persuasion. He could say things in well chosen words.
 - 2. This is a great advantage to a preacher. More people will go to hear an eloquent preacher, so his opportunities are multiplied.
 - 3. But eloquence entails great responsibilities, for it can help to carry an audience into error as well as into truth.
 - 4. Some of the church's greatest Bible students have not been eloquent and have consequently been difficult to listen to. Others have been eloquent, but ignorant of the Bible.
- B. He was mighty in the scriptures.
 - 1. He combined knowledge of the scriptures with skill in using them. (II Tim. 3:14,15; II Tim. 2:15). Illustration: A good airplane pilot combines knowledge of the gadgets on his instrument board with skill in using them. A man once died of a heart attack while piloting a plane. His wife, who was with him, knew the controls but was not skilled in using them. A skilled pilot flew to her and radioed instructions enabling her to land.
 - 3. Apollos didn't have the advantages we have. He learned from scrolls written by hand.
 - 4. His knowledge and use of the scriptures are commendable. His eloquence would have been worthless without that combination.
- C. He was fervent in spirit.
 - 1. He had zeal and enthusiasm. The expression "fervent in spirit" means "high on truth."
Illustration: I once had a roommate in the hospital who was excited about transcendental meditation. He talked it to me, to the nurses, to the visitors. He insisted that I see a TV show about it that was nearly two hours in length. He was demonstrating a fervent spirit.
 - 3. I so often hear groups talking football. Some travel hun-

dreds of miles to see a game. Others watch every game on TV.

4. Apollos' fervor caused him to teach diligently the things of the Lord.
5. He was like Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:9) and Paul (Acts 17:16,17).
6. We are all admonished to be fervent in spirit (Rom. 12:11; James 5:16).
7. This was the failing of Laodicia (Rev. 3:15,16). How about us? We are fervent for something. Is it for God's word?

D. He was a fighter for what he believed (vs. 27, 28).

III. His error.

A. Nature of the error.

1. He knew only the baptism of John.
2. Similarities between John's baptism and the baptism of Christ under the great commission: Both involved a burial in water; both were for remission of sins (Mark 1:4).
3. Differences: John's baptism was not in the name of Christ; the Holy Spirit was not promised with John's baptism.

B. Correction of the error.

1. Aquila and Priscilla heard him and corrected his error.
2. They didn't take the great preacher for granted; they listened with care and discernment. They were not simply looking for something to criticize, but, being well informed, they caught the error.
3. Modern religionists would find fault with Aquila and Priscilla. They would charge, "Much ado about nothing," "Of no consequence," "Majoring in minors," or "Legalists."

C. Results of the error.

1. Some in Ephesus followed the error (Acts 19:1-7).
2. Paul corrected them, showing them that the reception of the Spirit depended on the right baptism.

CONCLUSION:

Let us develop the good qualities of Apollos that we, too, might be useful servants of the Lord.

ADMONITIONS TO THE LOST AND STRAYING

DEATH

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The fact of death is one fact known to all. We know it by the Bible (Gen. 3:19; I Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27); by history (only two have escaped—Enoch and Elijah); and by observation.
- B. This is one appointment that even the most careless will not shirk.

DISCUSSION: I. The sobering effect of death.

- A. The thought of death ought to sober the vilest of sinners. It ought to stop the thief, the gambler, the drunkard, the adulterer.
- B. Should someone come from another planet, and visit places where men work and hear their conversation; or visit places of entertainment; or see our literature; or observe what is spent on strong drink; or see the cheating and dishonesty that is so prevalent; or see men hoard and build as though they never expected to leave this earth; surely he would be surprised to learn that these same men know that they must die.
- C. His immediate thought surely would be, "Somebody ought to tell these people that they are transients, that they will be in eternity in a very short time."

II. What we know about death.

- A. Death occurs when the spirit is separated from the body.
 - 1. Man is a dual being, made up of body and spirit—Gen. 2:7.
 - 2. The body is referred to as a house or tabernacle—II Cor. 5:1-3; II Peter 1:12-14.
 - 3. The body dies when the spirit moves out—Gen. 35:18; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; James 2:26.
- B. Death of the body does not end one's existence—Phil. 1:23,24; II Tim. 4:6-8; II Cor. 5:1-3; Matt. 17:1-5.

- C. The soul will be judged after death—Heb. 9:27; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-13.
- D. Two possible destinies await man following death—Matt. 25:31-46.
- E. Preparation for death does not depend upon a perfect life, but upon a life lived in Christ—Rev. 14:13.
 - 1. One enters Christ through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism—Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3.
 - 2. One abides in Christ by bearing fruit—John 15:1-6; Gal. 5:22,23; II Peter 1:5-11.

, The proper attitude toward death.

- A. Many display the wrong attitude.
 - 1. Some simply indulge in self-pity, spending their time in dread and worry. This is unprofitable.
 - 2. Others fret and complain. This is worthless.
 - 3. Others dismiss the reality and take it lightly. Their attitude: “Eat, drink, and be merry.”
- B. The only rational move one can make is to seek refuge in Christ.
 - 1. Suppose you knew a killing storm was coming. But near your house is a beautiful cave, a place of perfect protection. You would seek that cave, wouldn't you?
 - 2. The conies demonstrate this kind of wisdom—Prov. 30:24,26.
 - 3. We have a hiding place and we often sing about it:

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save from wrath and make me pure.”

“While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown, See
Thee on Thy judgment-throne; Rock of
Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself
in Thee.”

—A.M. Toplady
 - 4. You will see Him on that judgment-throne and will stand trembling there. That's a solemn thought! You will need a plea that will be accepted. You can't plead your own worthiness or perfection. You can't deny being a sinner. John says, “We have an advocate.. Jesus Christ the

righteous” (I John 2:1,2). If you die in Christ, you can make Him your plea.

CONCLUSION:

I will conclude with the reading of two passages—II Cor. 5:1-4;
II Peter 1:12-14.

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In Daniel 5, we have a judgment scene. Not the final judgment, but God was the Judge. There are similarities.
- B. It was a dramatic scene. If played on the stage it would make a profound impression. No embellishment would be necessary, no imaginary scenes.

DISCUSSION: I.

The setting.

- A. Belshazzar, King of Babylon made a great feast.
 - 1. His wives and concubines were there and he invited 1,000 of his lords. A great time was expected by all.
 - 2. As an insult to the God of heaven he sent for the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple; from them they drank wine, and worshiped their gods of gold, silver, brass and stone.
 - a. This was very irreverent; it was a desecration of the holy vessels, a defiance of Israel's God. He would show everyone he was not afraid of Israel's God. He was not afraid to dare Him, to issue a challenge to Him or to offend His people.
 - b. In those days wars were considered as battles of the gods. If a nation was defeated its god was thought weak and unable to defend the nation. Nebuchadnezzar had defeated Judah and brought the people to Babylon as captives. This probably made Belshazzar bold to challenge God.
 - 3. Belshazzar felt perfectly safe. Babylon was surrounded by a wall 60 miles in circumference. It was 300 feet high, 80 feet thick and extended 35 feet into the ground. The wall was protected by wide and deep moats or canals filled with water. There were 250 towers on the wall. The Euphrates river flowed through the city in just about the middle of it. They had taken every possible precaution to prevent the entrance of enemies by means of the river. There were many watchmen and guards.

- B. But while the king was engaged in his drunken revelry, enemy forces were busy. History says they dug a new channel for the river and that the Persian army marched into the city through the old river bed. “Cyrus diverted the Euphrates into a new channel, and guided by two deserters, marched by the dry bed into the city while the Babylonians were carousing at a feast of their gods.”

II. God's Intervention.

- A. Just at the right time in the chain of events, there appeared fingers of a hand writing something no one present could read. Try to imagine how weird and mysterious this must have been.
 - 1. The effect: Dynamic! Read Daniel 5:6.
 - 2. Now where was his defiance of God? Where is all his brazen arrogance? It is gone. Now he trembles—quakes. He was probably “white as a sheet.” **He was no great hero before his guests.**
- B. This is a picture of how it will be in the final judgment (Phil. 2:9-11.) **There will be no blasphemers, no atheists.** No smart-alec scoffers who scoff at the Bible and preachers. No one will take His name in vain. The Sanhedrin will not **spit** in His face. They will not blindfold Him or smite Him. They will not mock Him. The **Superstar** crowd will not see Him as a mixed up reluctant martyr. Those now representing Him as a homosexual will tremble with fear.

III. A Desperate Call For Help.

- A. They send for the worldly wise, the enchanters. **No help.**
- B. The queen comes in and tells Belshazzar of Daniel.
 - 1. He should have known about Daniel, but the **king was up high**, and Daniel **was just a little preacher.**
 - 2. Little preachers don't get much attention from the high and mighty. **Kings, governors, wealthy moguls, university professors**, don't pay much attention to little preachers. They are **way up here; preachers are way down there.** I Cor. 1:21,26.
- C. Daniel was brought in.
 - 1. He did not immediately begin to read the handwriting. First, God had a message for him to deliver—a message showing the king he was about to get justice, showing he deserved what was about to happen to him.
 - 2. **Read Daniel 5:18-23.**
 - 3. What was Daniel doing? **Reading the record.**
- D. This is how it will be in the final judgment when we stand to be judged.
 - 1. We will not be left wondering why. Jude 14,15; Matt.

- 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-20.
2. The **record** will be brought out. I. Cor. 4:3-5.
 - a. Mr. Nixon denied what he had done. But they brought the record.
 - b. Mr. Nixon could have destroyed the record. **But we cannot.**
 3. In judgment, God's justice will be fully vindicated.
 4. Many will be disappointed. (Matt. 7:22.) Religious people who:
 - a. Now argue: "We don't have to be baptized; one church is as good as another; etc."
 - b. Did not study, were lukewarm, argued: "All right to wear shorts, etc."
 5. Abraham said to the rich man, "Son, remember." These questions may be asked of you:
 - a. Don't you remember hearing gospel **preachers preach** Acts 2:38? Rom. 6:3? Acts 22:16?
 - b. Don't you remember changing your radio from a gospel sermon to some trash you wanted to hear?
 - c. Don't you remember calling some preachers legalists because they insisted that you must obey Christ to be saved?
 - d. Don't you remember hearing Heb. 10:25, II Tim. 2:15? I Tim. 2:9,10? II Peter 1:5-11? Matt. 6:33?

IV The Interpretation.

- A. For Belshazzar.
 1. **MENE**: "God hath numbered thy kingdom." This is it, so far as your kingdom is concerned.
 - a. He didn't expect that. He had plans.
 - b. Just any day your days may be numbered with all opportunity shut off. Plans disappointed.
 2. **TEKEL**: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." "You have been weighed in the balance of justice and have not measured up. You are not just."
- B. For you.
 1. How would you fare if weighed in the scales of justice, no mercy?
 - a. If you do not obey the gospel you will be found wanting.
 - b. Why? Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; Rom. 3:22,23. These verses mean that if we are weighed in the scales of justice we will be wanting.
 2. Man's only hope is to be **forgiven**.
 - a. Who is forgiven? The person in Christ. Eph. 1:6-7; Rom. 8:1-2.
 - b. How to enter. Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27.

CONCLUSION:

- A. If you believe, repent, confess faith and are baptized into Christ and abide in Him, you will not be found wanting. You will be forgiven.
- B. He will present you to His Father acceptable. Eph. 5:25-27; Col. 1:22.

NEVER GIVE UP

TEXT: Micah 7:8: “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.”

INTRODUCTION:

- A. What greater resolution could one make than, “Though I fall, I will rise”? (New ASV.)
- B. Possibly a more popular resolution is, “I will not fall; I’ll be perfect.” But one finds himself failing on that one.
- C. However, he will not fail as long as he rises immediately when he stumbles. This is a race in which all the runners sometimes stumble, but a fall does not disqualify a runner if he immediately rises.
- D. A comparison with Prov. 24:16 might be helpful.
- E. These are the considerations to be discussed in this lesson.

DISCUSSION: I. **Every Christian should try not to fall.**

- A. He should be like a boxer, seeking strength, trying to stand, withstanding the blows of the enemy.
- B. Scriptures warn against falling: I Pet. 5:8; Prov. 4:14-16; Heb. 3:12.
- C. Other scriptures tell us how to avoid falling: II Pet. 1:5-11; Eph. 6:10-17.

II. **Good men and women do sometimes fall.**

- A. The possibility of their doing so is expressed in Gal. 6:1 and I John 2:1.
- B. Great characters of the Bible did fall into sin: Noah (Gen. 9:20,21); Abraham (Gen. 20:1-5); Moses (Num. 20:7-11); David (II Sam. 11:2-5); Peter (Matt. 26:69-75).

III. The person who falls determines whether or not the enemy rejoices.

- A. If the person stays down, the enemy will rejoice—much as a boxer gloats over a fallen opponent. If, however, he rises from his fall, repents, confesses, and calls upon God for forgiveness, the enemy will find no joy.

- B. Some over whom the enemy rejoiced.
 1. King Saul—The devil rejoiced over him until the day he fell on his spear, for Saul **failed to rise**.
 2. Judas—He rejoiced over Judas until the day he hanged himself. I can imagine his boast, “Ah, I got one of His apostles.”
- C. Some over whom the enemy could not rejoice.
 1. David—The devil's elation must have been great when David committed adultery and murder, but his joy was brief. David repented and turned to the Lord (Psalms 51:1-12). This prayer from David's contrite heart put a stop to Satan's rejoicing. **David rose again**.
 2. Peter—Peter's fall was a shameful fall. Satan must have exclaimed, “I've got him—I've got that big-mouthed apostle!” His joy was brief, however, Peter was weak, but he had a tender conscience, one that could make him ashamed. The cock's crow and the Lord's look awakened that conscience, and Peter went out and wept. Peter's repentance ended the devil's joy. **Peter rose again**.
- D. Present day applications.
 1. Right now I could write the names of men and women I know over whom Satan is rejoicing. No doubt he thinks of some good meetings of past years in which many were baptized. But he went to work and is now boasting, “I messed most of that up.” Many of those fell and did not come up fighting. They didn't rise again.
 2. Others I could name fell, but they did rise, and they are still fighting.
 3. Satan can't rejoice against any child of God who hates his sins, confesses them, and prays for mercy—Heb. 4:15,16; I John 1:7-9.

IV. **There are reasons why some don't rise.**

- A. Some think that if they once fall, they are hypocrites.
 1. This is not the case, however.
 2. Hypocrites are not sincere. They want to deceive. They act as if they had not fallen.
- B. Some become discouraged.
 1. They tend to say, “I can never be a Christian; I just can't make it.”
 2. They don't get up; they give up.
 3. You can't “make it” through perfection, but you can do so through God's grace— Heb. 4:15,16; Ps. 103:10-13.

CONCLUSION:

There will be no second chance after death, but you can have many chances here. As often as you can truly repent, you can

try again. God and Christ paid a great price so you wouldn't have to give up. **Never give up!**

THE MORAL MAN

INTRODUCTION:

- A. I knew a man once who attended services with his family, but he was not a Christian. I held a meeting near his home, and he attended all the services. I decided to ask him why he had not been baptized into Christ. He replied that he had always lived a good life, was thoughtful of his family, and had tried to help the needy, and that he could hardly think that such a man could be lost.
- B. There may be others who think as he did, so we bring a lesson today concerning the moral man.
- C. All men must be moral to go to heaven. Faith, baptism, worship attendance, prayer, the Lord's supper, etc. will not save the immoral man or woman—Rev. 21:9; Gal. 5:19-21.
- D. But morality in itself can never take a man to heaven.
- E. Consider the following observations concerning *the moral man who has not obeyed the gospel*.

