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SERMON OUTLINES

Vol. 1

BY

Tom McLemore

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Introduction

I first met Bro. Tom McLemore while he worked for the church in Cherokee, Al. On two later occasions I spoke to the church at Lobelville, TN where he was the local preacher. Finally, he showed up one day, with a group of fellow preachers, at our home in New Delhi, India.

Bro. McLemore is married to the former Denise Johnson, one of Bro. and Sis Bill Johnson's daughters, and of course Bill and I attended Freed-Hardeman College together some years ago. It is with this kind of background that I have come to know Tom as I do.

Although relatively a young preacher, Bro. McLemore has put together a fine, full set of sermon outlines. It was on one of my visits in his home that I invited him to send them to me for publication. I am delighted that he followed through on it and this is the finished product.

Bro. McLemore is presently preaching for the Fanning Heights Church of Christ in Huntsville, Al. I now present him and his outlines to you.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
19, Jalan Sumatra
Jakarta, Indonesia
May 19, 1986.

Preface

These outlines represent the work of a young preacher in a local congregation. They were not produced by an expert in any sense, and it is hoped that they will be received with that in mind. The author feels that some good fresh approaches to needed subjects will be suggested by these outlines. Some are character studies, some are doctrinal discourses, while others are devotional lessons.

I want to thank J. C. Choate for his encouragement in producing these outlines for publication and for publishing them. He is a wonderful missionary and a great encourager of the work of the Lord.

Tom McLemore
January, 1984

Dedication

To my loving wife, Denise, and my two children, Jonathan and Amy, this book is affectionately dedicated.

(Click on title for outline)

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The Hardening Of Pharaoh's Heart

- I. **Let us take a look at what the Bible means by hardening of the heart.**
 - A. Exactly 20 times in the actual history recorded in Ex. 5— 14, the Bible speaks of Pharaoh's heart being hardened. What does the Bible mean by the hardening of Pharaoh's or any other man's heart?
 - B. Basically, the *heart* of the Bible is the mind. Something which is *hard* is firm or stiff. Thus, it would be right to say that when Pharaoh's heart was hardened, *He had made up his mind!* There are three words used in this story (all of them translated by "Hardening of heart" in English versions.) They express the degree to which Pharaoh "*made up his mind*".
 - 1) The first means literally, "To make insensible".
 - a) Thus, Pharaoh *made up his mind*, to the extent that he was not going to be *touched* or *moved* by anything or anybody.
 - b) This is what Paul was talking about in 1 Tim. 4:2.
 - 2) The second means literally "to make unimpressionable. "
 - a) Thus, when Pharaoh hardened his heart, he *made up his mind* that nothing was going to make an impression upon him!
 - b) This is the way in which many listen to sermons: "I'll listen, but nothing he says will make any impression on me. He can preach until he's blue in the face and not *even phase* me!"
 - 3) The third means literally, "to make firm or stiff so as to be immovable. "
 - a) Thus, when Pharaoh's heart was hardened, he had *made up his mind* that nothing or nobody was going to *change* his mind!
 - C. When Pharaoh or any other man hardens his heart, he *decides, makes up his mind that he is going to be insensitive, unimpressionable, and immovable!* He is in a state of

hard-headedness, prejudice, stubbornness, rebellion, and willful opposition to God and his message. Some examples:

- 1) Ezek. 3:7 — The house of Israel had *made up its mind* that it was not going to listen to God or his messenger — *they were hardhearted!*
- 2) Matt. 13:15 — The contemporaries of Jesus had *made up their minds* that they were not going to hear him — *their heart was waxed gross* (had grown dull)!
- 3) Acts 7:51 — The Jews to whom Stephen preached had *made up their minds* that they were going to resist the message of the Spirit — *they were stiffened and uncircumcised of heart!*
- 4) Mark 10:2—5 — Men were *bound and determined*, had *made up their minds* that they were going to put away their wives regardless of God's original plan. For their *hardness of heart*, Moses gave stipulations concerning divorce to protect the innocent!

II. **Let us take a look at the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.**

A. What hardened Pharaoh's heart?

- 1) The Bible says that God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12) and the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. (8:32).
- 2) God made a reasonable demand upon Pharaoh (Ex. 5:5 — "Let my people go... ") and Pharaoh *made up his mind* that he was not going to heed! Thus, God's part and Pharaoh's part in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. (Cf. 7:14-"refuses".)

B. Why did God's demand harden Pharaoh's heart?

- 1) The demand was made by a God that Pharaoh neither knew nor feared. (Ex. 5:2; 9:30.)
- 2) The demand was made through messengers *Pharaoh* did not believe was from God. (The magicians duplicated some of the signs and plagues of Moses and Aaron; enabled Pharaoh to doubt. These duplications by "their secret arts".)
- 3) The demand was contrary to the wishes and desires of Pharaoh. (Three million slaves here today and gone tomorrow was for Pharaoh a bad financial deal.)
- 4) The demand insulted Pharaoh's pride and self esteem.

(To the Egyptians and to Pharaoh himself, he was a God: "Who does he think he is telling *Me - Pharaoh, King and God of Egypt* — what to do?!)

- 5) The urgency of the demand was lessened in the eyes of Pharaoh by the respite from the plagues provided by God. (Note: each time, *immediately* after the plague was lifted, Pharaoh *hardened his heart*.)

C. The result: Egypt was ruined and Pharaoh is in rebellion against God.

III. Let us take a look at the hardening of men's hearts today.

A. What hardens men's hearts today?

- 1) Same factors as in the case of Pharaoh: God hardens men's hearts and men themselves harden their own hearts.
- 2) God makes reasonable demands upon men today: Hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized. Makes reasonable demands on Christians who sin publicly: Repent, ask forgiveness of God and the church. Yet, men *make up their minds* that they are not going to obey God! Why?
- 3) The gospel has the capability of *softening* or *hardening*, *depending upon man's attitude toward it!*
 - a) Heb. 6:7-8. b) 2 Cor. 2:15, 16.
 - c) The gospel is like heat:.. can *soften* wax and *harden* clay.

B. Why do the demands of the gospel harden the hearts of men?

- 1) Because, like Pharaoh, they do not have the *fear* of the Lord in them.
- 2) Because they are not convinced of the truth of the gospel. (Like Pharaoh, they think their way is as good as God's way.)
- 3) The gospel makes demands contrary to their wishes and desires. (Men, like Pharaoh, want to gratify their desires. Men want to walk in the lusts of the flesh, enjoy the way of worldliness; enjoy the "good life"; they want worldly luxury, etc. Gospel says, "Walk in the Spirit; not gratify the lusts of the flesh... " Men say, "If that's the gospel, *I'll have no part of it!*"