DISCUSSION: I. He is a sinner.

- A. No responsible person can be so righteous as to be free of sin.
- B. Scriptures: Rom. 3:22,23; Rom. 3:9.

II. He needs to be saved.

- A. Cornelius was a good man, but he needed salvation—Acts 10:1-6; 11:14.
- B. II Thess. 1:7-9.

III. He is trying to be saved by works.

- A. That is, if he has the attitude of the man described in my opening illustration.
- B. Paul teaches that one cannot be saved by his own meritorious works—Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; Phil. 3:9; II Tim. 1:9,10.
- C. To say that one is saved by grace is to say that he is saved by God's forgiveness.
- D. Fraternal orders often promise salvation to their members on the basis of good works.

IV. He is the enemy of Christ—Matt. 12:30.

V. He is a bad example.

- A. This may seem to be a strange statement, but the moral man's children and other young people know they should not follow the example of the drunkard, the thief, the adulterer, the murderer.
 - B. But they admire that moral man. He can advise them and they consider him wise.
 - C. Yet, his example falls short of leading them to be Christians. His example will not lead them to heaven.
- VI. He ignores the only way to heaven.
- A. One can go to heaven only through Christ.
 - B. Scriptures: John 14:6; Gal. 3:27.
- VII. He does not want the influence of Christ removed from the earth, yet he is not on the Lord's side.
- A. If I could destroy every shred of evidence that Jesus ever lived—all the art, all the books, all the songs, all the Lord's servants, all the refining influence, the church—he would not want me to do so.
 - B. But he still refuses to become one of the Lord's true servants.

CONCLUSION:

When Moses came down from the mount and saw the golden calf, he challenged the people with the question, “Who is on the Lord's side?”—Ex. 32:26. The same challenge faces the moral man who has not obeyed the gospel. Jesus is calling the moral man and all of us to come to His side, to fight the good fight of faith.

MISTAKES OF A GREAT MAN

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Great men do make mistakes—Moses, David, Hezekiah, Uzziah, Peter.
- B. So we can't follow even the greatest preachers blindly; nor even good parents.
- C. The great man we are speaking of in this lesson is Naaman. He was great as men count greatness (II Kings 5:1).
- D. But then it is added, “But he was a leper.” This was comparable to one's saying today, “He has leukemia or cancer.”

DISCUSSION: I. Facts about leprosy.

- A. It was incurable by the power of man.
- B. It was a very loathsome disease.

1. Dr. Trumbull, a modern traveler:

“As our traveling party passed out of the western gate of Nablus, the site of Ancient Shechem, 'a city of Samaria,' a group of repulsive lepers greeted us with calls for help. They showed various forms of that terrible disease: the nose or the lips, a hand or a foot eaten away; the limbs distorted, and in one case at least there was a 'leper white as snow.' When we were fairly in our tents beyond the city, westward, those lepers came fifteen in all, and seated themselves afar off in a semicircle, facing our tents, with one of their number a little in advance of the others holding out a dish for alms; and as with one voice they cried aloud for us to have pity on them and to give them aid.”

2. Dr. Thomson:

“Sauntering down the Jaffa Road, on my approach to the holy city, in a kind of dreamy maze, with, as I remember, scarcely one distinct idea in my head, I was startled out of my reverie by the sudden apparition of a crowd of beggars, without eyes, nose, hair. They held up to me their handless arms, unearthly sounds gurgled through their throats without palates; in a word, I was horrified.”

C. It was regarded as contagious.

D. It imposed isolation. Lepers lived in colonies, separated from clean people. They were required to hold up their hands and cry, “Unclean.”

II. Leprosy regarded as a type of sin.

A. Just as leprosy was incurable by man's power, so is sin. No pope, priest, or preacher can cure it; no work we can do (Eph. 2:8,9); no gift we can make. Only the Great Physician can cure sin (I John 1:7).

B. Just as leprosy was loathsome and defiling, so is sin. We abhor defiled bodies. We like to bathe often and be clean. We wouldn't go into a home where the people had not bathed in five years. We would not invite them into our home. But we are not that concerned with polluted souls, defiled souls, our own or others' (Prov. 14:9). There are thousands who have never had a spiritual bath; they are still guilty of every sin committed. Jesus says they are defiled.

C. Just as leprosy was contagious, so is sin (I Cor. 15:33). It is the practice of sin that is contagious, not the guilt. Children take it from parents, young people from other young people, young ladies from their boy friends, etc. We are not as careful as we should be. You wouldn't let your child spend

the night with a leper. You would never give your consent for your daughter to marry a leper. But we don't take the contamination of sin that seriously.

- D. Just as leprosy resulted in final isolation, so will unforgiven sin (Matthew 25:30-41; 13:41,42).

III. Naaman's mistakes.

- A. He went to the wrong place. A little maid of the Israelites had told of the possibility of his being healed, but she had specified a "prophet." Naaman went to the king instead. He probably smiled at her simplicity.
- B. He went with preconceived ideas. This mistake almost made him miss his healing. He had it figured out that the prophet would come out and call upon God and wave his hand over the leprosy.
- C. He became angry. When the prophet didn't do what he expected but did something very different, he was angry. The prophet's command was to wash. So he went away in a rage.
- D. He wanted to substitute. He wanted to wash in Abana or Pharpar rather than in the Jordan.

IV. **Millions make** exactly the same mistakes concerning sin.

- A. When they become concerned they go to the wrong place. Sometimes they go to a big old church where the pastor doesn't even believe that Jesus is the only way. Or they go to one who would never read the great commission or Acts 2:38 or Acts 22:16 or Gal. 3:26,27.
- B. They get preconceived ideas. They think the preacher ought to pray, as did Naaman. Or they have the "Trust Jesus" or "Receive Jesus as Savior" idea. They have heard it so much they think it is Bible. These ideas blind them to the truth. One can preach and preach, but they can't see it.
- C. Then when the truth is pressed upon them they get angry and scoff. Prov. 14:16 and James 1:18-21 provide good teaching for such.
- D. They try to substitute. Some try to substitute prayer for obedience, sprinkling for baptism, and denominations for the church.

V. **Mistakes he did not** make—mistakes millions do make **concerning sin.**

- A. He did not love his disease. This is the great mistake concerning sin (John 3:19). Men love it and hold on to it purely for the temporary pleasure. It does give some pleasure, but it is enslaving. It is like a tyrant and his servant. People think they will find it easy to give it up after a while, but are

- unable to when the time comes.
- B. He heard counsel, even from his servants who urged him to wash.
- C. He did not procrastinate.

VI. Was the power in water?

- A. No, but with God. Yet we know that he would not have been healed without washing.
- B. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16 teach the necessity of baptism. Is the power in water? No, if *so* we could force baptism on sinners and save them.
- C. Consider the blind man of John 9.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Naaman made some mistakes, but he corrected those mistakes and was healed.
- B. We urge sinners in our audience to avoid these same mistakes, obey the gospel, that they might be healed.

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

TEXT: Luke 17:28-32.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Many thoughtless people say, "I believe in Jesus, but I don't believe those Old Testament miracles, such as the whale swallowing Jonah or Lot's wife's being turned into a pillar of salt."
- B. This is very illogical reasoning, for Jesus believed both of them (Matt. 12:39,40; Luke 17:32).
- C. One can't consistently accept the claims of Jesus and reject what He accepted.
- D. In this lesson we focus our attention on the tragic end of Lot's wife.

DISCUSSION: I. Some things to be remembered about Lot's wife.

- A. She was turned to a pillar of salt because she looked back upon Sodom.
- B. She looked back because her heart was still in Sodom, the most wicked place on earth (II Pet. 2:7).
- C. She looked back even though safety was ahead and ruin be hind.
- C. She looked back in spite of God's warnings. In all this we see the depth of her *love* for that wicked city.

II. As Lot's wife was temporarily saved from Sodom, so converted and rescued people are saved from the city of sin.

- A. Jesus gave Himself that we might be delivered from the wicked city of sin (Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 5:9).
- B. The city of sin is well described in Phil. 2:14,15; Prov. 30:11-13.
 - 1. In it we become contaminated and polluted by sin.
 - 2. We become as polluted in God's sight as the person we meet who is polluted in body—as a leper or one who has never had a bath.
 - 3. When we believe, repent, and are baptized we are delivered—bathed, cleansed, translated from the city of sin into the kingdom of Christ (Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 1:13,14; Rom. 6:17,18).
 - 4. True repentance is a resolve to flee from the city of sin, to live in it no more. It is referred to as being “dead to sin.”
 - 5. All need to heed the admonition of Acts 2:40.

III. The church's great problem is that too many of these rescued people are looking back.

- A. They are looking back with longing eyes, and are not only looking back, but are doing many of the very same things that are done in the city of sin.
- B. The scriptures warn concerning the danger—James 4:4; Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:1-3; I John 2:15-17.
- C. Conduct of people in the city of sin that seems to be attractive to the people of God.
 - 1. The women wear scanty attire.
 - 2. The people live for fun, pleasure, and amusement. They spend their money for such. Dancing and drinking are a part of their lives.
 - 3. They love popularity, and will do whatever is necessary to be popular. Beauty contests in which the body is exposed to the gaze of onlookers are accepted in the city of sin.
- D. But part of the process of transferring from the city of sin to the kingdom of Christ is repentance. If you are still conformed or fashioned after those people you should be unhappy with yourself.
- E. Paul serves as a wonderful example—Phil. 3:13,14.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The condition of one who looks back is well described in Luke 9:62 and II Pet. 2:20-22.
- B. Once you resolved to enter the kingdom, and you did.
- C. But the person who looks back is not fit for the kingdom.

GOD'S FOREWARNINGS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Those who forewarn us of dangers can be of great benefit if we heed the warnings.
- B. The crew of the ship “Titanic” was forewarned of icebergs, but they did not heed. About 1,600 people perished.
- C. An engineer on a train was forewarned of danger by a red light in fog. He did not heed. He rammed the rear of a passenger train and killed thirty-two people.
- D. Christ graciously warned Peter that he would deny Him. Peter, however, was over-confident and failed to heed the warning.
- E. In this lesson we will observe some of God's forewarnings to us.

DISCUSSION:

I. God forewarns that one cannot enter the kingdom without the new birth.

- A. John 3:1-5.
- B. Observe the emphatic nature of the warning.
- C. The new birth takes place when one is begotten of the Spirit and is baptized in water.
- D. Millions, however, are not heeding. They are depending on their morality, or good works, or on faith only. The time will come when they will regret their heedlessness.

II. God forewarns that we have an enemy.

- A. I Peter 5:8.
- B. Consider the nature of the enemy.
 - 1. He is an aggressive enemy. He is not a sleeping enemy. He is not like a snake or wasps, aroused only when disturbed. He walks about, seeking us.
 - 2. He is a destructive enemy. He is not content merely to wound. He devours, as a lion. He seeks our complete ruin.
 - 3. He is a deceptive enemy —Eph. 6:11,16; II Cor. 11:14,15.
- C. Because of the nature of the enemy we are warned to be vigilant, to be sober.
 - 1. “Be vigilant”—Stay awake; be watchful. Imagine how watchful one would be if he were in a forest where a **lion** was roaming about.
 - 2. “Be sober”—Use your head; think; be earnest and prayerful.

III. God forewarns that we can't be saved if we walk in the flesh.

- A. Gal. 5:17-21; Eph. 5:3-6.
- B. We should observe that some of these sins have to do with overt acts, while others are sins of disposition, involving attitudes and feelings, especially toward others.
- C. Many, however, do not heed the warnings. They think that grace will cover their sins even when they do not sorrow or repent. They enjoy certain sins and have no intention of giving them up. Yet they ask for forgiveness.
- D. The doctrine that a child of God cannot be lost even if he does walk in the flesh is a false doctrine.

IV. God forewarns that Jesus will return as a thief in the night.

- A. II Peter 3:10.
- B. His coming will be as in the days of Noah—Matt. 24:37-39.
- C. There will be no announcements to workers, “Stay at home today.” On that day men will buy houses, but never live in them; buy cars, but never ride in them; take trips, but never return; plant fields, but never reap; marry, but never live with their companions; die, but never be buried. People, too, will have planned to obey the gospel, but will meet the Lord unprepared.
- D. The Bible gives many admonitions: II Pet. 3:11,17; I Thess. 5:1-6; Luke 21:34-36; 12:35,36.

CONCLUSION:

- A. How will you treat these warnings?
- B. The captain of the “Titanic” wished he had heeded. So did the engineer. The rich man of Luke 16 wished that he had listened to Moses and the prophets.
- C. Just as certainly you will regret treating God's warnings lightly.

STUDIES IN THE BEATITUDES

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Jesus often said, “He that hath ears, let him hear.”
- B. But most people don't hear. They especially have difficulty hearing things that don't appeal to them and things contrary to what they want to hear.
- C. Preachers today have trouble getting people to listen and grasp things that clash with their inclination and desires. Jesus had the same problem.
- D. Jesus said something that was difficult to hear in the first beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven.”
- E. People in Jesus' day were interested in the kingdom, but it was difficult for them to hear that one must be poor in spirit to have the kingdom.

DISCUSSION: I. **Some who failed to hear in the first century.**

- A. James and John didn't hear—Matt. 20:20-24.
 - 1. Had they heard they would have restrained their ambitious mother. They would have said, “Mother, you don't understand about the kingdom.”
 - 2. Jesus patiently taught them further concerning the nature of the kingdom—Matt. 20:25-28.
- B. The other disciples didn't hear—Matt. 18:1-4.
 - 1. Jesus again teaches them the necessity of being “poor in spirit,” using a child to impress upon them the lesson.
 - 2. Months go by, and they still haven't heard, for at the Passover they argue over who will be the greatest. Again Jesus teaches them both by word and deed—Luke 22:24; John 13:3-17.
- C. The Pharisees didn't hear—Matt. 5:20.
 - 1. They served as a perfect example of what people in the Lord's kingdom must not be—Matt. 23:5-12.
 - 2. The pride of the Pharisees is obvious from the prayer of

Luke 18:9-12.

- D. Diotrefes didn't hear—III John 9,10.
1. He obtained fellowship in a local church.
 2. But he had not humbled himself as a little child, he was not poor in spirit, so he was not in the kingdom.
 3. Even after fifty years some hadn't heard.

II. Some fail to hear today.

- A. Those who trust their own righteousness fail to hear.
1. These think themselves to be good enough to be saved, that they do not need Christ or His gospel.
 2. They need to be poor in spirit that they might recognize their own sinfulness—Rom. 3:22,23; I John 1:7-10.
- B. Those who dispute the teaching of Jesus fail to hear.
1. These are like the Pharisees who scoffed (Luke 16:10-14) or those who were present when Jairus' daughter died (Luke 8:52,53).
 2. Many dispute the teaching of John 3:5 and Mark 16:16. They refer to those who accept these passages as “water Salvationists.”
 3. Many refer to the teaching of Jesus as being narrow, especially that teaching which clashes with man's will and the traditions of men.