- 4) The gospel insults the pride and self-esteem of men. (They cannot stand to have anyone tell them they are wrong, much less *lost*. So they make up their minds, "Nobody is going to tell me what to do!")
 - 5) Because the goodness and forbearance and longsuffering of God cause the urgency of the demands of the gospel to be lessened in their eyes. (Rom. 2:4, 5.)
- C. The result: The same as in Pharaoh's case: The soul is ruined and men stand before the judgment bar of God *having made up their minds* that they will not obey!
- IV. Let us take a look at how to avoid being hardened!
- A. Evident in the case of Pharaoh is the fact that *one's attitude* toward God and his message makes the difference between one's being hardened or softened by the message of the gospel.
 - B. Therefore, in order to avoid hardness of heart, men must re-evaluate and change their attitudes.
 - 1) Must come to a fuller understanding of who God is that realize that God has the power to save the *obedient* and destroy the *disobedient*. (Cf. Heb. 12:28.)
 - 2) Realize that God's word is authoritative and will judge us in the last day, *whether we believe it or not!* (Thus best to believe it!)
 - 3) Realize that Christ wants men who are willing to *deny self and take up the Cross*.
 - 4) Must be willing to humble self and submit to God.
 - 5) Must not *presume upon* the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God, *but realize that it is intended to lead us to repentance!*
 - C. It is *within your power* to determine the effect God's demands will have on you.
 - 1) Heb. 3:15 — *Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart...*
 - 2) Rather, *obey Him now!*

Abraham And Abimelech

Gen. 20:1-8

Introduction

1. Have you ever imagined what kind of world Abraham and his family must have known?
 - a. A world of frequent famine (Sojourn in Egypt.)
 - b. A world of gross sexual perversion (Sodom and Gom.)
 - c. A world of tyranny and treachery (King kills husband... takes wife.)
2. Wouldn't you have some fears... some reservations about living in such a country? Such conditions would influence your life.
3. That is the kind of world Abraham faces as he sojourned in Canaan. (Read Gen. 20:1-18.)
4. There are valuable lessons to be learned from the land of the south... from Abraham and Abimelech.

Discussion

I. A lesson on human frailty and the patience of God.

- A. Second time this happened.. ' already in Egypt (24 years hence, Gen. 12) *not the last!* Happened to Isaac (Gen. 26.)
 1. How could Abraham repeat the same mistake?
 2. How could Isaac fail to learn from his father's mistake?
 3. The answer — *human frailty*.
- B. A repeat sin is not the unpardonable sin.
 1. God does not say: "I'll give you one more chance and if you blow it this time, you're finished. "
 2. If so, Peter would have been lost for sure... denied the Lord thrice.
 3. Jesus taught... forgive 70 x 7... surely God would not expect more of Christians than he does himself!
- C. We need to learn this lesson on human frailty and the long-suffering of God... *and don't give up!* Paul said, "when I am weak, then I am strong. "

- II. A lesson on the power of the tongue for evil.
- A. Verse 5 -- just *eight* words "she is my sister... he is my brother" meant:
 - 1. Possible death of Abimelech, and all his house, v. 7.
 - 2. Guilt on Abimelech's kingdom, v. 9.
 - 3. Shame and humiliation of Sarah, v. 16.
 - B. Cf. James 3:5-8.
 - C. The story of Abraham and Abimelech is hard proof against
 - 1. Situation ethics.
 - 2. Catholic doctrine: "Good to lie under certain circumstance. "
 - D. To tell a half-truth is to lie... all liars have reservations in hell. Rev. 21:8.
- III. A lesson on the possibility of ignorant guilt.
- A. Someone has said, "Ignorance is bliss"... but I'm certain it wasn't Abimelech!
 - B. Abimelech had a clear conscience yet was *guilty!* vv. 5, 9.
 - 1. He was guilty of taking another man's wife. v. 3.
 - 2. Yet, was ignorant and had clear conscience, cf.
 - a. Jews who killed Jesus. Acts 3:17.
 - b. Paul. Acts 23:1; 26:9.
 - C. By the way, young people... and old... before you get engaged to anyone, *make sure that you have the right to marry them!*
- IV. A lesson on humility.
- A. Abimelech supposedly a heathen (v. 11.), and Abraham a friend of the true God, and yet, look who reprimands whom! v. 9.
 - B. Reminds us of Romans 2:1-3; 19-22.
 - 1. We condemn those who are not NT Christians for not being members of the NT church. We are sometimes proud and arrogant.
 - 2. Yet, in *many things*, *their* conduct rises up in judgment of us... they humble us... e. g.,
 - a. Their giving.
 - b. Their Bible knowledge and study.
 - c. Their zeal.
 - d. Their love and devotion.

- C. Not enough (though important and essential) to have become a member of the NT church... must be *true Christians*.

V. A lesson on faith in the providence of God.

- A. God's providence is seen correcting problems resulting from Abraham's mistake.
 - 1. God had promised Abraham that he would father a great nation. (Gen. 12:1-3.)
 - 2. Abraham thought, "How can God do this if I'm *dead!*" v. 11.
 - 3. So Abraham figured out a way that would save his life, but in so doing, put himself in position to lose Sarah... and put Sarah in danger of conceiving by other than Abraham.
 - 4. So God struck Abimelech and his house with sexual disorder that made conception impossible.
 - 5. In this way, Sarah is protected and so is the promise. (Cf Gen. 12:17—same in Egypt.)
- B. Abraham's faith had not matured to the point where he let God do all the planning! (Cf. this will Gen. 22:1-14; Heb. 11:17-19 - his faith had matured!)
- C. What about when we doubt the success of God's plan and start figuring out how to help God by coming up with additional plans. (Illus. Bible didn't get job done... manuals and creeds finish God's work!)

VI. A lesson on prayer.

- A. No need to pray until repentance and restitution or *fruit* is evident! vv. 7, 14—16.
- B. The prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Jas. 5:16.
 - 1. Abraham, though weak, stumbling, and frail was righteous by faith. Gen. 15:6. He was a prophet... "anointed"v. 7.
 - 2. Rom. 4:19—25. We are also righteous by faith, even though we make mistakes. We are the "elect. "
 - 3. God hears and answers those who are in covenant relationship with him. 1 John 1:7—9.

Remember Lot's Wife

Luke 17:23

Introduction

1. Throughout the United States are to be found many monuments to which are attached great amounts of significance.
 - A. What great significance is associated with the Statue of Liberty, which was a gift from France to the U. S. to commemorate the 100th anniversary of U. S. independence?
 - B. Within the limits of the state of Ohio, situated on South Bass Island in Lake Erie, there is a monument commemorating the victory of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry over the British fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie, September 10, 1813. To this monument was given the name, "Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial. "
 - C. About three miles from Charleston, S. C. Fort Sumter stands. It was against this fort that on April 12, 1861 the Confederates fired the first shot of the Civil War, which ultimately resulted in nearly a half million casualties.
2. These and many others were all established as national monuments by the United States Government to remind of the tragedies and triumphs of our country's history.
3. Of much greater significance than these however, is a monument established by the wrath of God over 3800 years ago in the valley of Siddim, a short distance from the little town of Zoar.
 - A. This monument was the remains of a woman killed by fire and brimstone and encrusted with salt where she stood — "she became a pillar of salt. "
 - B. All that remains today of that monument is the divine record of the event and the inscription which the voice of Jesus engraved for it 1900 years later — "*Remember Lot's Wife.* " (Luke 17:32.)
 - C. The story is found in Gen. 19:15-26. (Read.) There we see Lot's wife's salt encrusted remains standing amidst a

ghastly background of the smoke of the cities of the plain. It is a reminder, a monument...