CONCLUSION:

No one qualifies for the Lord's kingdom until he is poor in spirit and imbibes the spirit of the song, “Have Thine Own Way, Lord.” We sing the song; we must also practice it.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. According to our Lord's beatitudes, our blessedness or happiness does not depend on what we possess, but on our attitudes; not so much on our position, but on our disposition.
- B. The first of the beatitudes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” tells of the attitude one should have toward self. The second, “Blessed are they that mourn,” tells of the attitude one must have toward his sins.
- C. Sin is among us and the greatest of men sin. Abraham and David, two of the greatest, sinned.

DISCUSSION:

I. Three attitudes men take toward sin.

- A. Indifference.
 1. Some men can sin grievously and not suffer a minute's remorse. They can sin all day, then lie down and sleep like a baby.
 2. The Bible describes such a person as having a seared conscience (I Tim. 4:1,2) and as being past feeling (Eph. 4:17-19).
 3. It is a great danger signal when one gets past feeling. Physical pain enables one to know something is wrong, but if he could not feel the pain, he might continue working and endanger his life. In the same way, the conscience is designed to make one miserable when he has sinned. If it fails to so function, there is nothing that can stop him in his race toward hell.
 4. How does one's conscience become seared? By ignoring its miseries.
- B. Stubbornness.
 1. Some refuse to admit their sins and to confess them. They are too proud to follow the teaching of I John 1:7-9.
 2. King Saul is an example (I Sam. 15). Observe his unwillingness to confess and Samuel's reply.
 3. King Ahab is another example. Ahab became very angry when punishment was visited upon him and his wicked nation, but he never manifested any sorrow for his sins. His vanity was often wounded and his anger aroused, but nothing bothered his conscience.
- C. Mourning.
 1. Some react with deep sorrow and regret.
 2. This is the attitude our text teaches. Consider also Psalms 34:18; Isa. 57:15; Psalms 38:17,18; Isa. 66:1,2.
 3. The Bible gives many examples of mourning: Peter after denying Jesus; the Pentecostians; Saul of Tarsus; the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50.
 4. Any sin we commit should arouse such an agitation in our conscience that we can't rest until we correct it.
 5. At this point a problem exists, for many of us would mourn over *some* sins; in many cases, sins we have never committed—stealing, murder, adultery. But are there some sins we don't take so seriously—failure to obey the gospel (Mark 16:16), the sin of gossip, neglect of study, neglect of prayer?

II. Those who mourn are comforted.

- A. They are comforted, not because:
 1. Tears can wash away sins.
 2. God forgives on mere condition of sorrow.
- B. They are comforted because:

1. Godly sorrow works repentance—II Cor. 7:10.
2. Regret, shame, and sorrow will cause one to seek the remedy for sin (as one's distress over his physical condition will cause him to see a doctor). The remedy is the blood of Christ, found “in Christ” (Eph. 1:7), through obedience to the Lord's commands (Gal. 3:26,27).

III. One can come to mourn his sins.

- A. By hearing and meditating on God's word.
- B. By thinking of the seriousness of life (Psalms 119:59,60).
- C. By thinking on the goodness of God (Rom. 2:4).
- D. By considering the shame of sin. If one should go to the judgment and stand before God, surely he would be ashamed that he had rejected Him. Even if one were to meet Him face to face in this life, he would be ashamed.
- E. By keeping a tender conscience (I Tim. 1:19). We do this by always doing what we know is right.

CONCLUSION:

There is great blessedness to be found in mourning over one's sins. Will you not find a place for mourning in your life, and come to Christ, that you might be comforted?

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The beatitudes set forth attitudes: toward self, toward our sins, toward other people.
- B. They are the attitudes of blessed or happy people.
- C. We pay lip service to the Bible, but do we really believe these principles and their promises? Do we believe, “Blessed are the meek” or do we really believe meekness won't get **us** anywhere?

DISCUSSION: I. Meekness is commanded in almost every Christian relationship.

- A. It is a beautiful ornament in women—I Pet. 3:3,4.
- B. It is part of the character that is the fruit of the Spirit—Gal. 5:22,23.
- C. It is the spirit which Christians show toward one another—Eph. 4:2,3.
- D. It must characterize our efforts in restoring the wayward—Gal. 6:1.
- E. It must be the spirit in which we answer the outsider—I Pet. 3:15.

- F. It is the spirit which Christians must show toward the opposition—II Tim. 2:24,25; Titus 3:2.
- G. It must characterize the hearers of the word if they are to benefit—James 1:18-21.
- H. It is the spirit that makes people the kind the gospel is designed to reach—Isa. 61:1.

11. What is meekness?

- A. Meekness is gentleness, mildness. Wickliffe's translation: "Blessed are the mild men."
- B. A meek person seeks to accomplish his purposes in a quiet, gentle manner. A meek person acts like a lady or a gentle man, when well-treated or evil-treated.
- C. A meek person is the opposite of one who rants and raves about his rights and moves to get his rights regardless of his influence, spirit, or methods.
- D. He is the opposite of one who uses force or harsh, rash means. The meek person doesn't go about with clenched fists, a gun on his hip, a pocket full of rocks, or a big knife.
- E. The Bible gives examples of meekness.
 1. Jesus was meek—Matt. 11:28,29. His meekness is demonstrated in I Pet. 2:19-23.
 2. Moses was meek—Numbers 12:3. Many harsh complaints were brought against Moses, but he did not avenge himself. Rather, he fell on his face and took his problems to God.
 3. Michael the archangel demonstrated meekness—Jude 9.

III. What meekness does not mean.

- A. Meekness does not suggest a lack of conviction.
- B. It does not suggest a compromise of truth, or a failure to teach on touchy subjects, or a failure to reprove—II Tim. 4:1,2.
- C. It does not suggest submitting to every demand. We must often say, "No," but firmly, plainly, kindly.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The beatitudes involve attitudes that must be cultivated. They don't just come by human nature.
- B. I have seen people who seemed to be meek until a disagreement arose. Then the spirit of Satan would fill them.
- C. I have seen people who were meek outside the home, but were tyrants in the home.
- D. We must seek to be meek in every relationship of life.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

TEXT: Matt. 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. When we pray we ask God's blessings upon us, but we must always remember that His blessings are conditional.
- B. Blessings for the Christian are conditional just as pardon for the alien is conditional. As many sinners ignore the conditions but still expect the pardon, we must beware lest we pray for blessings but fail to comply with the conditions.
- C. The beatitudes set forth some conditions. If we ignore them, we will miss the blessings.
- D. Our study in this lesson centers upon the beatitude of verse 6.

DISCUSSION: I. **What is righteousness?**

- A. Man's ideas and God's ideas concerning righteousness differ. In fact, it is difficult to get people to listen while we give them God's teaching concerning righteousness. They are so sure they already know.
- B. Man, however, cannot by his own wisdom know what righteousness is—Jer. 10:23; Prov. 3:5; 14:12; Isa. 55:8,9; I Cor. 1:21.
- C. God's answer to our question.
 - 1. All God's commandments are righteousness —Psa. 119:172. See also Psa. 119:138,144.
 - 2. This righteousness is revealed in the gospel—Rom. 1:16,17.
 - 3. The inspired word provides instruction in righteousness —II Tim. 3:16,17.
 - 4. The scriptures are referred to as the word of righteousness—Heb. 5:13.
 - 5. Jesus' baptism was for the purpose of fulfilling all righteousness—Matt. 3:15.
 - 6. Zacharias and Elizabeth demonstrated their righteousness by walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord—Luke 1:6.

II. How is righteousness obtained?

- A. Not accidentally.
 - 1. It doesn't just happen to indifferent people.
 - 2. It doesn't seize one suddenly and mysteriously, unaccountably.
 - 3. One doesn't lie down to sleep without it and awaken in possession of it.

4. It is not obtained by blindly following parents, or a creed, or by simply selecting a convenient church, assuming that they are all right.
- B. There must be a strong desire for it, a desire that can be described as “hungering and thirsting” for it.
 1. These are the most powerful drives in the human body.
 2. Wherever people live and work there must be food and drink. The hundreds of eating places in our cities exist as a testimony to the power of hunger and thirst.
 3. Many illustrations can be given of the power of hunger and thirst.
 - a. Captain Rickenbacker and his crew had to survive on a raft in the Pacific during World War II. They ate raw fish and drank rain water squeezed from their clothing because they were hungry and thirsty.
 - b. During the Roman siege of Jerusalem mothers ate their own children.
 - c. A group of soldiers, hot and thirsty from their lengthy march, stopped at a creek to quench their thirst. They were warned that a dead horse was in the creek above, but their thirst compelled them to drink anyway.
 4. David expressed the attitude of one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness—Psa. 1:1,2; 119:97,103,148.
- C. Righteousness, then, is not for the person who spends hours each day working, playing, being amused, reading fiction, entertaining, but showing no interest in the feeding of the soul.

III. Why are more people not feeding on the word of righteousness?

- A. They are not hungry.
- B. They are not hungry because they have filled their souls with the trash of this world— like children who come to the table already filled with candy and sweets.
- C. It's hard to eat when one is already full. We were once invited to a home without understanding that a meal was to be served. We had already eaten and found it hard to eat. So it is with the person who tries to eat spiritual food when he is already filled with the things of this world.

IV. What are some examples of spiritual hunger and thirst?

- A. The Ethiopian eunuch—Acts 8:26-39.
- B. The disciples of John, who left their duties of home and went to hear John—Matt. 3:5. There they met Jesus.

V. What blessings are offered to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness?

- A. “They shall be filled.”

- B. Here is real satisfaction.
 1. Worldly things cannot satisfy. They are like salt water of the sea. The more one drinks, the thirstier he becomes.
 2. Alexander the Great conquered the world, but was not satisfied.
 3. The wealthy of the world are not satisfied.
 4. Those who live without restraints are never satisfied, turning so often to alcoholic and drug addiction, and eventually to suicide.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Are we hungry and thirsty for righteousness?
- B. We must hunger for the knowledge of it; we must hunger for the practice of it—Rom. 10:1-3; II Thess. 2:10-12.
- C. Any other attitude toward righteousness will find us weighed in the balances and found wanting.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Happiness depends upon attitude. If a man is to be happy, he must develop the right kind of attitude toward his heart.
- B. Man is a dual being, consisting of the outer man and the inner man. One must not just seek to keep the outer man clean and attractively dressed; he must also seek to keep the inner man clean.
- C. When we speak of the heart, we are speaking of the inner man, of the mind of man: his intellect (Rom. 10:10), his emotions (Matt. 22:37; II Sam. 6:16), his will (II Cor. 9:7).
- D. It is the purpose of this lesson to contrast a pure heart and an evil heart, and to show how to develop purity of heart.

DISCUSSION: I. **One's heart may be pure and the source of good.**

- A. A pure heart is one that thinks right things—Phil. 4:8.
- B. A pure heart loves and hates according to righteousness, having the right plans, motives, purposes, meditations.
- C. A pure heart:
 1. Is not full of lasciviousness—Matt. 5:28.
 2. Is not filled with hate toward brethren—I John 3:15.
 3. Is not filled with covetousness, as were Ananias and Sapphira—Acts 5:1-10.
 4. Is not filled with a love for the world—I John 2:15-17; James 4:4.

- 5. Is not full of envy and jealousy—James 3:14,15.
- 6. Is not full of pride and vain glory.
- 7. Is not rebellious and unwilling to obey **God**.
- D. A pure heart loves truth and refuses to feed on **trash**.

II. One's heart may be evil and the source of evil.

- A. Out of the heart are the issues of life—Prov. 4:23; 23:7.
- B. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts and deeds—Matt. 15:19.
- C. An evil heart was the cause of the wickedness of the antediluvians—Gen. 6:5.
- D. The fruit of a wicked heart is a wicked life. The heart is the root, the life is the fruit.
- E. Illustration: Wood soaked in gasoline is ready to flame up. In the same way, if the heart is soaked in sin, it takes little to involve the body in overt sin.
- F. So, the following warnings are given: II Cor. 10:5; Isa. 55:7; Psa. 19:14; 119:59; Matt. 5:28.

III. One's heart may be cleansed and made pure.

- A. A heart is evil because of the evil things that are stored there, gleaned from stories, books, magazines, movies, associates, obscene songs, etc.
- B. The heart may be cleansed by filling it with good thoughts, by filling it with the word of God, by reading of those in the scriptures who lived worthily, by associating with good companions.

CONCLUSION:

- A. A pure heart is essential to happiness in this life and to hope of happiness in the life to come.
- B. Illustration: If my faucets pour out contaminated water, the cure is not in painting the faucets, but in purifying the source. If our lives are impure, we must purify the source, and the source is to be found in the heart.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We continue our study of the beatitudes, turning our attention in this lesson to “Blessed are the peacemakers.”
- B. In a children's class the question was asked, “What would be the opposite of this beatitude?” A child's reply: “Cussed are the fuss makers.” And so it is—Prov. 6:16-19.
- C. God loves a peacemaker; He abominates a strife-maker.

DISCUSSION: I. Realms in which Christians can help to make peace.

- A. They cannot help in all realms.
 - 1. They can't help make peace among government leaders, but they can pray—I Tim. 2:1-4.
 - 2. They can't help in wars among nations.
 - 3. They can't help in capital-labor disputes. The need in such disputes is the golden rule. Christians should avoid being agitators—at work, in college, in politics. Christians are taught to be content—Heb. 13:5; I Tim. 6:6-8.
- B. There are two realms in which Christians can make peace.
 - 1. In the home and in the church.
 - 2. If we have peace at home, the honor is ours; if we have strife and hate, the blame is ours—it's up to us.
 - 3. So it is in the church. If we have peace, we make it; if we have strife, we make it.

II. What makes peace in the home?

- A. Marital fidelity on the part of both.
- B. Mutual confidence.
 - 1. A complete absence of jealousy is essential.
 - 2. If a man is faithful to his wife, but the wife is suspicious and jealous, this destroys peace—and vice versa.
- C. Cheerfulness and kindness.
- D. Unselfishness. If a husband or wife is determined to have his way (or her way) and pouts and complains when he can't get it, strife results; peace is destroyed.
- E. Self-examination.
 - 1. Whenever a home is torn by strife, each needs to ask himself, “Am I to blame?”
 - 2. He should ask, “Am I what I should be as a husband, or wife?”

III. What makes peace in the church?

- A. Careful adherence to the New Testament pattern.
 - 1. All innovations cause strife. Instrumental music did. So did the missionary society, sprinkling, infant baptism, benevolent societies, fellowship halls, gymnasiums.
 - 2. If there were nothing else wrong with them, I would oppose them because they have destroyed the peace.
 - 3. I know that methods are not bound, but I wouldn't divide a church over a method I had devised or borrowed. I would not destroy the peace of a “one cup” church by creating a faction.
- B. Right living by all members.
 - 1. Questionable conduct starts rumors, gossip, denials, and so destroys peace.