Discussion

I. Lot's wife is a monument to the danger of unbelief and indifference.

- A. Lot's wife, as well as Lot and his daughters, had every possible advantage for escaping the destruction slated for Sodom.
 - 1. Two angels, divine messengers, who had proved they were from God by a miracle (v. 11) had informed them in no uncertain terms of the certain destruction of Sodom.
 - 2. These angels even went so far as to take them by the hand and set them outside the city.
 - 3. These angels expressly told Lot and his family that if they stopped anywhere in the valley, or even looked back, they would be consumed.
- B. As always, the determining factor was whether or not the warnings were *believed... the advantages appreciated*.
 - 1. So it was when God brought the plague of hail upon the land of Egypt; (Ex. 9:19, 20.) God through Moses warned Pharaoh of the plague of hail. Those who believed God among Pharaoh's people *got their slaves and livestock into their houses to safety...* But those who were unbelieving and indifferent *left their slaves and livestock in the fields and they perished*.
 - 2. Jonah was instructed to go to Nineveh the second time and proclaim, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. " The Bible says, "The people of Nineveh *believed God*; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. " (Jonah 3:4, 5.) As a result, the city was saved.
 - 3. Lot's wife *did not believe* the warnings and as a result, was consumed. Lot and his daughters *did believe* the warnings and escaped.
- C. God has clearly warned us of many things and the determining factor is *whether we will believe Him or not!*
 - 1. He has warned of the power and savagery of the devil: "a roaring lion who walks about, seeking whom he may

devour. " (1 Pet. 5:8.) Are we going to *avoid him* and *resist him* or are we going to *play* with him? Depends on our belief of the warning.

- a. *Illus.:* Recently a man walked up to an attendant at the Los Angeles Zoo and asked where the lions were. He said he wanted to "play with them. " A short time later, the man's partially eaten body was found in the zoo's lion compound. Even though the compound had a fence, a water moat, and a fourteen foot wall, all of which should have warned the man of the danger inside, the man somehow managed to get in. Officers speculated that he climbed a tree overhanging the compound.
 - b. Many folks still "play" with the lion, the devil, in spite of the clear warnings of God. Why? *Unbelief, indifference.*
2. God has clearly warned us of an eternal hell, but we make jokes about it, and we never stop to think that we might be headed there! D. So, "remember Lot's wife" and *believe God's warnings.*

II. Lot's wife is a monument to the danger of disobedience.

- A. In addition to being sufficiently warned, Lot, his wife, and daughters were *commanded* to flee for their lives, *to not look back, and to not stop anywhere in the valley.*
- B. As always, *obedience* was the determining factor.
 1. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And fire from the Lord went out and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. (Lev. 10:1, 2.)
 2. Uzzah touched the ark of the covenant with his hand of which God had said, "do not touch, lest ye die. " God smote him. (Num. 4:15; 2 Sam. 6:6, 7.)
 3. Lot's wife *disobeyed* the divine mandates from the angels and was consumed. Another name was added to the rollbook of the children of disobedience.
- C. In the case of eternal salvation, *obedience* is the determining factor.
 1. Jesus is only the Author of eternal salvation *to them that obey Him.* (Heb. 5:9.)

2. God has himself in readiness to revenge all disobedience. (2 Cor. 10:4-6.)
3. Lot's wife is evidence that God does not accept *partial* obedience.
 - a. She began to obey the commandments of the angels; she began to flee for her life, but stopped far short of complete obedience.
 - b. In this she was like many of us, who "did run well, " but have allowed ourselves to be hindered that we do not obey the truth. (Gal. 5:7.)
- D. Therefore, "remember Lot's wife" and obey all God's commandments.

III. Lot's wife is a monument to the danger of being lost by a look.

- A. Lot's wife helps us to remember the capability that the eye has of causing us to stumble if we do not control its gaze. (Matt. 5:29; 1 Jn. 2:16.)
- B. The Bible is replete with instances in which a look brought severe consequences.
 1. Eve was enticed to eat the forbidden fruit. Had she not looked upon the fruit, the devil's case would have been weakened. But she looked and was overcome. (Gen. 3:6.)
 2. Achan coveted some of the forbidden spoil of Jericho. Had he not looked upon it, he would not have coveted it. (Josh. 7:21.)
 3. David committed adultery with Bath-sheba. Had he not looked upon this beautiful woman bathing, he would not have sent and inquired after her. (2 Sam. 11:2, 3.)
- C. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices. He will dangle the beautiful and pleasing pleasures of sin before our eyes to entice us. (Cf. James 1:13—16.)
- D. Therefore, "remember Lot's wife" and avoid being lost by a look.

IV. Lot's wife is a monument to the goodness and severity of God.

- A. God's mercy and goodness is clearly evident in the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom.

1. God would have spared the city for the sake of 10 righteous people.
 2. God did everything possible to provide way of escape for Lot's house, even made certain that they got out of Sodom, (v. 16.)
 3. Spared Zoar, one of the cities slated for destruction, at the request of Lot, in order to accommodate his escape.
 4. Would not do anything in bringing destruction upon the cities until Lot reached Zoar safely, (v. 22.)
- B. Lot's wife reminds us that the day of mercy ends and the day of severe punishment begins.
1. Significant that Lot was told to leave Sodom just after dawn. (v. 15.) It was not until after sunrise the next day that Lot came to Zoar. (v. 23.) Thus, there was an actual 24 hour "day of mercy. "
 2. After the "day of mercy" had ended, after all measures possible had been taken to provide escape for Lot and his family, *the sun rose upon the day of God's severe punishment*. Lot's wife *had failed through disobedience to arrive at Zoar during the day of mercy* and found herself still in the valley at the dawn of the day of wrath.
 3. So it is with men today. The gospel dispensation is "the day of mercy" with ample opportunity to reach safety in Christ. But the dawn of the "day of wrath" is certain which will mark *the end of the day of mercy*.
 4. Note: One day the angels were agents of mercy, the next, they were agents of wrath, doom, and destruction. Even so, during the Christian dispensation, Jesus Christ is the agent of salvation, but at the end of this "day of mercy" Christ will be the agent of destruction and damnation. (2 These. 1:6-9.)
- C. Therefore, "remember Lot's wife" and be advised that God's mercy gives way to his wrath.

V. Lot's wife is a monument to the danger of indecision.

- A. We are not told *why* Lot's wife looked back, but it is likely that she looked back in *indecision*. 1. Sodom was a beautiful, wealthy city, likely her home-

- town; she had a home with personal possessions, and memories just as we.
2. She could not decide between that which she formerly held dear and safety in Zoar.
 3. She wanted *both* but received *neither*. She is a warning to all who cannot decide between Christ and the world.
 4. Her heart was in Sodom, because that is where her treasure lay. She is a warning to those whose treasure is laid up only upon the earth. (Matt. 6:19-21.)
- B. In her indecision, she too lingered as did Lot. Yet, the outcome was different for each.
1. Lot lingered, yet still had opportunity to decide to flee and escape, yet, she lingered in the valley and had no opportunity to decide to flee and escape, thus she was consumed.
 2. Lot and his wife represent two types of people: Some linger in not obeying the gospel and are able before death to decide to obey and do; others linger and death overtakes them before they have decided to obey.
 3. How *wise* it is to obey the gospel *now, while there is yet opportunity!*
- C. Therefore, "remember Lot's wife" and make the decision that God demands. (Josh. 24:15.)