2. When a church finds discipline necessary, it always causes some commotion.
- C. Humility among all the members.
 1. A person who feels superior and is conceited often causes strife. He is self-willed and determined to have his own way.
 2. Helpful teaching is found in I Pet. 5:5.
- IV. Two extremes to be avoided.
 - A. There are some who pick fights and are contentious about everything. They complain, but do nothing constructive. Nothing is right to them.
 - B. Others want peace so much they will tolerate all kinds of error. Wives will do things that are sinful to have peace. Members of the church will allow every kind of addition because they want to maintain peace. Consider James 3:17; II Kings 9:14-22.

CONCLUSION:

The most important peace one can make is peace with God (Rom. 5:1). This peace comes when sin is forgiven. Obedience to the gospel is necessary to finding this peace.

BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED

TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In this lesson we study the last of the beatitudes.
- B. One would think that people who practice the beatitudes would be honored by all, but this beatitude implies that they have persecutions.
- C. So it has been throughout history—consider Abel, Isaac, Israel in Egypt, Moses, Elijah, Micaiah, Jeremiah, Jesus, Paul, and the Christians of the first century.
- D. The scriptures teach that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution—II Tim. 3:12.

DISCUSSION:

- A. There are false concepts concerning persecution.
 1. Many cry “persecution” when their error is exposed by a teacher of the truth.
 2. But teaching, reproof, and rebuke are not persecution—II Tim. 4:1-4.
 3. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees (Matt. 23); Paul rebuked the Judaizers (Gal. 1:6-9); Peter rebuked false teachers

(II Peter 2); but these were not persecutors.

- B. Persecution may be in the form of bodily harm, as in Saul's persecution of the church—Gal. 1:13,14; Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1,2; Acts 26:9-11.
- C. Persecution in our day consists primarily of efforts to hurt by lying, misrepresentation, and ugly names.
 - 1. Those who stand for truth are referred to as narrow, cranky, hobbyists, antis, church dividers.
 - 2. The persecutors in such instances are not interested in “reasoning together,” and having facts brought out. It serves their purpose better to say hard things and to call names.
 - 3. So it is with those who refer to Christians as “Campbellites” or with journalists who refer to others as “hobbyists” and “antis,” refusing to publish their answers.
 - 4. Such men are afraid. They know their position will not stand.

II. Why are Christians persecuted?

- A. Because true Christians are positive, contending earnestly for the faith— Jude 3.
- B. Because true Christians are negative, opposing sin and error—John 7:7; II Cor. 10:3-5; Jer. 1:9,10; II Tim. 4:1,2.
- C. If one is not persecuted, it is because he is not bothering the devil and his works.

III. By whom are Christians persecuted?

- A. Sometimes persecution may come from the heathen, from infidels.
- B. More often it comes from the devout.
 - 1. Jesus was persecuted by people who called His Father their Father.
 - 2. Paul was persecuted by people who claimed the same God he claimed.
 - 3. Thousands who have died for their faith in Christ were killed by people who also claimed to believe in Him.
- C. Christ even predicted that Christians **would** be persecuted by close relatives—Matt. 10:34-36.

IV. How should Christians receive persecution?

- A. Our text suggests that they should be received as blessings.
- B. There is too much tendency now to conform that persecution might be avoided. We seem to think that persecution will destroy the church, but it has not been so in the past.
- C. Jesus in this beatitude is not suggesting that we should court persecution by rudeness, or by harsh, abusive speech. Such will repel sincere people.

- D. But we must plainly and firmly and earnestly teach all Bible truth and warn against sin and error.
- E. We are blessed only when we are persecuted for *righteousness*' sake.
- F. When such persecution comes, count it a blessing and rejoice—Matt. 5:12.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Persecution will come to the godly.
- B. Accept it joyfully, recognizing it as evidence of your faithful service to the Lord.

STUDIES CONCERNING PRAYER

WHAT GOD SEEKS IN OUR PRAYERS

TEXT: Matt. 6:5-15.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Do you sometimes pray, but feel that your prayers are not answered? Have you considered God's purpose or design for prayer?
- B. Prayer must be according to God's will—I John 5:14.
- C. We must not think of prayer as an Aladdin's lamp, serving to bring us new automobiles, dresses, mansions, jobs. God did not see fit to remove Paul's thorn in the flesh in response to Paul's prayer.
- D. God does not spoil His children as we do. We sacrifice to make them happy when in reality we are making them un happy.
- E. As we study the prayer found in our text, we will see that prayer is not designed to pamper us in this life. Rather, it is designed to help us go to heaven and win others.

DISCUSSION:

I. Acceptable prayer manifests faith in a loving, concerned Father.

- A. The petition begins, "Our Father." This implies belief in a Father who is in heaven; that there is One who will hear—Heb. 11:6; James 1:5-7.
- B. Consider the nature of a father.
 - 1. A father is the author of life—so with our Father—Acts 17:25,28.
 - 2. A father loves and provides—so with our Father—Matt. 6:25-34.
- C. Note the simplicity of the address, "Our Father." There is no effort to be showy.

II. Acceptable prayer is concerned with the things of God.

- A. "Hallowed be Thy name."
 - 1. The word "hallowed" means consecrated, sacred, honored, revered—Ps. 111:9. 70

2. The name of the Lord must never be used lightly or in vain. His name must not be made common. If I pray, "Hallowed be Thy name" from the heart, I will not be guilty of so using it.
 3. My approach to God must always be with reverence, both at home and in public worship.
- B. "Thy kingdom come."
1. We do not pray this petition now, for the kingdom has already come.
 2. But the petition still indicates the proper emphasis in our prayers, for it expresses concern for the Lord's kingdom — Matt. 6:33.
 3. We need to pray for the preaching of the word, for the church, for preachers and elders.
 4. If we were to pray our true sentiments, would we pray for the health of the kingdom or for the health of the economy? Just how concerned are we?
- C. "Thy will be done."
1. Observe that this is another petition that is concerned with the things of God.
 2. Do you ever make this petition concerning your own life? your home? the church? your community? your nation? -I Tim. 2:1,2.
 3. If the Lord's will in such matters does not concern us, we lack dedication and consecration; we are in need of spiritual maturity.

III. Acceptable prayer manifests an attitude of dependence on God.

- A. "Give us this day our daily bread."
- B. Here is the recognition that God is our provider. He could shut off our supply.
- C. The request is for the simple necessities, not luxuries.
- D. The things that God will give us in answer to our prayers are the "good things"—Matt. 7:7-11. Are riches really good for most of us?

IV. Acceptable prayer is concerned with one's sinfulness.

- A. "Forgive us our debts."
- B. We must be among those who mourn over sin and seek forgiveness, such as the Pentecostians and Saul. Consider Matt. 5:4.
- C. Sin against God is not a light thing. We need to realize the pollution and contamination as seen through the pure eyes of God. We must not ask for forgiveness lightly or flip-pantly.
- D. If sin doesn't worry you and trouble your conscience, you are not in good position to pray.

- V. Acceptable prayer is concerned about attitudes toward others.
 - A. "As we forgive our debtors."
 - B. If you hold malice, hatred, ill will, and an unforgiving spirit in your heart, God will not hear, and you will go to the judgment guilty before Him.

CONCLUSION:

Let us remember these principles when we pray that our prayers might be the effectual, fervent prayers that avail much.

INFLUENCE WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION:

- A. There are thousands of messages pouring into the U. S. Congress every week, trying to influence the votes of congressmen. There are hundreds of lobbyists trying to get certain legislation on the law books. Sometimes legislators are offered money to vote for certain measures.
- B. A person with great influence with the higher powers is held in high esteem. He is well known by the great of the country. He "stands in" we say.
- C. If it is great to have influence with earthly powers, it is far greater to have influence with God. In this lesson we will talk of such people.

DISCUSSION: I. There are people who have influence with God.

- A. Scriptures: James 5:16; Heb. 4:15,16; Phil. 4:6; I Peter 3:10-12; Matt. 6:6; 7:7-11; I Tim. 2:1-3; Exodus 33:17.
 - 1. These passages speak of influence, not with human legislative bodies or earthly monarchs, but with the Creator of the universe, the highest power in existence.
 - 2. If men are honored for their influence with men in power, how much more should we appreciate men who find favor in the eyes of God and are heard at His throne.
 - 3. We have no idea how much they are doing to hold the world together. They are the kind of men of whom Jesus spoke when He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth."
- B. Some persons who had such influence.
 - 1. Abraham's pleading for Sodom—Gen. 18:16-33.
 - 2. Hannah's prayer for a son—I Sam. 1:9-18.
 - 3. Elijah's prayer that it might not rain—James 5:17.
 - 4. The church's prayer for Peter—Acts 12:5-19.
 - 5. Hezekiah's prayer for extended life—II Kings 20:1-7.

II. There are people who have no influence with God.

- A. Scriptures: Prov. 28:9; I Pet. 3:12; Psa. 66:18; Isa. 59:1,2; John 9:31.
- B. People think of prayer in a very superficial way. Prayer is eulogized and recommended by religious leaders of all faiths, even by modernists. Very worldly people speak of how prayer brought them through various trials and tribulations. But the Word doesn't teach such.

III. The kind of people who have influence with God.

- A. The righteous.
 - 1. Observe above scriptures.
 - 2. Do you know that you are doing things that are sinful, things of which you are not willing to repent? If so, your prayers are vain.
 - 3. Are you neglecting duties, making no effort to do what you know you should do? If so, your prayers are vain.
 - 4. Is there some teaching which you refuse to accept because of stubbornness or rebellion? Saul's rebellion separated him from God—I Sam. 15:13-23.
- B. Those who have faith—James 1:5-7; Heb. 10:19-23; 11:6.
- C. Those who “pray without ceasing.”
 - 1. Scriptures: Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17.
 - 2. The term “without ceasing” means frequently and regularly; we are not to pray just in times of trouble.
 - 3. A man once said, “Lord, I have never bothered you with a prayer, and if you will take care of me now, I promise you I will never bother you again.” Such people the Lord will not hear.
 - 4. Some use prayer as they would a fire escape. With such the Lord is not pleased.
 - 5. The Bible teaches perseverance in prayer. Ask again and again, as did the woman of Canaan—Matt. 15:21-28.

CONCLUSION:

Obviously, few qualify to pray. We must all develop the qualities God desires that we might have influence with God.

PRAYER IN THE ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We should have two purposes in view when we assemble on the Lord's day: to worship God and to edify the church.
- B. Every effort possible should be made to accomplish these purposes. We should strive to avoid sloppiness in every part of our worship. Slipshod conduct is not in keeping with

the teaching of I Cor. 14:40.

- C. There are times and places for practice, but the time is not in our Lord's day services. That is the time for our best.
- D. In this lesson we will place special emphasis on the leading of prayers in our assemblies.

DISCUSSION: I. Suggestions for making prayers more worshipful and edifying.

- A. Pray in a strong voice.
 - 1. When someone leads in prayer, the rest should listen and pray with the leader. They are handicapped in doing this if they can't hear.
 - 2. Prayers that cannot be heard are no more effective than prayers in a tongue—I Cor. 14:16.
 - 3. Most leaders would do well to use the public address system.
 - 4. Fifty years ago I read in a gospel paper of a preacher who led a prayer for a large audience. There was no P. A. system and the audience did not stand. So he knelt in the aisle, faced the rear, and prayed in a strong voice. The article was commending the preacher.
 - 5. Many good brethren learned to pray in days of much smaller audiences. They need to learn to adjust their voices to larger audiences.
- B. Give thought to your prayer, and ask for things within reason.
 - 1. It is not reasonable to pray that all the sick will get well.
 - 2. Nor is it reasonable to pray that the teachers may *have* prepared their lessons; or that we may *have* gotten much good from the service.
- C. Pray with fervor, warmth, feeling—James 5:16; Rom. 12:11.
- D. Be specific in your prayers.
 - 1. It is good to pray for all the sick, but it is also good to specify some whom we know and are specially concerned for.
 - 2. It is good to pray for all who preach, but it is also good to specify the preacher for the occasion and those whom the congregation helps to support.

11. Things to be avoided in our public prayers.

- A. Avoid praying as a formality.
 - 1. We do not pray simply because we are supposed to do so.
 - 2. We should think of prayer together as a great benefit, a blessing. It is not to be regarded as a dull, boring part of the service, something to be hurried through so we can get to the singing or preaching. We tend to think that

anything called a prayer is all right.

3. Having the proper attitude toward prayer, we must enter into it thoughtfully, with suitable petitions.

4. The third stanza of "I Am Thine, O Lord" expresses the proper attitude:

"O the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend, When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend."

— Frances Jane Van Alstyne.

B. Avoid making a sermon of the prayer.

1. I have heard many prayers which were obviously prayer to admonish the people or to remind them of duty.

2. Example: "That we may have studied our lessons."

3. One man quoted a passage and gave the reference in order to teach someone in his prayer.

C. Avoid substituting confession and prayer for repentance.

1. We often hear the expression, "We know we do many things we should not do and leave undone many things we should do."

2. If we know about such, it calls for repentance and reformation. If you do many things you should not do and know it now, you shouldn't be able to say that a month from now.

D. Avoid borrowed eloquence.

1. I used to hear an expression frequently in prayer, "The meandering scenes of life." We hear similar expressions today.

2. Such language is out of character for most of us, as is some sermon eloquence I hear.

III. Suggested petitions for assembly prayers.

A. We should pray for rulers—I Tim. 2:1-3.

B. We should pray for the preaching of the gospel and for those who preach.

1. Scriptures: II Thess. 3:1,2; Eph. 6:18-20.

2. Preachers are human and may be tempted to preach so as to be popular. In doing so, they may shun to declare the whole counsel of God. We ought to pray for their strength and courage.

3. Paul requested the Colossians to pray that God would "open a door of utterance" (Col. 4:3). "That God may open the door of opportunity" (Williams' Translation). "That God may give me an opening for the message" (Goodspeed's Translation).

4. What a difference it would make if every Christian at every service prayed fervently for the preaching of the

gospel.

C. We should pray for spiritual strength for Christians—
Phil. 1:9-11.

D. We should pray for Christians in trouble.

1. For those who are in persecution—as the church did when Peter was in prison (Acts 12:5).
2. For those who are in affliction. We may not pray in every instance that they recover, for their recovery may not be according to God's will. We can always pray, however, that their faith may be strong and sustaining; that they may be patient; that good might come from the affliction.
3. For those who are bereaved.

CONCLUSION:

Prayers will never be perfect (Rom. 8:26). But God wants us to pray with confidence and from a sense of need. We must not be careless and thoughtless, merely praying in an effort to flatter God and impress men.

STUDIES IN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

IF I WERE YOUNG

INTRODUCTION:

- A. I have a book of sermons on the subject, "If I Were Young." The sermons are rather philosophical in nature, containing little scripture.
- B. The book, however, suggests to me the idea of a Bible centered lesson on the same subject.
- C. With the experiences I've had and observations I've made, there are certain things I would do if I had life to live again.