Conclusion

1. Big and important things often come in small packages. Though one of the shortest verses in the New Testament, "Remember Lot's wife, " is not short on eternal importance *by a long shot!*
2. The very thought of the salt encrusted remains of Lot's wife serves to embed deep within our hearts
 - A. The danger of unbelief and indifference.
 - B. The danger of disobedience.
 - C. The danger of being lost by a look.
 - D. The fact of the goodness and severity of God.
 - E. The danger of indecision.
3. Symbolically, if you are not a Christian, or if you are an unfaithful one, *you are in the valley of Siddim* possibly heartbeats from eternal fire and brimstone!

- A. Are you going to flee for safety by obeying Christ?
- B. Or are you going to draw back into the perdition of Sodom and be lost?
- C. *There is no time to delay your decision!*

Barnabas — Son Of Consolation

Acts 4:36

Introduction

1. New Testament names were given because of their meaning on various occasions. (E. g. Jesus, Peter, many others.)
2. Barnabas was such a consoler (RSV - son of encouragement) that he was surnamed "son of consolation (encouragement) ".
 - a. "Son of" was the means in Greek of making nouns adjectives.
 - b. Jesus so partook of the quality of encouragement that he was called "*son of encouragement*".
3. Our study is designed to look into what the NT tells about Barnabas — a man possessing a quality that God would have us to possess as well.

Discussion

I. Some biographical background concerning Barnabas.

- A. A Levite — of the priestly tribe of Israel. (Acts 4:36.)
- B. A native of Cyprus. (Acts 4:36.)
- C. Obviously wealthy. (Acts 4:37.)
- D. A good man, full of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 11:24.)

II. Barnabas — a man who "lived up to his name!"

- A. Was an encouragement by providing financial support. (Acts 4:36, 37.) This is a manner in which all can be "sons of encouragement".
- B. Was an encouragement by providing recommendation for Saul. (Acts 9:26, 27; Acts 11:25, 26.)
- C. Was an encouragement by exhorting the brethren at Antioch. (Acts 11:23.)
- D. Was an encouragement by being a companion of Paul. (Acts 14:12) — silent partner - easier to be strong in the Lord when friends are an encouragement.

E. Encouragement by taking Mark to Cyprus to work. (Acts 15:36-39.)

III. God would have us to be encouragers.

- A. Great need in the church, the home, the community.
- B. Passages which express the importance of encouragement. (Eph. 6:22; Phil. 2:1; Col. 2:2.)
- C. How God wants the encouragement to be done? By means of brethren.
 - 1. Ephesians — Tychicus.
 - 2. Philippians — Same mind, love, full accord, one mind.
 - 3. Colossians — Hearts knit together in love.
- D. God would not have any to be guilty of discouragement. (Deut. 1:28, 34.)

Conclusion

- 1. If the brethren or the elders were to surname you, what would that surname be?
- 2. So live that it would be "son of encouragement. "
- 3. No grander feeling than knowing that you have encouraged some one, some congregation, some program of work.

John Mark

I. His early life and family background.

- A. Likely a native of Cyprus and of the tribe of Levi.
 - 1. Cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10, RSV.)
 - 2. Barnabas was of Cyprus and of the tribe of Levi. (Acts 4:36.)
- B. Likely from a family of means.
 - 1. Barnabas a man of means. (Acts 4:36.)
 - 2. Mark's mother owned a slave girl (Acts 12:13.) and owned a house large enough for *many* to be in one room. (Acts 12:12.)
- C. Likely had contact with Jesus earlier in life.
 - 1. Some have suggested that Jesus and the 12 ate the pass-over at Mark's mother's house. (They consider that to be the reason why they were gathered there for prayer in Acts 12:12.)
 - 2. Also suggested that it was Mark who was the young man in the linen cloth at Gethsemane. Mark 14:51, 52. (Supposedly arose from bed to follow Jesus and the 12 after overhearing Jesus speak of his betrayal.)
 - 3. May even have been a disciple of Jesus. D. Was converted by Peter's preaching. (1 Pet. 5:13.)

II. His work in the church at Antioch.

- A. Accompanied Barnabas and Saul from Antioch as far as Perga of Pamphylia. (Acts 12:25-13:13.)
- B. He was their "minister". (Acts 13:5.)
 - 1. Several words translated "Minister".
 - a. *table waiter*.
 - b. *under-rower* in a large ship.
 - c. *servant*.
 - 2. *Under-rower* is the word used in Acts 13:5.
 - 3. Word suggests a subordinate acting under another's directions.

- a. Luke 4:20. Attendant at the synagogue service who brings the scriptures to the reader and replaces them after the lesson is read... he is called a "minister. "
 - b. Same word as used in Acts 13:5.
 - c. Thus, Mark is referred to as their subordinate acting under their direction.
- C. What would have been Mark's work as subordinate? as minister?
- 1. Duty of the Levites was instructing the people in the law. (Deut. 33:10; 2 Chron. 17:7-9; 35:3; Neh. 8:7.)
 - 2. Mark could have been conducting "new convert" classes — instruction following conversion.

III. His mistake. (Acts 13:13-14; Acts 15:36-41.)

- A. Why did Mark withdraw?
- 1. Not homesickness, anxiety for mother's safety, home duties, desire to rejoin Peter, fears of the perils of the journey, etc.
 - 2. Likely, was uncertain about the question of circumcision and fellowship with Gentiles... may have feared the circumcision party like Peter did. (Gal. 2:11-12.)
 - a. Gal. 2:11-14 probably took place during Barnabas' and Paul's stay at Antioch in Acts 14:28.
 - b. Mark withdrew *before* the Antioch episode. *Before* the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and thus *before* the questions had been settled.
 - c. In Acts 13:5, 13, Luke calls him by his Hebrew name John... Acts 15:37 calls him by his Roman name. Thus, Luke may be suggesting that the questions have now been settled in Mark's mind.
 - d. Mark is ready to go *after* the events at Antioch and at Jerusalem.
 - e. So, it seems to have been these questions which caused Mark to go back to Jerusalem.
- B. Why did Paul refuse to take him? Paul considered him still to be unreliable; also, perhaps Paul thought that his accompanying them would serve no practical purpose in view of the reason they were going. (Acts 15:36.)
- C. Barnabas had confidence in him and so much so that he

was willing to part company with an old and dear friend in order to prove it.

IV. Mark's later life and work.

- A. Likely worked in Cyprus with Barnabas for a time. (Acts 15:39.) Acts says no more about them. Mark wrote the earliest account of the life of Christ of the four.
- B. Paul, his confidence in Mark now renewed by record of time, had Mark with him. (Philemon 24.)
- C. Mark was with Peter in Babylon -probably the actual location of ancient Babylon. (1 Pet. 5:13.)
- D. Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark to him when he came. (2 Tim. 4:11.)

V. Lessons we can glean from the life of Mark.

- A. The seriousness of putting your hand to the plow and turning back. (Luke 9:62.)
- B. One opportunity missed may mean many opportunities missed.
- C. The fact that mistakes don't imply failure. Mark made a mistake, but came back and did much for the Cause.
- D. We see the need for us to give those who have made mistakes in the past the benefit of the doubt when they desire to try again. (As Barnabas did.)
- E. The danger of lack of knowledge of the truth - when it comes to making decisions. Mark made a faulty decision because he did not know the truth, concerning the matter on which he was making his decision.

From Saul The Persecutor To Paul The Persecuted

Galatians 1:23

I. Consider Saul of Tarsus — the epitome of Pharisees.

A. *His Birth:*

1. Free-born in Tarsus; a Roman citizen. (Acts 21:39; 22:27, 28.)
2. The son of a Pharisee. (Acts 23:6.)

B. *His Bloodline:*

1. He was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5.) from which tribe Saul, king of Israel, was.
2. The tribe of Benjamin along with Judah remained loyal to the Davidic throne.

C. *His Upbringing:*

1. Reared in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel. (Acts 22:3.)
 - a. Gamaliel was a doctor of the law. (Acts 5:34.)
 - b. He had the reputation of all the people (Acts 5:34.) and was the greatest teacher of the day ¹.
2. Saul had been taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. (Acts 22:3.)

D. *His Record:*

1. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. (Phil. 3:5.) This meant that he had maintained his Jewish language (the mother tongue, Hebrew), customs, and manner of life².
2. He was a Pharisee (Acts 22:6; Phil. 3:5.), a member of the most strict and law-abiding sect of Judaism (Acts

¹F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968) p. 124.

²Jac. J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980) p. 110.

26:5.), who stood firm by the traditions of the fathers and were held in high esteem by the people³.

3. He excelled in the Jews' religion above many of his peers, being exceedingly more zealous of the traditions of his fathers. (Gal. 1:14.)
 4. Concerning his outward righteousness, no man brought reproach upon Saul's manner of life, conduct, or ceremonial and moral keeping of the law. (Phil 3:5.)⁴
 5. He was so zealous for the Jews' religion that he persecuted the church of Jesus in order to protect Judaism from departure from the traditions of the fathers. (Phil. 3:5.)⁵
- E. All things considered, a more ideal Jew was not to be found.

II. Consider Saul the Pharisee — Profile of a Persecutor.

- A. First mention in connection with the death of Stephen. Saul was consenting to the death of Stephen and guarded the outer garments of the witnesses who cast the first stones. (Act 7:58, 59; 8:1.)⁶
- B. Saul attacked the church at Jerusalem as a wild animal ravages his prey.
 1. By authority of the chief priests (Acts 26:10) Saul persecuted the Jerusalem church "beyond measure." (Gal. 1:13.)
 2. He ravaged, destroyed, and laid waste⁷ the body of Christ, dragging men and women out of their houses, binding them, and committing them to prison. (Acts 8:3.)
 3. In every synagogue, Saul beat and compelled those who believed to blaspheme. (Acts 26:10.)

³ *Ibid.*,

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977.) p. 69.

⁷ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966.) Vol. II, p. 201.

4. When they were put on trial, Saul cast his vote for their condemnation and demanded the death sentence against them. (Acts 26:10.)⁸
- C. Saul pursued fleeing Jewish Christians.
1. After he had finished ravaging the church at Jerusalem to the extent that the Christians were all scattered abroad except the apostles, Saul still breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. (Acts 8:1; 9:1.)
 2. He was exceedingly mad in a raging fury against them and he persecuted them even to the foreign cities to which they fled. (Acts 26:11; cf. Acts 11:19.)
 3. Then he went to the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of that way, whether they were men or women; he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1, 2.) He obtained authority and commission to go and do so. (Acts 26:12.)
- D. Saul's persecution of the church was to him a conscientious duty and obligation⁹.
1. He truly thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (Acts 26:9-11.)
 2. Saul lived in all good conscience. (Acts 23:1.)
 3. He in no way exaggerated when he said that he persecuted the church "unto the death." (Acts 22:4.)

III. Consider Saul the persecutor who becomes a Christian.

- A. The conversion of Saul is one of the most important in the book of Acts.
1. His conversion is described in detail three times in Acts (chs. 9, 22, 26). This seems to indicate the great importance of the conversion of Saul.
 2. Indeed, no other conversion exerted so great an influence upon the world than that of Saul of Tarsus.

⁸ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, p. 490.

⁹ For further and more complete treatment of the motive of Saul in persecuting the church, see Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, pp. 70-72.

- a. "No single event, apart from the Christ-event itself, has proved so determinant for the course of Christian history as the conversion and commissioning of Paul. "¹⁰
 - b. Paul undoubtedly made possible his own statement: "And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and *which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...* " (Col. 1:23.)
 - c. No stronger argument can be found for the resurrection of Christ and the genuineness and truthfulness of the gospel of Christ than is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.
 - d. As Lord Lyttelton said, "... the conversion and the apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine revelation. "¹¹
- B. By harmonizing the three accounts provided by Acts, we have the story of Saul's conversion, which proceeds like this:
- 1. Saul was on his way to Damascus with authority from the high priest to bring incarcerated Christians back to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, nigh to the city.
 - 2. Suddenly, at midday or noon, he saw a great light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, which shined round about him and them which journeyed with him.
 - 3. They all fell to the ground and Saul heard a voice saying to him in the Hebrew tongue, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. "
 - 4. And Saul answered and said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said unto Saul, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. "
 - 5. They that were with Saul saw the light and were afraid.

¹⁰ Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, p. 75.

¹¹ James D. Bales, *Saul - From Persecutor to Persecuted*, (Shreveport: Lambert Book House, 1975), p. 106.

They stood speechless, hearing Saul speak, but hearing nor seeing him to whom Saul spoke.

6. And Saul, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, "Arise and go into Damascus and there it shall be told thee what thou must do. "
7. And Saul arose from the earth and when his eyes were opened, he could not see for the glory of that light. He was led by the hand of them that were with him and they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.
8. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, one named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there. To him said the Lord in a vision, "Ananias. " And he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord. " And the Lord said unto him, "Arise and go into the street which is called Staight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. "
9. And Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority to bind all that call upon thy name. " But the Lord said unto him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. "
10. And Ananias went his way, entered into the house, and came to Saul. Standing and putting his hand on Saul, Ananias said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mightiest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Receive thy sight. " And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and the same hour he received his sight forthwith and looked upon Ananias.
11. And Ananias said, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that

Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. "

12. And he arose, and was baptized.

IV. Consider Paul — a pattern of the perfect patience of God.

- A. Paul is a pattern in the sense that his conversion *demonstrates how* a sinner obeys Christ and is saved.
 1. From the example of Saul, it is clear that seeing a heavenly vision or having a spiritual experience *do not* constitute the means whereby sins are washed away.
 - a. Saul had two visions, one on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3; 9:12.)
 - b. Many religious and sincere people accept the report of some spiritual experience or vision as proof of salvation.
 - c. Saul had seen two visions and in them had a real spiritual experience, yet his sins were still to be washed away.
 2. From the example of Saul, it is clear that verbal acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ Jesus does not by itself constitute the means whereby sins are washed away.
 - a. Saul called Jesus "Lord" (Acts 9:6) yet still had not had his sins washed away.
 - b. As Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord, ' shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 7:21.)
 3. Prayer and fasting do not constitute the means whereby sins are washed away.
 - a. Saul had been praying and fasting for three days. (Acts 9:9, 11.)
 - b. Yet, Saul had not yet had his sins washed away.
 4. As in all the rest of the NT, so in the case of Saul, *no one* has ever had his sins washed away until he was baptized.