DISCUSSION:

I. If I were young I would remember my creator in the days of my youth—Eccle. 12:1.

- A. This involves remembering that He is my Creator; not allowing someone to rob me of that sensible fact and to persuade me that all of the wonders around me came about by accident; that life, intelligence and order evolved from a lump of lifeless matter. Prov. 19:27.
- B. This involves remembering His word—II Tim. 3:14,15. Many of the passages that you hear me quote easily are passages I learned when I was young.
- C. This involves obeying the gospel—II Thess. 1:7-9.
- D. This involves being zealous—I Cor. 15:58. It involves attending all services of the church and attending meetings elsewhere. Even if this results in one's getting C's instead A's, he is making wise choices.
- E. This involves taking part in spiritual activities—I Tim. 4:8.

II. If I were young I would heed the advice of godly people—Prov. 12:15; 15:5; Psa. 32:8,9.

- A. You can get plenty of counsel from the young and inexperienced. Rehoboam did—I Kings 12:6-11. Because Rehoboam took the counsel of young men his kingdom was wrecked.
- B. You listen to Christian parents, to sound preachers.
- C. A boy was once in a house of ill fame when a stove exploded.

ed. The boy was badly burned. In the hospital he said, "I'd give the whole world if I had listened to my daddy."

- III. If I were young I would keep good company—I Cor. 15:33; Prov. 4:14-16; 13:20.
 - A. Living right is not easy at best, but it is much harder if we run with bad companions. Peter would not have denied his Lord had he stayed in good company.
 - B. Sometimes an element of young people misbehave in worship services. Where I was brought up, that element sat in the rear. If I or my cousins stopped there we were reproved.

- IV. If I were young I would flee youthful lusts—II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 2:11.
 - A. One should flee lusts as he would flee from an dangerous animal or deadly disease.
 - B. Passions are normal. They have a purpose. They can be controlled. But there are things that pervert them and make them abnormal. The devil uses many devices to pervert our passions: the modern dance, love scenes in movies, vulgar stories, pornographic literature. He puts out the word that such conduct is all right. He invented alcohol and drugs to break down consciences.
 - C. But lust is the mother of sin—James 1:13-15.

- V. If I were young I would form good habits.
 - A. Habit is the devil's way of getting permanent hold of us. Illustration: Clapsed hands can easily break one thread that binds them. But let enough threads be wrapped around those hands, and the hands cannot be freed. Every time you commit a certain sin another thread is wrapped around your heart. The devil wraps it, laughs with glee, and hopes that you will continue the sin until you are bound.
 - B. A boy once tied a little sapling in a knot. He could have easily untied it at the time. But years later the sapling had grown and become hardened, and the knot could not be untied. This is the way habits grow.
 - C. A tyrant once asked a servant to tie a chain three feet long. He then told him to double it and to double it again, until finally the chain was long enough to bind the servant for the rest of his life. This is the way habits grow. In later life men see the foolishness of their bad habits and struggle to overcome them. In many cases they are unsuccessful.
 - D. Good habits: courtesy, friendliness, neatness, promptness, carefulness in work, good reading, attending, praying, pure conversation, good company.
 - E. By all means avoid tobacco, alcohol, psychedelic drugs.

These are not mere habits: they are addictions. There are so many warnings: sufferers, crimes, suicides. Why would one ever touch them? You may use such things now to keep from being “chicken” or “a square,” but later you will do them because you are in the powerful grip of a vicious habit or addiction.

CONCLUSION:

Consider the following verses: Prov. 14:16; 12:15; **1:7**

FORGIVENESS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A grave marker near New York City has just one word on it — “Forgiven.”
- B. I hope that when I'm gone that one word can be fitly placed on my grave marker, for forgiveness is my only hope. The word “Perfect” would certainly not be appropriate; nor would the word “Worthy” do.
- C. The forgiveness of God is the only hope for any of us, for all have sinned—Rom. 3:22,23. Not one can plead a sinless life.
- D. There is one lesson, however, that we must remember: God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others. It is this truth that we will emphasize in this lesson.

DISCUSSION:

- A. It is taught in the model prayer—Matt. 6:14,15.
- B. It is taught by parable—Matt. 18:23-35.
- C. It is taught by example—Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.
- D. It is taught by direct command—Col. 3:12,13.
- E. It is an outgrowth of love—I Pet. 4:8.

II. Objections raised by those who will not forgive.

- A. “But you just don't have any idea how he treated me—I can't forgive.”
 - 1. Did he curse, swear, and declare that he didn't know you?
 - 2. Did he sell you into the hands of men who sought to crucify you?
 - 3. Did he mock you?
 - 4. Did he blindfold you, smite you, and make sport of you?
 - 5. Did he spit in your face?
 - 6. Did he scourge you?
 - 7. Did he crown you with thorns?
 - 8. Did he drive nails through your hands and feet, and thus

hang you on a cross? 9. Did he stone you? B. "I can forgive, but I can't forget."

1. Such is not forgiveness. To forgive is to bury the matter and treat the offender as if it had never happened.
2. Forgiveness is not a kind of delayed judgment which holds the offender on probation. Such is sham forgiveness.
3. When God forgives, the matter is ended with Him. He never remembers the offence again. One never has to answer to God for a forgiven sin—Heb. 8:12.

III. Forgiveness requires bigness on the part of the forgiving party.

- A. It demands bigness of heart, a bigness that is akin to divinity.
 1. Someone has said, "To err is human; to forgive is divine."
 2. God and Christ forgive freely because they are big in heart—Psa. 86:5.
- B. Forgiveness is too big for little souls.
 1. This is why so many congregations have members who have nothing to do with one another and will not speak to one another.
 2. Some are too little, too proud, to say, "I was wrong; I apologize." Too many are too little to really forgive.
 3. So many hold grudges and ill will. Instead of carrying tolerance and forgiveness in their hearts, they carry their feelings on their shoulders and revenge in their hearts.

CONCLUSION:

- A. If you should die today, could the word "Forgiven" be fitly engraved on your marker? Not if you are refusing to forgive another. Not if you hold malice in your heart.
- B. It could not be engraved there if you have not obeyed the gospel.
- C. It could not be engraved there if you are an erring Christian who will not repent and pray. Not if you are a lukewarm member.

WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN THERE?

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In the Bible we have accounts of gatherings of the people of God for various reasons, reasons that were good, with divine approval.

- B. Any gathering approved of God should have the approval and support of all of God's people.
- C. Little patience is indicated in the scriptures with A.W.O.L. children of God: John Mark (Acts 13:13; 15:36-40); Meroz (Judges 5:23); Demas (II Tim. 4:10). What is said of Demas could be said of every one who stays away on Sunday night or Wednesday night to look at TV or to engage in any other pleasure.
- D. In this lesson we are going to read about some assemblies approved of God. We will keep before you these questions: If you had lived then would you have been there? Would you and your family have been there?

DISCUSSION: I. A meeting to read God's word.

- A. Scripture—Nehemiah 8:1-8.
- B. Would you have been there? What about your family? If not, would God have been pleased?
- C. The Jews had a similar service every sabbath. Jesus, our example, attended regularly—Luke 4:16.
- D. The church here has two or three such services every week. We know God approves them. Do you and your family attend them, or are you A.W.O.L.?

II. A meeting on the first day of the week to break bread.

- A. Scripture—Acts 20:7. (Observe: a great preacher was present, but they came together, not to hear a great preacher primarily, but to break bread. God is not pleased when the crowds gather just when a great preacher is present.)
- B. Would you have been there?
 - 1. Or would you have been entertaining company that day?
 - 2. Or would the whole family have stayed home with one ailing member?
 - 3. Or would you have been down on the river?
 - 4. Or would you have stayed home because “you had a bone in your leg”? Many excuses are just this flimsy.
- C. We have A.W.O.L. members every Lord's day. This is wrong—Heb. 10:25.

III. A meeting to settle a controversy.

- A. Scripture—Acts 15.
 - 1. The issue is stated clearly in verses 1-3. The problem involved the question of circumcision.
 - 2. Erring brethren had their say (verses 5-7); then Peter, James, Paul, and Barnabas spoke.
 - 3. Though the matter was decided by the apostles and elders, the church was there and supported the decision

(verses 12,22).

- B. Would you have been there?
 - 1. Or in spite of announcements and pleadings by the apostles and elders, would you have stayed away?
 - 2. Would you have criticized? Would you have said, "I just can't stand all of this fussing?" Or, "It's just a preachers' fuss,"
- C. There are issues now, serious issues, that are dividing churches and homes.
 - 1. Many members will not study them to learn what is involved.
 - 2. They know which side their favorite preacher or paper is on, and which way the big churches and the majority of churches have gone, and that's all they want to know.
 - 3. This same condition existed in the latter half of the 19th century, at which time missionary societies and instrumental music were the issues.
 - 4. We should be thankful when two good men discuss vital issues.
 - 5. There must be heresies—I Cor. 11:19.
 - 6. Let us be warned against drifting—Heb. 2:1-3; Acts 20:29,30.

IV. A meeting for prayer.

- A. Scripture— Acts 12:5,12.
 - 1. James had been martyred by Herod. Now Peter was imprisoned and marked for death.
 - 2. The church was helpless as far as human help was concerned. There was no ruler or court to which they could appeal. Prayer was their only resort.
 - 3. Many met. They didn't just offer a brief prayer at home. They came together, and apparently continued until late.
- B. Would you have been at one of those gatherings for prayer?
 - 1. Or would you have been at home asleep?
 - 2. Or at some place of amusement?
- C. We don't pray enough.
 - 1. We don't come together to pray. We have a little prayer at each service, but we place more emphasis on our singing, preaching, etc.
 - 2. We are taught to pray for rulers—I Tim. 2:1-3; for preachers—Col. 4:2,3; Eph. 6:18-20; II Thess 3:1.
 - 3. I wonder what results we would see if we really had prayer meetings, if we gathered to pray for a specific matter of great concern to us.
 - 4. Matt. 18:19 suggests the results.
- D. But if we had prayer meetings, would you attend?

CONCLUSION:

Christians are to present their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). The Macedonians did this, and it influenced their service to the Lord greatly (II Cor. 8:5). When people give themselves to the Lord, they won't have to be frightened, or emotionally aroused, or inspired by a big preacher come to town, or stirred by a city-wide campaign, or fed a meal, to get them to attend services. They will be present for every service the Lord approves.

DON'T BE A FOOL

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The term “fool” has different meanings in the scriptures. In Matt. 5:22 we are warned against calling someone a fool. In this passage the word is used as a term of contempt, and those who so use it are in danger of hell.
- B. The word is not always so used. The Bible calls people fools, suggesting that they are deficient in judgment, unwise, acting foolishly. It is the opposite of being wise.
- C. In this lesson we will turn through the Bible and observe the kind of people whom the Lord calls “fools.” He makes no mistakes. Any person who fits into one of these categories is truly a fool.

DISCUSSION: I. Those who won't listen to advice.

- A. Scriptures: Prov. 1:7; 23:9; 1:22; 12:15; 28:26.
- B. One must make sure when listening to advice that he is heeding the advice of wise men.
 1. Some make the mistake of following the advice of fools. Rehoboam made this mistake—I Kings 12:6-15.

II. Those who pay no attention to warnings.

- A. Wise men heed warnings; fools don't.
- B. Scriptures: Prov. 14:16; 22:3; 13:19; 10:23; 26:11.

III. Those who believe everything they hear.

- A. The wise investigate; fools don't—Prov. 14:15.
- B. Some believe everything they hear in religion, but they are wrong in doing so—Matt. 7:15; I John 4:1.
- C. The attitude of a wise man is demonstrated by the people of Berea—Acts 17:11.
- D. Wise men “prove all things”—I Thess. 5:21.

IV. Those who make a mock of sin.

- A. Scripture: Prov. 14:9.
- B. The fool sins without remorse or blushing—Jer. 8:12.
- C. Sin is a serious thing. It is rebellion against God and it separates one from God—Isa. 59:1,2. Yet many treat it lightly.
- D. Such cannot escape the wrath of God—Gal. 6:7,8.

- V. Those who are contentious and get mad easily.
 - A. Scriptures: Prov. 18:6; 14:7; 14:29; 27:3; Eccle. 7:9.
 - B. A wise man is slow to wrath—James 1:18-21.

- VI. Those who talk too much.
 - A. Scriptures: Eccle. 10:14; 10:12; 5:2,3; Prov. 10:19; 18:7.
 - B. Our words can produce either good or evil, depending upon the heart from which they proceed—Matt. 12:35-37.

- VII. Those who are deceived by strong drink.
 - A. Scriptures: Prov. 20:1; 23:32.
 - B. The following poem depicts well the true nature of “a bar” where drinks are served:
 - A bar to heaven, a door to hell;
 - Whoever named it, named it well. A
 - bar to manliness and wealth;
 - A door to want and broken health.
 - A bar to honor, pride and fame;
 - A door to grief and sin and shame.
 - A bar to home and a bar to prayer;
 - A door to darkness and despair. A
 - bar to honored useful life;
 - A door to brawling, senseless strife.
 - A bar to all that's true and brave;
 - A door to every drunkard's grave.
 - A bar to joys that home imparts;
 - A door to tears and aching hearts.
 - A bar to heaven, a door to hell;
 - Whoever named it, named it well.

- VIII. Those who say in their hearts that there is no God.
 - A. Scripture: Psalms 14:1.
 - B. The Gentile world before Christ demonstrated this truth—Rom. 1:21-28.

CONCLUSION:

We have discussed many types of people whom God refers to as fools. But we now want to make a special appeal to those who are not Christians. The Bible teaches that those who fail to make adequate preparation, who lay up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God, are fools—Matt. 25:1-13;

Luke 12:16-21. We urge you to be wise and begin now to prepare to meet God.

A CHRISTIAN'S SACRIFICES

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A man was feeling low and blue, feeling that life had been rather hard for him. But he decided to count his blessings, and realized that he had received many. Then he decided to count his sacrifices for the Lord. But he could not think of even *one* real sacrifice that he had ever made for the Lord.
- B. Every good dad could think of great sacrifices he has made for his children. So could every good mother. But how many of us have made one great sacrifice for the cause of Christ?
- C. In today's lesson we will consider some of the sacrifices the Lord wants us to make.

DISCUSSION: I. **The sacrifice of praise—Heb. 13:15.**

- A. This is rendered in prayer, in song, in conversation.
 - 1. Scriptures: I Pet. 2:9; Psa. 100; 103:1-5.
 - 2. Some years ago I visited a church and was impressed with the fact that all, young and old, sang. That is as it should be.
 - 3. This praise should be from the heart—Matt. 15:8.
 - 4. The songs should be songs of praise.
 - 5. All should pray, and they should do so with a sense of need.
 - 6. A young man, explaining his hoarseness, said, “I yelled myself hoarse at a football game.” I have seen people do that very thing, and then appear bored at worship.
- B. This sacrifice of praise is to be “by him”; that is, by Christ.
- C. This sacrifice of praise is to be the fruit of lips (as in I Cor. 14:15 and Col. 3:16,17), rather than fruit from the use of a machine. A machine (piano, organ) cannot praise God.

II. **The sacrifice of doing good and communicating—Heb. 13:16.**

- A. We can't do all of our sacrificing with words.
- B. There is so much teaching on the giving of material substance: I Cor. 16:1,2; II Cor. 9:6-10; Luke 16:10-12.
- C. Sacrificial giving is in reality saving—I Tim. 6:17-19; Matt. 6:19-21.
- D. The Macedonians sacrificed to give, and the thing which led them to do so was their giving themselves first—II Cor. 8:1-5.

III. The sacrifice of bodies—Rom. 12:1.

- A. This sacrifice involves oneself.
1. Not many are required to die for Christ in our times, but all are asked to live for Him—I Cor. 6:19,20; II Cor. 5:14,15.
 2. The following quote tells of a man who sacrificed his body to football: “‘Win or lose, he’s never home during football season,’ she said. ‘He’s gone all day Saturday and after church on Sundays till seven or eight o’clock, to say nothing of every day until 8, 9, 10 or even 11 o’clock,’ she said. ‘In fact, he takes those plays to bed with him.’”
 3. If someone spent that much time working for the church and studying his Bible and attending gospel meetings, he would be called a fanatic. The Lord would consider him one who was presenting his body a living sacrifice.
 4. In giving our bodies we must use our *tongues* to teach and invite, to read to our children and teach them to pray, to read to the elderly and blind.
 5. We must use our *hands* to pass tracts to our acquaintances, to prepare meals for those who need them, to make garments for the needy.
 6. “Things like that tire me to death,” someone may be thinking. But—Rev. 14:13; Matt. 16:25; John 12:24,25.
 7. “Well, that is just too hard; I just can’t make that great a sacrifice.” But—Matt. 16:26; Luke 14:27. The choice is yours. But don’t be deceived and think you are being a good disciple without carrying any loads.
- B. One cannot present his body to two causes—Matt. 6:24.
1. One might *half* serve two masters, but both masters would be dissatisfied.
 2. Suppose, for instance, a sacrificing Christian were to join some other organization, a civic club, for example. If he became a good member of the civic club, he would have to donate time and effort attending meetings and working on committees. In time such a member would be elected to offices, increasing his responsibilities. But this activity would necessitate his dropping some of his work for the Lord. If he continued to run well in the kingdom he would just *crawl* for the organization. If he runs well in the organization and pleases the leaders he will begin to *crawl* for the Lord.
 3. Here is exactly why the work of the church suffers. Many members are dividing their lives with other masters. They have their name on the church roll and they attend maybe one service a week. But they are members of this organization and that organization; this club and

that club; they become involved in this worthy work and that worthy work; and all this activity keeps them running until all they can do is *crawl* for the Lord. The organization doesn't want *crawlers* and the Lord doesn't want *crawlers*—*Rev. 3:15,16; Luke 9:60.*

4. There is an old adage: “A half a loaf is better than nothing.” The Lord doesn't accept that. We can't serve him half the time and some other master half the time. But thousands who claim to be Christians are trying to satisfy the Lord with one little slice out of a big loaf of many slices.
5. This just can't be what He asks in Rom. 12:1.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Are we willing to make these sacrifices for the Lord?
- B. His salvation is offered to those who will do so.

“UNSTABLE AS WATER”

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In Genesis 49th chapter, we have Jacob's prophecies concerning his sons.
- B. Of Reuben, his firstborn, he said, “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” (vs. 4)
- C. Reuben was unstable. A thing that is stable is something fixed, steadfast, not easily moved; something not affected by surrounding circumstances. Well expressed in song: “I Shall Not Be Moved.”

DISCUSSION: I. Instability.

- A. Instability of water.
 1. Water will not lie flat in a bucket. Tilt the bucket and the water is poured out. Fill the bucket nearly to the brim and the water will not lie flat so that it can be carried easily. It will slosh.
 2. If water would lie flat in the ocean and in rivers, sailing would be much safer. But when the wind blows, the water rolls up in great waves and makes danger for ships.
 3. Water adjusts to the shape of any vessel it is in. Round, square, oblong, triangle. A tube 10 miles long and a half inch in diameter.
 4. Water will travel 1,000 miles rather than climb a hill or mountain.
 5. Water in the ocean tries to follow the moon when it passes overhead.

6. So water has no will of its own. It is influenced entirely by things other than itself. B.

Instability of Reuben.

1. Reuben was tempted to commit adultery (incest) with Bilhah, one of his father's concubines. He did not have the self-control to resist the temptation. So, when he had opportunity he committed sin. "Unstable as water."
2. Reuben could be controlled by a hundred outward forces, but he lacked control from within.
3. So his father predicted he would not excel. He would not amount to much. *True of any person who lacks self-control—decisions made by others—no power to make decisions for himself and stick to them.*

II. Evidences of modern instability.

- A. Some cannot give a reason for what they believe. I Pet. 3:15.
 1. Why they believe in "fellowship halls," baptism for remission of sins, etc.
 2. They may say, "I disagree with you," but they cannot give a reason.
- B. Some agree with anyone with whom they talk. About women teaching, about women wearing pants, about institutionalism, etc.
- C. Some are touchy on some subjects. Don't want the subject mentioned.
- D. Many depart from the truth—when they marry, when they move to another town, when they go away to college.
- E. Some are happy with whatever church may be nearby, regardless of its teaching or practice.
- F. Some have no convictions concerning: social drinking, petty gambling, immodest attire, mixed swimming, lascivious entertainments, etc.

III. **God's word urges stability.**

- A. Summary of its teaching: It teaches us to
 1. Have a fixed purpose and stick to it.
 2. To be dependable.
 - a. In all surroundings.
 - b. Under great pressure, when others would change our course.
- B. Scriptures:
 1. Psa. 57:7; Acts 11:22-23.
 2. I Cor. 15:58. Reminds us of General Thomas J. Jackson who earned the name, "Stonewall Jackson" when he stood firm on a line from which others in the battle were falling away.
 3. Eph. 3:17-19; Col. 1:21-23. Leaning tower of Pisa leans

because it is not properly “rooted and grounded.” 4.
Eph. 4:13-15; Heb. 13:9; II Pet. 1:5-11; Rom. 12:2. C.

Examples:

1. Daniel (Dan. 1:8).
2. Three Hebrew children (Dan. 3).
3. Joseph (Gen. 39:7-20). Contrast with older brother, Reuben.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Ships and planes are held steady on their course by gyroscopes.
- B. We all need spiritual gyroscopes.
- C. *Faith* is the Christian's gyroscope. I Jn. 5:4; Eph. 6:16.

MEN OF CONVICTIONS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Had you been a member of the church in Jerusalem, what would you have done when you had heard that the apostles had been arrested, beaten, and cast into prison? Or when you had heard that Stephen had been stoned to death? Would you have attended worship the next Lord's day? Would you have invited your neighbors to attend? Would you have attended Stephen's funeral? Or would you have stayed away and criticized Stephen for disputing with the Libertines?
- B. The answers to these questions depend on whether you are a person of strong, deep convictions, or a person of weak convictions who would be embarrassed to discuss with others his beliefs.
- C. Peter suggests that we must be people of strong convictions-I Peter 3:15.

DISCUSSION: I. **Bible examples of strong conviction.**

- A. Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:8,9). Their convictions made the congregation angry. “Let's stone them,” they said. But their anger and threats did not change Joshua and Caleb.
- B. Daniel. Daniel demonstrated strong conviction in relation to the king's dainties (Daniel 1:5,6,8) and to prayer (Daniel 6). How different the story would have been had Daniel been a man of weak convictions.
- C. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:16-18).
- D. Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26).

- II. We should study issues and differences that arise within the church.
 - A. The Bible teaches us that there will be false teachers, even among brethren (Acts 20:29,30; I Cor. 11:19).
 - B. When differences arise we should be concerned. We must not take a “So what?” attitude. Every difference involving doctrine or practice should be a challenge to search the scriptures. God gave us minds to be used.
 - C. When the “missionary society” and “instrumental music” questions arose in the nineteenth century, many ignored them, followed their favorite preachers or papers, and were swept away into error.
 - D. Now the problem is church related institutions and social activities. We should be concerned for the church. We should teach our children and others concerning the danger of apostasy. But many members are no more concerned for these dangers than they are for the “Book of Mormon,” the “Koran,” or the alligator population.

- III. Characteristics of people with conviction.
 - A. People with sound convictions obtain them from the Bible — not from their favorite preacher, editor, parents, or tradition.
 - B. People with convictions will discuss differences with others. They will give the facts and scriptures that have brought them to their convictions.
 - C. People with convictions want to teach others.
 - D. People with strong, well-grounded convictions are stable and settled. The size and social status of the church are of no significance in relation to their convictions. Their only question is, “Which group has the truth?”

CONCLUSION:

In forming convictions follow II Tim. 2:15. Don't allow prejudice, tradition, emotions, crowds, or church doctrine to blind you. Be able to take the Bible and support your convictions. Don't be weak in relation to them. Don't be ashamed of them. Don't encourage and support doctrines contrary to them. Don't drop them when you begin courting, or marry, or go to college.

LOOK FOR A MAN

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Do we preachers complain too much about moral and spiritual conditions? Do you think we are chronic fault-finders—too pessimistic, always looking on the dark side, prophets of doom?
- B. If so, you need to read the inspired book of Jeremiah.
 - 1. Jeremiah 9:1-6 provides a sample.
 - 2. Jeremiah had to condemn the prophets (Jer. 23:16,17, 29;32).
 - 3. He must have received bitter criticism: “Who does he think he is?” “He thinks he is the only true prophet in the country.” “He knocks our dear Hananiah.” And he did condemn Hananiah, to his face, a popular prophet who prophesied what the people wanted to hear.
 - 4. Jeremiah was probably accused of being self-righteous. If he had even a slight fault it did not escape criticism.
- C. But today our special attention will be to Jeremiah 5:1-5.

DISCUSSION: I. God challenged the people to find a man.

- A. We are reminded of Diogenes.
- B. No doubt they had plenty of citizens of the masculine gender. They had men they honored. They probably responded, “Why, we have many fine men.” They no doubt had fellows who were very proud of their manhood.
- C. But there was no man there according to God's standard (I Sam. 16:7).

II. God was seeking a man who possessed two qualities: “Doeth justice” and “seeketh truth.”

- A. “Doeth justice”: To do justice is to give all men their rights; to be impartial and fair to all—to the rich and poor alike. One must be just in all dealings; honest; righteous (consider Micah 6:8).
- B. “Seeketh truth”: Not to simply accept what is popular; not to mount some bandwagon; not merely to follow parents; not to follow one's own wisdom (Prov. 14:12; 3:5); not to be a slave to passions. The man who seeks truth is the man of Matt. 5:6; he is one who will walk in truth without fear of men; he is one who will teach and stand for truth regardless of criticisms (I Cor. 16:13).
- C. No coward is a man, for a man doesn't run from his post of duty. No one is a man who is ashamed of his convictions, who will not stand for them in all company. God's man will stand up for the truth in any kind of company, even in the

face of ridicule.

III. God refused to accept their pious pretensions.

- A. God could not find “a man” in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 22:30). Had there been a man among them, he would have suffered (Isaiah 59:15), for society there was comparable to the antediluvian world and Sodom.
- B. There were, however, pious pretensions (verse 2). They would preface a statement with, “As the Lord liveth,” but would swear falsely. They would lie, even as they called God as a witness.
- C. Their hardness is described in verse 3.

CONCLUSION:

- A. God is still looking for men: not just preachers, not just elders, not just members.
- B. God wants men: men who love justice, men who seek truth.
- C. He wants you young people to grow up to be men—His kind of men.

STUDIES CONCERNING DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES

A BEAUTIFUL SPIRIT OF FAIRNESS

TEXT: Acts 28:16-24.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We are living in a world of many conflicting interests. We see differences among governments, political parties, capital and labor, and in religion. As we observe these conflicting interests, we see so many evidences of unfairness.
- B. We hear unfair criticism, misrepresentation, ridicule, and false accusations. We find such even among religious people. We have observed papers misrepresent and attack others, then close their columns, refusing to allow them to answer.
- C. So, when a difference is handled in a spirit of fairness, it is refreshing indeed. Such was the case when Paul arrived in Rome to be tried before the emperor.

DISCUSSION: I. Paul sends for the leaders of the opposition.

- A. Paul's usual approach when he arrived in a city was to preach to the Jews in their synagogue. This was impossible in Rome, since he arrived as a prisoner. So, in this case, he had to send for them.
- B. He sets his case before them—Acts 28:17-20.
- C. He does so with no bitterness or harsh accusations.

II. The leaders respond with a reasonable answer.

- A. While admitting that the church is everywhere spoken against (verses 21,22), they are willing to hear the other side. How different to people today, who turn you aside with “We're Catholic,” or “We're Baptist.”
- B. They allow Paul to represent his own views. Their words: “We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest” (verse 22).
- C. They bring a good crowd to hear Paul (verse 23). Religious groups might practice this today were it not for prejudice. But the leaders know that their doctrines cannot stand in-

vestigation (John 3:19-21).

- III. Paul's sermon is preached in a spirit of fairness.
 - A. He preaches from the law and the prophets, rather than from his own thinking (verse 23).
 - B. There is no venom in his preaching, no wisecracks.
 - C. Discussion is apparently welcomed after his preaching (verses 24,25).
- IV. The people listen in a spirit of fairness.
 - A. They listen all day (verse 23). They obviously face their differences seriously.
 - B. Some believe; some disbelieve (verse 24).
 - C. But they do not forget the things spoken, for great reasoning among themselves follows (verse 29).

CONCLUSION:

As differences arise among us, let us react with a spirit of fairness. God is never pleased with a contentious, unfair spirit.

LET THERE BE NO STRIFE

TEXT: Genesis 13:5-12.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Lesson begins with the story of two men, one a big man, the other a little man. If both had been little men there could have been serious trouble. Murder could have resulted.
- B. No reference to physical size, but bigness of heart and soul. One mature, the other like a child.
- C. These men were Abraham and Lot, uncle and nephew.
- D. God commanded Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land He would show him. He led Abraham to Canaan. For some reason, Lot came along. Maybe a mistake on Abraham's part. Lot was a grief to him.
- E. They settled in the hill or mountain area of Canaan. Pasture was not adequate for both. Herdsmen began to quarrel.

DISCUSSION:

- I. Abraham's noble appeal. (Let there be no strife.) A. Commendable that he wanted no strife.
 - 1. He had the spirit of the inspired proverbs. (Prov. 20:3; 17:14; 17:19).
 - 2. Abraham believed as Paul taught in Phil. 2:3.

- B. His reasons for avoiding strife were commendable.
 - 1. "We are brethren." Psa. 133:1. Brethren should love each other. Everyone should try very hard not to cause offenses. Everyone should be willing to take and take rather than quarrel, that is, when personal offenses are involved—I don't advocate silence when innovations are introduced.
 - 2. Perrizite in the land. How would it sound to talk to the Canaanite and Perrizite and tell him his god was not God and that we serve a living God, then set an example of strife, quarrelling, and fighting?
- C. What Abraham was willing to sacrifice for peace.

II. There should be no strife among Christians.

- A. Scriptures: Col. 3:15; Heb. 12:14; Phil. 2:2-4; Jas. 3:14-17.
- B. As Abraham said, we are brethren, begotten of the same Father by means of the pure seed. We should try hard not to offend. Prov. 6:19; Psa. 133:1. Should be very ready to apologize. Should take and take affronts of a personal nature. Eph. 4:1-3; I Cor. 13:7—"Beareth all things," etc. "Let somebody run over me?" Big dog walking down the street does not stop to bark at every little dog that may challenge him.
- C. Denominations are in the land. How does it look for us to warn them to take the truth, to boast that we take the N.T. as our guide and try to pattern after the N.T. church, beg them to leave the doctrines and commandments of men and stand with us on the Bible, and then *we* set an example of strife and division!
- D. The servants of the Lord must not strive. II Tim. 2:24; Gal. 5:16.
- E. Strife is after the flesh. Gal. 5:19-21.