- a. Sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus. (Rev. 1:5.)
 - b. That blood was shed in his death. (Jn. 19:34.)
 - c. The *only* way to be "in Christ's death" and thus contact the soul cleansing blood of Jesus is to be "*baptized into his death.* " (Rom. 6:3.)
 - d. That is why Ananias said, "... be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. " (Acts 22:16.)
- B. In a greater sense, the conversion of Saul is a pattern of the longsuffering and mercy of God - it demonstrates that even the *worst* of sinners *can* be saved. (1 Tim. 1:16.)
- 1. Christ died to save sinner. (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 5:6-10.)
 - 2. Saul was the foremost or chief of sinners, yet he obtained mercy.
 - a. No man who knows the story of Saul could be justified in thinking, "Christ is not willing to save me. "
 - b. Nor is he justified in thinking that the gospel does not have the power to save him.
 - c. Nor is he justified in thinking that he is not good enough for God to love him and save him.
 - 3. When we give up on people who are active and energetic sinners in opposition to the cause of Christ, we have lost sight of the patience of God demonstrated in the case of Saul.
 - 4. No man who is willing to obey Christ, no matter what his sins may have been, is beyond the limits or reach of the mercy of God. He is able to save to the uttermost all who draw nigh unto him through Christ.

V. Consider Paul — the persecuted preacher.

- A. Within only a few days, the persecutor of Christianity became a preacher of Christ. (Acts 9:19, 20.) He began his preaching career knowing by revelation of the things he would suffer for the name of Christ. (Acts 9:16.)
- B. Of all the preachers of whose activities the New Testament supplies details, none endured more persecutions than did Paul. (2 Cor. 11:23.)
 - 1. The book of Acts reports many of the persecutions he endured:

- a. At Damascus, the Jews took counsel to kill him, but he escaped being let down by the wall in a basket. (Acts 9:23-25; cf. 2 Cor. 11:32, 33.)
 - b. At Antioch of Pisidia, the Jews raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of their coasts. (Acts 13:50.)
 - c. At Iconium, there was an assault made both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews with their rulers to use them despite fully and to stone them, but they fled to Lycaonia and escaped. (Acts 14:5, 6.)
 - d. At Lystra certain Jews from Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium persuaded the people and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. But he rose up and went back into the city. (Acts 14:19, 20.)
 - e. At Philippi, Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten with many stripes, thrust into the inner prison with their feet made fast in the stocks. Following an earthquake and the conversion of the jailor, they were released by the magistrates. (Acts 16:22—24.)
 - f. Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders of the many tears and temptations which befell him by the lying in wait of the Jews. (Acts 20:19.)
 - g. At Jerusalem, all the city was moved and the people ran together and took Paul, drew him out of the temple, beat him, and went about to kill him, but he was rescued by the chief captain and his soldiers. (Acts 21:30-32.)
2. In his second epistle to Corinth, he provided a catalogue of the persecutions he endured.
 - a. He suffered in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. (2 Cor. 11:23.)
 - b. Of the Jews five times he received forty stripes save one. Three times he was beaten with rods, and once he was stoned. (2 Cor. 11:24, 25.)
 - c. He was in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen. (2 Cor. 11:26.)
 3. In many of his other epistles, he describes his persecutions in familiar terms:
 - a. No less than five times he speaks of being "the prison-

- er of Jesus Christ. " (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8; Philemon 1, 9.)
 - b. No less than five times he speaks of being "persecuted. " (Gal. 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:9; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:9; 1 Thes. 2:15.)
 - c. No less than nine times he mentions his "bonds". (Prison epistles: Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 16; Col. 4:3; Philemon 10, 13; 2 Tim. 2:9.)
 - d. He wrote to the Galatians, "... I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. " (Gal. 6:17.)
- C. Notice Paul's attitude toward his suffering and toward his persecutors:
1. Concerning suffering for Christ and the gospel:
 - a. Paul said in 1 Cor. 14:12-13: "being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat... "
 - b. He saw tribulation and persecution as crucibles in which patience is refined. (Rom. 5:3.)
 - c. He realized that the pain of the sufferings he endured was so insignificant in comparison with the greatness of the glory that is to be revealed that it is not worthy of being compared with that glory. (Rom. 8:18.)
 2. Concerning those which inflicted that persecution:
 - a. He taught others "... bless them which persecute you ... "(Rom. 12:14.)
 - b. There is no hint of any embitterment on his part toward his persecutors to be found in the record.
 - c. Though his countrymen persecuted him and sought to kill him, he still desired, prayed, and worked for their conversion. (Rom. 10:1.)
 - 1) He gladly would have lost his own soul if it would mean their salvation. (Rom. 9:1—3.)
 - 2) He indicated that he had not aught whereof to accuse his nation. (Acts 28:19.)

VI. Consider Paul — the peerless apostle of the Gentiles.

- A. The meaning of the word "apostle. "
 1. Means one sent by another.

2. A "delegate" or "representative"; one commissioned by another to represent him in some way.¹²
 - a. Christ, being sent by God, is the "apostle" of our profession. (Heb. 3:1.)
 - b. Individuals selected by different congregations and sent on missions were called "apostles." (Acts 14:14; cf. Acts 13:2-4; 2 Cor. 8:19, 23 ASV margin.)
 - c. The unique group of men personally selected and commissioned by Christ were called "apostles of Jesus Christ." The eleven apostles, Matthias, and Paul were the only ones called "apostles of Christ" from Acts 1 onward.
- B. Paul met *all* the qualifications or bore all the marks of an "apostle of Christ." (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12.)
 1. There were eye witnesses of Christ's resurrection. (Acts 1:22.) So was Paul (Acts 22:14, 15; 1 Cor. 15:3-8, et al.)
 2. They were personally chosen and sent by Jesus Christ. (Matt. 10:5; Acts 1:24.) So was Paul. (Acts 26:16.)
 3. They were taught by the Lord and after his ascension, by the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 14:26.) So was Paul. (Gal. 1:11; 12, 16 1 Cor. 14:37.)
 4. They had authority. (Matt. 18:18.) So did Paul. (1 Cor. 7:17, et al.)
 5. The apostles of Christ had power to work miracles. (Acts 2:43.) So did Paul. (2 Cor. 12:12.)
 6. The apostles had power to communicate miraculous gifts on those upon whom they laid their hands. (Acts 8:14-18.) So did Paul. (Acts 19:1-6; cf. Rom. 1:11.)¹³
- C. Paul was an apostle specially sent to the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15; 26:17; Gal. 1:16; 2:9; Rom. 15:16.)
 1. In this, Paul was the peerless apostle. While Peter and John went mainly to the Jews, Paul's special mission was to the Gentiles.