III. There should be no strife in the home.

- A. With Abraham we should say, "Let there be no strife between us, for we are husband and wife. We promised to love, honor, and cherish one another for life." Prov. 11:29; 14:1; 21:9.
- B. There are children in the home. How can we rear them to be Christians and good husbands and wives if we set an example of quarrelling?

IV. Some things that cause strife among God's people.

- A. Foolish and unlearned questions. II Tim. 2:23.
- B. False doctrines. I Tim. 6:3-5.
- C. Bad attitudes.
 - 1. Hatred. Prov. 10:12.

2. Wrath. Prov. 15:18; 29:22.
3. Pride. Prov. 13:10. One can't reason with the proud but the humble and wise will listen. A person who feels superior will find fault. Pride brings on many innovations—It may hurt the pride of some to admit that we have no hospitals, colleges, and etc.

D. Innovations.

1. There have been thousands of cases of strife over: Sprinkling (none over burial); infant baptism (none over believers, etc.); instrumental music (none over singing); societies (none before their introduction); gymnasiums and fellowship halls (none before they were introduced). Blame placed on opposers, but the innovation is the wedge.
2. Not wrong to oppose. God values purity above peace.

V. **What sacrifice may rightly be made for peace?**

- A. All agree that we should *not* have strife and division. We are all Abraham's in word. We all say, "Let there be no strife." We all say it retards the progress of the church. We pay lip service to peace.
- B. It is obvious that someone must sacrifice to have unity and peace. But who should do it?
 1. Should those who oppose the innovations accept them for the sake of peace? What would we have to sacrifice? Conscience! Should we? Rom. 14:23.
 2. Should the promoters? They can do their work in a way that is not doubted or questioned without violating their conscience.

CONCLUSION:

Strife is sinful. All must develop the attitude of Abraham as he sought to avoid strife in a manner that would be pleasing to God.

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING ROMANS 14

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The church in the first century was troubled by issues as the church is today: the question of circumcision was one such issue; the resurrection was another; gnosticism was another.
- B. It is sad that such issues existed, but they served a purpose — I Cor. 11:19.
- C. A great issue among Christians today involves the question of fellowship. Fellowship has to do with united effort or

joint participation.

- D. The question involved is: What people will we work with in spiritual activities?

DISCUSSION:

I. The view of some brethren.

- A. The view of some is that we are to fellowship all who are “in Christ”—that is, all who have been scripturally baptized.
1. Such people, they would teach, should not be rejected because of any error in teaching or practice. They would say, “Christ saves no one because he is perfect. He saves because he is in Christ.”
 2. They would further say, “Immorality would demand rejection but not doctrinal error or practice.”
 3. When closely questioned, some say they would fellowship them in things they do that are scriptural, but wouldn't in unscriptural things. For example, if a church builds a fellowship hall, they would use the preacher for a meeting and would call on the elders for prayer; they would announce their services and would co-operate with them in a radio program; but, they would not have any part in their social activities in their fellowship hall. This attitude would be the same toward a church that uses instrumental music.
- B. This position is erroneous.
1. Scriptures: II John 9; Acts 20:29,30; I Cor. 1:10; Gal. 1:8,9; Jude 3.
 2. Doctrinal error cuts one off from Christ.
 3. To avoid the force of these passages, these brethren have placed special interpretations on these passages.

II. A look at Romans 14 in relation to this controversy.

- A. Those who hold to the above position frequently refer to Romans 14 in support of their convictions.
- B. According to this chapter, weak brethren are to be fellowshiped.
1. This chapter deals with fellowship and judging—verses 1, 10-13.
 2. Weak brethren are under consideration.
 3. We are to receive the weak brethren of the chapter. We are to fellowship them. The important question is: Who are these weak brethren?
- C. Some who do not qualify as the weak brethren of this chapter.
1. Factionists —Titus 3:10.
 2. Those who cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine of Christ—Romans 16:17,18.

3. Men who lead congregations into digression and scoff at those who stay with the Bible—I Tim. 6:3-6.
 4. People who walk after the flesh—Gal. 5:19-21.
 - D. Who then is under consideration in Romans 14?
 1. The chapter has to do with personal scruples.
 2. Paul uses two examples: Meats and days—vs. 2, 5.
 3. Some things that I believe fall into this category:
 - a. Voting and holding a political office.
 - b. Attending professional ball games.
 - c. Drinking coffee and coke.
 - d. Television.
 - e. Observance of Christmas as a national holiday.
 - f. Easter egg hunts.
 - g. Displaying whiskey bottles filled with colored water,
 - h. Playing football.
 - i. Sunday work,
 - j. Sunday night communion.
 - k. Singing of spiritual songs with an instrument in the home.
 - E. Romans 14 is not applicable to any question on which we have a clear revelation from God.
 - F. What should be our practice in relation to these questions of personal scruples?
 1. Don't practice them if you doubt—verse 23.
 2. Don't judge those who can practice them. Don't force your scruples upon others—verse 3.
 3. Don't practice a liberty in a way to encourage another to violate his conscience—verses 20-22.
 4. Don't hold people in contempt for their scruples. Don't ridicule. Don't pressure—verse 3.
 - G. Certain congregational action forces members to either violate their consciences or leave.
 1. This has taken place with:
 - a. The introduction of instrumental music.
 - b. Sending money to human institutions.
 - c. Spending money on social programs, athletics, etc.
 2. Such practices violate Romans 14. Those who introduce them over brethren's consciences no longer walk in love (v. 15), and they fail to follow things which make for peace (v. 19).
111. Questions to be considered.
- A. Should we disfellowship all who disagree with us on Bible teaching?
 1. My answer would be “No.” We may have people in this congregation who differ with me on the subject of the covering (I Cor. 11), institutionalism, and many other

- questions. We do not disfellowship them.
2. But if such should try to stir up a faction and make trouble, that would call for action.
 3. I know of preachers who disagree with me on the covering. Some I would work with and some I would not. It depends on their attitude.
 4. I would feel the same toward preachers with whom I disagree on the eldership.
- B. Must people be perfect in understanding to be saved?
1. We must strive to understand—Eph. 5:17; I Cor. 14:20.
 2. God is not pleased with people who merely follow preachers, or parents, or editors.
 3. But I don't claim to be perfect in understanding and must hope that the Lord will be merciful—Heb. 2:17,18.
- C. Must people live perfect lives to be saved?
1. The New Testament teaches righteous living—Titus 2:11-14; II Pet. 1:5-11.
 2. But if one were saved by a perfect life, he would be saved by works, not faith.
 3. Mercy is extended to those who walk in the light and confess their sins—I John 1:7-10; 2:1.

CONCLUSION:

We do not claim perfection in understanding or life, but the necessity of breaking fellowship with certain ones is placed upon us by the Lord. We, therefore, cannot fellowship those who are factious, or those who cause division, or those who are leading the church into apostasy.

LEGALISM

INTRODUCTION:

- A. An editor recently wrote that the only fault of churches of Christ was their legalism in following the letter of the New Testament.
- B. There is widespread condemnation of legalism; it is regarded as a very great fault. I agree that it is a very great error, but I am sure that many who condemn it really don't know what it is.
- C. It is the favorite cry of all who have departed from the teaching of the New Testament. It is the simplest answer they can give to those who teach strict obedience to the New Testament.
- D. Consequently, a study of this subject is needed, and we turn our attention to it in this lesson.

DISCUSSION:

I. Legalism misunderstood.

- A. The author of a book, *“The Teaching of Jesus,”* warns of three errors in the use of Jesus' teaching: allegorizing, literalism, and legalism. “The final mistake is that of legalism, or the effort to turn Jesus' teaching into a new system of laws. But it was not rules Jesus came to bring, but life. Jesus' idea of religion was not a better set of laws, but a new spirit in the hearts of men. All this becomes plain when we look at His teachings. There is no effort to set forth any system of laws; rather, He is like the wise physician, pre scribing this for one patient and that for another.” When this author warns against legalism, then, he is saying that we should obey no laws, keep no rules; just cultivate a new spirit, but ignore laws, rules, and regulations.
- B. Christ, however, gave us laws.
 1. We would not know the spirit we should manifest except as Jesus taught it by His rules.
 2. The sermon on the mount is full of rules and commands—rules and commands that must be obeyed, Matt. 7:24-27.
 3. The New Testament clearly states that Christ gave us a law—Gal. 6:2; I Cor. 9:21; Heb. 8:10.
 4. If there is no law, there is no transgression—Rom. 4:15. If Jesus gave no law, there is no such thing as sin—I John 3:4.
 5. The Bible warns against disobedience to Christ's teaching—I John 2:3,4; Acts 3:22,23; Luke 6:46; I John 3:24.
 6. His teaching is applicable to all: John 3:5 applies to all men; so does the great commission and the sermon on the mount.
 7. So, Jesus gave a set of laws; He gave commandments. If legalism means a faithful effort to obey His laws, then I believe in legalism. But that is not the meaning of legalism.

II. Legalism defined.

- A. Legalism is the doctrine that one can be saved by keeping a law; that Jesus will say, “I gave a law and you kept it perfectly, so enter into My rest.” People indicate a legalistic spirit when they say things to the effect that “if you don't measure up to the Bible, you won't be saved.”
- B. The law of Moses was a legalistic system.
 1. There was no salvation by it—Gal. 2:16; Rom 3:20; 3:28.
 2. Gal. 3:10-13 explains why there was no salvation by the law. To be saved by law required perfect keeping of law. Not one error was allowed. That is the principle of law.

Not one kept it without error—Rom. 3:22,23; Acts 15:10.

- C. It is the nature of law to condemn rather than to save.
 - 1. When laws are made, penalties are attached for the punishment of offenders. If the law is enforced, there is nothing in the law to save the violator; all it does is condemn.
 - 2. Illustration: Littering the highway carries a \$50 fine; failing to stop at an intersection, a \$10 fine; murder, imprisonment or death. If one breaks these laws and is caught, and the law is in turn executed with exactness, there is not a chance for him to escape the penalty.

III. Our hope in Christ.

- A. Our hope in Christ is not based upon a perfect keeping of His law, but upon His mercy and grace.
 - 1. He expects us diligently to obey His commandments, for it is in this way that we show our faith and love, become a blessing to others, and find happiness and well-being for ourselves.
 - 2. But perfection is impossible—I John 1:8-10. If, then, we had to be measured in the judgment by Christ's commandments— *with no mercy or no grace*—not one would stand. We can't merit salvation by a perfect life—Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5.
 - 3. Our hope is in His mercy and grace. We cannot say, "Lord, I never once broke Thy law."
- B. God's grace not to be viewed as license.
 - 1. The fact that we are saved by forgiveness through God's grace, rather than through perfect law keeping, does not mean that we can treat His teaching lightly and chide those who are careful to abide in His teaching with "legalism."
 - 2. Illustration: I try to obey the law in my driving. Once, while driving in Pell City, Alabama, I stopped at several intersections; but as I approached another intersection, a parked car obscured my view of a stop sign. I ran the stop sign. I explained my failure to the policeman who pulled me over. He told me to go on and didn't write a ticket. Did the law save me? No, grace. But the police man's grace did not grant me license to run future stop signs, nor to call those who conscientiously stop at stop signs "legalists."

CONCLUSION:

God's mercy is extended to all who diligently follow His teaching, but that mercy is to be found "in Christ" —Eph. 1:7. One enters Christ through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism—Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27.

FAITH AND OPINION

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Jesus desires unity within His church—**John** 17:20,21; I Cor. 1:10.
- B. Jesus loved His spiritual body more than His fleshly body. He suffered in the flesh that His church might exist.
- C. So, every Christian should do everything possible to maintain strength and unity within the church.
- D. It is my task in this lesson to discuss *faith and opinion* in their relation to unity.

DISCUSSION: I. How can unity be attained?

- A. By all following the same rule—Phil. 3:16.
 - 1. *Illustration:* There is uniformity in postage costs among the post offices of America, because they all have the same rule or standard.
 - 2. *Illustration:* Ten different men, told to cut a board five feet long, should come up with boards of exactly the same length, because they all have the same rule or standard.
 - 3. In the same way, Christians committed to the same rule or practice should be able to attain unity.
- B. But what is the rule?
 - 1. II Cor. 5:7—"We walk by faith, not by sight."
 - 2. But what does this mean? Rom. 10:17—Faith comes by hearing the word of God.
 - 3. *Illustration:* My wife walked by faith in her doctor. He prescribed medicines. She bought them and took them. One day a man ridiculed the medicine and told us of something just as good and much cheaper. She stuck to her medicine.
 - 4. "By faith, Noah..." (Heb. 11:7) Noah did what *God* said to do, thus walking by faith.
 - 5. "By faith the walls of Jericho..." (Heb. 11:30)
 - 6. This tells us the rule. It is God's word, the Bible. If we always act in religion as we have a command, approved apostolic example, or necessary inference in the Bible, we will have unity. It is the only possible way to carry out I Cor. 1:10.

II. Can we unite on opinions?

- A. Opinion is a judgment formed without certain knowledge, without a command or example. It is an assumption. It may be plausible, but it is still an assumption.
- B. We can never agree on opinion, for opinions differ. We end

up with as many rules as there are opinions. C. Division has resulted when men have advocated the following opinions: (1) There is only one in the Godhead; (2) Jesus to reign a thousand years in Jerusalem; (3) Sprinkling; (4) Instrumental music; (5) Missionary societies; (6) Radio and TV societies; (7) Benevolent societies; (8) All baptized in the Holy Spirit; (9) Church sponsored recreation and entertainment) (10) Bachelor elders; (11) Elders without children; (12) Only inspired praying referred to in I Cor. 11:1-16; (13) That baptism takes care of an adulterous union; (14) Infant baptism; (15) Distinction in gospel and doctrine. The whole brotherhood can never unite on these opinions.

III. What do we do about opinions?

- A. I'm sure we all have some. I have some I wouldn't mention to anyone. If God rejects me because of them, I'll not cause Him to reject anyone else.
- B. Thomas Campbell framed a slogan: "In faith, unity; in opinion, liberty; in all things, charity." But all who are familiar with Campbell's writings know that he did not mean liberty to preach opinions or force them on a church.
- C. *Illustration:* The Sand Creek story. The church withdrew from some brethren who tried to force suppers, pastors, organs, and missionary societies on it. Those withdrawn from read their response, defending the right of some to force their opinions on others and castigating those who opposed. They placed the blame on the church, saying that they were forcing their opinions on them.
- D. This is our problem now. Many preachers now refuse to reprove and rebuke men who divide the church with their opinions, while many do rebuke those who oppose introduction of opinions and call them antis and hobbyists and factionists. Some say they are making their "own inferences, deductions, conclusions and reasonings based on" the word.
- E. If we are making inferences, deductions, human opinions and reasonings we shouldn't make when we oppose instrumental music, missionary and benevolent societies, and church sponsored recreation, would we be doing the same where we oppose holy water, the sign of the cross, and the rosary? Do we not reject them on the same ground—viz., they are not taught in the scriptures?

CONCLUSION:

- A. We must teach and practice only that which is in the word of God.
- B. We must never teach or bind our opinions on others.
- C. This is the only way to unity among God's people.

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Wedding preparations require much time: clothing must be prepared, attendants chosen, invitations prepared and mailed, license bought, rehearsal planned, decorations and reception arranged.
- B. But these external preparations are not the most important; one's own personal preparation—getting himself ready—is the most important preparation for marriage. In fact, all other preparations could be eliminated except for the legal requirements.
- C. It takes more than a month or two to make this personal preparation. This preparation should begin in very tender childhood. Parents help in this preparation.
- D. This lesson will consist of steps to be taken in this personal preparation for marriage.

DISCUSSION: I. Learn unselfishness.

- A. Scriptures: Phil. 2:2-4; I Cor. 13:5 (Love seeketh not her own.)
- B. A child who has always had everything he wanted; who has learned to pout or throw temper tantrums to get his way, is not prepared for marriage. Woe to the one who marries such a person.
- C. The only beautiful argument in marriage is that which takes place when each insists that the other take the best.
- D. Marriage demands sharing: sharing the drudgery, sharing the income.

II. Learn kindness.

- A. “Love is kind”—I Cor. 13:4.
- B. A person easily provoked, one who is given to bitter, harsh words and deeds, is not prepared for marriage.
- C. One should ask: “Would I make life miserable for a man or woman?” If so, that person is not prepared and is in need of self-control.

III. Become prepared for the responsibilities of marriage.

- A. If a person is “not ready to settle down,” he is not ready for marriage.
- B. A young man after three or four years of married life deserted his wife and said he didn't want to be married. He should have thought of that before he messed up a fine girl's life.
- C. A man must prepare to make a living, to take care of his wife and children.
- D. A woman must be willing to bear children and be a homemaker (Titus 2:4,5). Childless homes have more problems.

IV. Be prepared to meet with some unpleasant situations.

- A. I hope they don't come, but your companion won't be perfect. Be prepared to be patient.
- B. Be prepared to apologize. One who thinks he can never be wrong, or is too proud to confess and apologize, is not prepared for marriage.

V. Get a sound education concerning love belonging to marriage.

- A. Get a good book from a Bible book store that is written from a Christian viewpoint. The wrong type of book will use low, base language of the gutter. One reading such books will get a distorted view of married love, and will act with coarseness rather than with the tenderness that makes marriage beautiful.
- B. Paul's counsel in I Cor. 7:1-5 should be studied and obeyed.
 - 1. Though the wife must not deprive her husband, the husband must be considerate and not require that which amounts to abuse.
 - 2. The delicate manner in which Paul wrote should be considered. Times have changed, but Christians should still use discreet language when they speak of the delicate things of life.

VI. Keep a clean, unpolluted body for the one you will marry.

- A. This is what you want of your mate. If it is what you want, why ask more than you are willing to give?
- B. There are more temptations now. Society now considers fornication a light thing. The Bible doesn't (Rev. 21:8).

CONCLUSION:

- A. All I can do is give instruction. I can't force you to take it. But I know now of many who wish they had.
- B. About a third of the marriages now end in divorce. In some cities there are more divorces than marriages.
- C. This condition exists to a great extent because people go into marriage unprepared.

MAKING MARRIAGE SUCCESSFUL

INTRODUCTION:

- A. It is important that we understand the permanence of marriage.
- B. God's teaching is found in Matt. 19:3-9.
- C. God is the author of marriage, so He alone has the right to legislate concerning it. Men usurp authority that doesn't belong to them when they tamper with God's marriage laws.
- D. Since Jesus made fornication the only cause for divorce and remarriage, it behooves all to do everything possible to make marriage successful. If we don't like a house or a car, we can trade it for another, but it is not so with a husband or wife.
- E. Our only hope for a happy home and a hope of heaven is to make marriage work.

DISCUSSION: I. Important steps in the selection of a companion.

- A. Pray for wisdom—James 1:5.
- B. Don't be too hasty.
 - 1. Great familiarity reveals traits not seen in a casual acquaintance.
 - 2. "But familiarity breeds contempt," someone may be thinking. Not always. Sometimes it does and should.
- C. Talk to parents.
 - 1. Elopement may seem romantic, but it seldom works.
 - 2. I could name a dozen young people who eloped, all of them thinking that they were really putting one over on their parents.
 - 3. The parents were grieved and the couples' acts proved very foolish.
 - 4. In every case the non-members were reared in troubled or irreligious homes.
- D. Be sure to observe how the one who wants you treats members of his or her family.
 - 1. Is he kind and considerate of parents, brothers, and sisters?
 - 2. Or is he selfish, critical, unkind, harsh?
 - 3. When the new wears off, he will treat you as he treats present members of his family.
 - 4. You can't depend on promises. You must judge by character traits. Watch for them.
- E. Don't marry a man to reform him.
 - 1. If you don't care to live with a drinking man, don't marry one.
 - 2. If you don't like the influence of a cursing, swearing, ly-

- ing man, don't marry one.
- 3. If you know that a potential companion has an immoral past, beware.
- 4. Years ago I begged a fine Christian friend not to marry a suave young man who claimed to have reformed from a very sinful background. She didn't heed my admonition, and has spent many years regretting her mistake.
- F. Enter into marriage with the Bible conviction concerning it.
 - 1. Don't enter the relationship with the careless thought that if you are not exactly pleased you will put him or her away and get another.
 - 2. Enter it determined to give and take; to be unselfish; to adjust; to be forbearing; to bear with faults; for you will find them.

II. Steps toward finding a good wife.

- A. Don't simply fall for a pretty face and form.
 - 1. I know some fine women who are beautiful in appearance.
 - 2. I know some who don't seem so beautiful at first sight, but seem very beautiful when you know them.
 - 3. I know some who are beautiful in appearance, but make you sick on further acquaintance. They have ugly dispositions. They are selfish, vain, lazy.
- B. Seek a beautiful character—I Peter 3:1-4.
- C. Seek one who is willing to bear children and be a keeper at home.
 - 1. Scriptures: Titus 2:2-4; I Tim. 5:14.
 - 2. The Bible opposes the women's liberation movement.
- D. If you want to be a Christian, ask the following questions:
 - 1. Will this woman help me to build a Christian home?
 - 2. Will she help me to be a Christian? Or will she be a hindrance?
 - 3. Will we have a divided home, one that will confuse our children? (Samson didn't ask enough questions.)

II. Steps toward finding a good husband.

- A. Don't just look for:
 - 1. A handsome man—I Sam. 16:7.
 - 2. A wealthy man.
 - 3. A famous man—an athlete or entertainer.
 - 4. A man who has been baptized.
- B. Look for a man of sterling character, one who respects God and His word and is willing to live it.
- C. Ask yourself: Will this man help me to live the Christian life? Or will he be a hindrance? Will he help me rear a Christian family and have a Christian home? Or will he be a hindrance?

1. If you never thought of these questions, then the Christian life doesn't mean much to you.
2. I have seen so many young men and women weaken after marriage.
3. I must admit that many have been converted after marriage, but they were not the wild, reckless, irreverent kind with no respect for religion or the Bible.

IV. Steps toward being a good husband.

- A. A young man soon to be married asked this question of the authors of a syndicated newspaper column, "What makes a good husband?" Their answer follows:

A good husband makes his wife feel important in his scheme of things.

A good husband shows his affection by action as well as by words.

A good husband is sympathetic with his wife's moods or setbacks.

A good husband appreciates the work that goes into running a home efficiently and raising the children wisely.

A good husband gives his wife some degree of financial independence through a joint checking account, an allowance, or a checking account of her own.

A good husband is a companion to his wife, talking things over with her, and sharing her interests.

A good husband takes his wife out regularly for recreation, realizing that he is the only escort she can have, now that she's married.

A good husband cheerily assumes his responsibility in the disciplining and raising of the children.

A good husband helps his wife with the chores when she's ill or overworked.

A good husband is considerate in the intimate side of married life.

A good husband is faithful to his wife.

A good husband is on friendly terms with his in-laws.

A good husband is honest with his mate.

A good husband is attentive to his wife in public.

A good husband consults his wife before making any important household or family decision.

A good husband places the interests of his wife and children ahead of his relatives.

A good husband avoids being overly critical.

A good husband often compliments his wife.

A good husband makes it possible for his wife to

have some leisure time for outside interests.
B. God gives instruction: I Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:19; Eph. 5:25.

- V. Steps toward being a good wife.
A. Follow the instructions of I Peter 3:1-4 and Eph. 5:22-24.
B. Practice these and all will be well.

INFLUENCE OF ONE'S COMPANION

INTRODUCTION:

- A. I can think of persons who have made very radical changes in their thinking and manner of life: some who once opposed the church are now faithful members; some who once did not believe in God or the Bible are now believers; boys who once were zealous for the Lord and preached the gospel are now full of criticism of the church; girls who were baptized and attended faithfully at one time now are indifferent and some have quit completely.
- B. Several things can contribute to such changes, but one of the greatest is the influence of one's companion, the husband or wife.
- C. In this lesson we will consider the influence of one's companion.

DISCUSSION: 1. The influence of one's companion may be for evil.

- A. Bible examples of evil influence.
1. Eve upon Adam.
 - a. Eve was deceived by the tempter; Adam was not.
 - b. He sinned because of Eve's influence—I Tim. 2:14.
 2. Delilah upon Samson.
 - a. Samson was the strong man of Israel, a one-man army against the Philistines.
 - b. But his Philistine wife, deceitfully appealing to his sympathy, learned wherein his strength lay and ruined him—Judges 16:15.
 3. Jezebel upon Ahab.
 - a. One of Ahab's great evils was his marriage to Jezebel — I Kings 16:30,31; 21:25.
 - b. Jezebel's influence can be seen in her attitude toward Elijah—I Kings 19:2.
 - c. Her influence can be seen in her moves to take Naboth's vineyard—I Kings 21:1-16.
 4. Ahab's daughter over Jehoram.

- a. Jehoram's father, Jehoshaphat, was a good man, one of the best kings of Judah.
- b. Whatever good influence Jehoshaphat had over Jehoram, however, was destroyed when Jehoram married Ahab's daughter—II Chronicles 21:6.
- 5. Solomon's wives over Solomon.
 - a. Many things about Solomon made him one of the greatest kings in history: his noble choice in his youth; his wisdom; his construction of the temple.
 - b. But his wives led him to build a temple for idols and even to bow his knee before idols—I Kings 11:1-8.
- B. Questions to be considered by those who are not married.
 - 1. Do you think it would be perfectly safe for you to marry just any person you might fall for?
 - 2. Do you think you couldn't be led into error or lukewarmness, that you couldn't fall? What of I Cor. 10:12?
 - 3. Have you not thought about these things? In that case, you need the strongest Christian possible, for you would be a pushover for a worldly companion.
 - 4. You must ask, "Will this person help me to be a stronger Christian? Or, would he pull me the other way?" If such a question doesn't occur to you, you lack spiritual maturity and are really in danger.
 - 5. The time to ask these questions is when a boy first asks you for a date. It will be too late when you've already fallen in love.

The influence of one's companion may be for good.

- A. Oftentimes one is able to convert his companion.
 - 1. I know of no Bible example, but I know that it can be done—I Pet. 3:1.
 - 2. I have known many who were successful in doing so.
- B. Consecration is essential if one is successful.
 - 1. The consecration described by Peter in the above passage is what is needed.
 - 2. A worldly woman once asked a preacher how she could convert her husband. The simple reply was, "You can't."
- C. Not all companions can be converted.
 - 1. The converts are usually those of solid character who just lack information.
 - 2. Wild, worldly, ungodly boys with no deep religious background seldom change—those described in Prov. 30:11-14.
 - 3. Several girls of our acquaintance have married such and have been deeply hurt. Others must not make the same mistake.

CONCLUSION:

The care that must be taken in choosing a companion is well expressed in the following poem, "A Woman's Question," by Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

A WOMAN'S QUESTION

Do you know you have asked for the costliest thing
Ever made by the hand above— A
woman's heart and a woman's life
And a woman's wonderful love?

Do you know you have asked for this priceless thing
As a child might ask for a toy? Demanding
what others have died to win
With the reckless dash of a boy!

You have written my lesson of duty out,
Manlike, you have questioned me; Now,
stand at the bar of my woman's soul,
While I shall question thee.

I am fair and young, but the rose will fade
From my soft young cheeks one day— Will
you love me then 'mid the falling leaves
As you did 'mid the bloom of May?

Is your heart an ocean so strong and deep,
I may launch my all on its tide? A
loving woman finds heaven or hell
On the day she's made a bride!

I require all things that are grand and true,
All things that a man should be; If you
give this all, I would stake my life,
To be all you demand of me.

If you can't do this, a laundress and cook
You can hire with a little pay. But a
woman's heart and a woman's life
Are not to be won that way.

TO OUR SONS

One of the last things written from the pen of Brother Hall

The decree now seems to be that I cannot be with you much longer. But I am seeking to dwell on the wonderful blessing that I have been privileged by God's goodness to have been with you so many years. How wonderfully blessed we have been! How much for which to be thankful!

When you were born we were very conscious of our fearful responsibility. We knew you were facing an evil world. We could not think of a greater tragedy than to rear children who were not Christians and being rejected in God's judgment.

So we took our responsibility seriously. We prayed daily for wisdom from the very first day you were born—in fact, before you were born. We taught you the Bible as soon as you could comprehend it.

You never knew what it was to miss any service the church held—this was true from the day your mother was able to take you. Of course, days of serious illness were excepted.

Your place at service was always a front seat. You helped sing and show reverence during the service. Very rarely were you punished for being playful or talking during a service. But you were watched carefully and misbehavior was not tolerated.

We attended practically all gospel meetings within reach of us. There your behavior was the same as at home.

We were stern in our discipline. Commands required prompt obedience—no second reminders. Prohibitions were not forgotten. We did not turn our heads the other way. We agreed on discipline. Sometimes discipline was administered by required readings of biographies and other edifying literature. Whippings were accompanied by loving admonitions.

Often you wondered why you were denied going to places you thought to be right. We did not simply prohibit on our authority. We tried to show the dangers involved and give good reasons.

You learned very young to submit to authority. This you had to be taught. And you have done so all your lives. You respect constituted authority from that of God all the way to the most humble lawmakers.

Both of you respect the word of God and preach it faithfully. You are respected and loved by God-fearing men and women because you live the word in your lives.

You are both richly blessed by having wonderful Christian companions and obedient children—all of them a credit to you.

I do not wish to imply that we were perfect parents. I, especially, had so many faults. I was high tempered, impetuous, impatient. My redeeming quality was my willingness to repent and apologize. Only in this way was I able to maintain the confidence of my family. You were patient and forbearing and you never doubted for a moment that your daddy loved you.

Now I must leave you. It is such a joy to see that you have followed our counsel and especially that of divine wisdom. It is so much easier to bid you farewell as faithful Christians and gospel preachers. I go with a happy heart—not a crushed one.

Love, Daddy