¹² Bales, *Op. cit.*, p. 47. Quotation of E. D. Burton, *New Testament Word Studies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927,) p. 69.

¹³ Bales, *Op. cit.*, pp. 49-52.

2. Paul was a pioneer in the environs of the Roman Empire to plant the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 15:14—24.)
3. Through the labors of Paul to the Gentiles, the ultimate fulfilment of Daniel 2:44 was made possible.
4. Furthermore, through the labors of Paul, there was, yet hope for the salvation of the Jews. (Rom. 11:1 —36.)

The Man Whose Faith Christ Praised

Matthew 8:5-13

I. A look at the centurion.

- A. A foreigner (v. 10.)
- B. A soldier of rank in the Roman army — *centurion* (from *centum* — a hundred) — commanded 100 men which kept Capernaum.
- C. May have been a man of considerable wealth. (Had a servant, v. 6.)
- D. A generous man highly respected. Lk. 7:4, 5.
- E. A prototype of Cornelius.

II. A look at the centurion's faith.

- A. An asking faith, vv. 5, 6.
- B. An humble faith, v. 8a. — "I am not worthy. "
 - 1. Knew it was considered unlawful for a Jew to enter Gentile's house.
 - 2. For his high esteem for Jesus was *certain* that such would apply to such as thus.
- C. A faith that did not require sight, (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7.) v. 8b.
- D. A marvelous faith, v. 10a.
 - 1. Was expected for an Israelite, educated under the law and the prophets, and prepared for the Lord by John's preaching to have faith.
 - 2. But a heathen-reared Gentile having greater faith than the Jews - *astonishing*]

III. A look at a prophecy of Gentile salvation. Vs. 11, 12 —

(The centurion's faith gave occasion for it.)

- A. Jesus was saying that many Gentiles like the Centurion who believed would enter the everlasting kingdom, v. 11.
- B. But the Jews who rejected Christ (the children of the kingdom — Jews) would ultimately be cast out into outer darkness.

- C. Gentiles have been converted beginning with Cornelius and will enjoy life everlasting in fulfilment of this prophecy.

IV. A look at how our faith compares with that of the Centurion.

- A. Is ours an "asking" faith? James says that many times it is not. (James 4:2.)
- B. Is ours an humble faith? In many cases, we are proud, haughty, as though we deserved salvation, blessing.
- C. Is ours an unconditional faith? Most of us refuse to commit ourselves farther than we can see.
- D. Is our faith greater than could be found in the average church member?
- E. Is ours a "marvelous" faith?
 - 1. It is expected for a person reared in the church to have faith — yet, many do not. But if they do, nothing marvelous in that.
 - 2. A heathen in Africa who hears the word having greater faith than one reared in the church — Marvelous.

The need of the hour is self-examination. If our faith is found deficient, let us pray with the apostles, "Increase our faith. "

The Tragedy Of Saul

1 Samuel 15

This episode in the reign of Saul provides us with:

1. A lesson on the nature of God!

- A. From Him, disobedience cannot be hid.
 - 1. When the battle was over, the watchful eye of God saw that Saul had not obeyed him. ("Then" vv. 10, 11.)
 - 2. Let us not think that our disobedience can be hid from the Lord either! (Heb. 4:12, 13; [Psa. 139:1, 2; "I know thy works" — Revelation; Num. 32:23.])
- B. He means what he says and says what he means!
 - 1. God spelled it out: "*Destroy everything!*" (v. 3.)
 - 2. Likewise, *everything* which Christ has commanded is essential! To neglect obeying one point is to be a rejector of God's word. (Vv. 23, 26; cf. Jas. 2:10.)
- C. He delights in *obedience* as much and even *more* than in sacrifices and offerings, (v. 22.)
 - 1. Sacrifices and offerings without obedience are worthless. (Micah 7:7, 8.)
 - 2. Coming to worship, singing hymns, giving means, etc. *All worthless* if one's life is out of harmony with God's will!

II. A lesson on the nature of sin!

- A. Sin deceives!
 - 1. Sin had so deceived Saul's heart that he actually thought that he had obeyed God. (Vv. 13, 20.)
 - 2. Thousands today are so blinded and deluded by the deceitfulness of sin that they can not see that they are short of complete obedience! (Heb. 3:13.)
- B. Sin leads one to seek to shift the blame.
 - 1. Saul was quick to say, "*They did it!*"(Vv. 15:20, 21.)
 - 2. Reminds us of Adam and Eve, doesn't it.

3. When I sin, it is no one else's fault but mine. I must accept the blame and make things right.
- C. Though sin may be pardoned, its consequences remain. (Vs. 24-31.)
- D. Verse 14 is an illustration of the necessity of completely destroying the old man of sin at conversion. (Rom. 6:1 — 5.)
 1. If I don't, I may say that I did.
 2. But the "bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen" will give me away!

III. A lesson on attitudes.

- A. Saul — A picture of humility turned into pride!
 1. Before he came to be king — humble (9:21; 15:17; cf. v. 12.)
 2. They who exalt themselves shall be abased! Matt. 23:12; Jas. 4:7.)
- B. God requires the attitude of complete *submission* to his voice. (Vv. 1, 19; Cf. 1 Sam. 3:4-10; Jn. 10:1-5.)
- C. To have a *rebellious, stubborn* attitude toward God is the same as turning from God to idolatry, (v. 23.)
- D. A most dangerous attitude — *thinking we know better than the Lord*.
 1. Saul and his soldiers altered God's instructions to read the way they wanted them to read. (v. 9.)
 2. Men are not in the position to question, add to, take from, or alter *in any way* the instructions of God. (Rev. 22:18, 19.)
 3. God knows best and we must realize it! (1 Cor. 1:25; Isa. 55:8, 9. And who are we trying to please any way?)

Lesson From Samson The Strong Man

Judges 13-16

Introduction

1. Samson could be called the "John the Baptizer of the United Kingdom. "
 - a. John the Baptizer was to prepare the way of the Lord. Samson's purpose was to break the power of the Philistines and thus prepare the way for the work of Samuel and David which produced a *permanent triumph* over the Philistines.
 - b. Thus Samson is said to "*begin* to deliver Israel. " (Judges 13:5.)
2. It was a time when physical strength and personal prowess were the only arguments that could meet the emergency.
 - a. Readily seen that Samson was no saint, no holy man — went from one harlot to another. But then he did not have to be a saint to accomplish what God wanted done. He just had to be a Nazarite. The time called for a Hercules.
 - b. Heb. 11:32 says that he was a hero of faith and rightly so, for he possessed the faith of a patriot in the God of his people and of his country.
3. While Samson was not a model of holiness fit for emulation by Christians today, there are many great lessons that we may learn from his story.

Discussion

- I. **We learn that he had parents with an attitude much needed today.**
 - A. Father concerned about bringing up the child in the way the Lord wanted (13:8) and was anxious to know what his purpose was. (13:12.)
 - B. Mother obviously was obedient to the word of the Lord and brought the boy up as a Nazarite.

- C. At least they were concerned about whom he was going to marry and expressed a *strong preference* for one of his own people to be his bride. (14:1—3.)

II. We learn the value of total abstinence from strong drink.

- A. His mother was not to drink at all (13:4.) Obviously, God already knew what we know now — Alcohol can cause birth defects and addiction in the child.
- B. Samson, as a Nazarite, was not to drink at all. (cf. Num. 6:2, 3.)
- C. When God raises up a specimen of full physical vigor — a man worthy of being endowed with superhuman strength — he absolutely prohibits wine and strong drink.

III. We learn that the power is in the Lord and not in the man.

- A. Samson's strength was not in his hair but in his faithfulness to the Nazarite vow — his obedience to God's law for the Nazarite.
 - 1. His strength came when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.
 - 2. 13:25, 14:5 (lion); 14:19 (30 men of Ashkelon); 15:14 (1000 Philistines).
- B. We must learn this lesson: that it is by the grace and power of God that we are what we are and do what we do. (Phil. 4:13.)

IV. We learn the great influence of ungodly companions.

- A. Because of Samson's base subjection to the sway of a heathen woman, he became disobedient to God.
- B. Whether it be friends, spouse, family - they can corrupt us if we submit to sway from them. They will do anything to win us. (16:15, 16.)
- C. We learn the truthfulness of 1 Cor. 15:33.

V. We learn that one may think God is still abiding with him when in reality he had left.

- A. Judges 16:20.
- B. When Samson failed to meet the conditions God had laid down, God left him.
- C. So it is with us. (Jn. 14:23; 1 Jn. 2:4.)

Conclusion

1. What Tragic Words! (Judges 16:20.)
2. Could it be that the Lord has left you and you do not realize it?

Rahab

Joshua 2:1—22

Introduction

1. Rahab the harlot was a rather obscure character in OF history, yet time and time again we find her mentioned in the New Testament.
 - a. In the genealogy of Christ. (Matt. 1:5.)
 - b. In connection with the principles of heroic faith. (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25.)
2. In light of such, it is well worth our effort to learn more of this woman and the part she played and the lessons that part has for us.

Discussion

- I. **Rahab — one who would not follow the crowd.**
 - A. The inhabitants of Jericho feared the Israelites but would not acknowledge their God, Jehovah. Rahab did. (Josh. 2:8-11.)
 - B. Many today who fear the judgment and impending doom of hell, yet will not acknowledge God, will not obey him.
 1. They are like the Athenians, who were warned of the judgment but put off making the decision to repent. (Acts 17:30-32.)
 2. They are like Felix who trembled at the teaching Paul gave concerning judgment to come, but put off obedience. (Acts 24:25.)
 3. Folks are much like the Jews. Jesus warned them of the destruction of Jerusalem and told them to flee when the signs appeared, but few escaped.
 - C. Who was it that was preserved from slaughter at the siege of Jericho? *Rahab*, who feared and acted upon that fear.

II. Rahab — an illustration of the power of God to save the worst of sinners.

- A. We remember Rahab to this day as "Rahab, the harlot. "
 - 1. She could have reasoned, "God will not save a sinner like me who is guilty of the awful sin of harlotry. "
 - 2. Harlotry was so bad that God used it to portray the total apostasy of the Israelites.
 - 3. Yet, even this harlot was delivered when she did the Lord's will.
- B. Christ died for sinners and sinners only. (1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:3; Luke 5:31; Luke 19:10.)
 - 1. The gospel is for sinners — contains command to *repent* — if one had no sin, could not repent.
 - 2. One sin is as much sin as another. Harlotry no worse than stealing; homosexuality no worse than gossip or foul language. All sin is sin, and any sin has the capability of separating one from God.
 - 3. Yet, the gospel has the power to save one from *any sin*. More than enough power to save the *worst* and *chiefest* of sinners.

III. Rahab — an example of justifying faith.

- A. Her faith was not one of "seeing is believing. " v. 10 - "*We have heard...* "
 - 1. Many today won't believe in God because they can't see him.
 - 2. Rahab, a pagan, simply *upon hearing* recognized that Jehovah was God of heaven and earth.
 - 3. Likewise, the faith of the NT is not based *upon seeing*, but upon *hearing* the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.)
- B. Her faith was one *of action*.
 - 1. The inhabitants of Jericho *believed* in God, but failed to act upon that belief — lost.
 - 2. Rahab believed in God and acted upon that faith — *saved*.
- C. Her faith led her to seek the salvation of her kin. (vv. 12, 13.)

IV. Rahab — a warning of the danger of seeking salvation outside the place where God has located it. (v. 19.)

- A. God has located salvation in Christ, 2 Timothy 2:10. His body is the church, Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18. Saved added to the church. (Acts 2:47.)
- B. As reasonable and logical to try to be saved outside the church as for Rahab to have sought salvation on the streets of Jericho!

V. Rahab — a reminder that even the worst of sinners have the makings of strong Christians.

- A. Some good qualities that Rahab had that all strong Christians must have:
 - 1. *Industrious* - Josh. 2:6. Evidenced by the flax on the roof of her house.
 - 2. *Unselfish* — Josh. 2:12. Cared for the salvation of her family.
 - 3. *Honest* — kept her promise to the spies.
- B. What do you think made Paul such a fervent and zealous preacher after he obeyed the gospel? The fact that he possessed the quality of fervent zeal before he obeyed the gospel.
- C. Can't over-emphasize the power the gospel has to make us into strong Christians, but God will use *the best of the worst* of us who are willing to obey him.

Conclusion

- 1. Let no one say that they are not good enough to be a Christian, Rahab is a reminder that God receiveth sinful men.
- 2. Let us do the will of God even though it seems everyone around us refuses to do so.
- 3. Let us have the kind of faith that Rahab had — the kind that *acts*.
- 4. Let all remember where salvation is located and do all that we can to bring many into the kingdom.

Paul's Faithful Sayings

I. 1 Tim. 1:15 — Christ came to save sinners.

- A. Mk. 2:17 - The whole need not a physician.
- B. Lk. 15:1-24 - Three stories which show that the *lost* needs saving.
- C. The self-righteous can never be saved until they realize that they are lost.
- D. Christ can save the worst of sinners - even Paul, persecutor and injurer.

II. 1 Tim. 3:1 — One desiring the office of an elder desires a fine work.

- A. Three of the great men and writers of the NT were elders.
 - 1. Peter- 1 Pet. 5:1.
 - 2. James - Acts 15:13; cf. v. 2, 6; 12:1, 2.
 - 3. John the Apostle - 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1.
- B. Their duties speak highly of their office.
 - 1. Feed, oversee and provide example. (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.)
 - 2. Lead (Lit. meaning of "rule".) Heb. 13:7, 17.
- C. Their responsibility is highly commendable: to give account. (Heb. 13:17, cf. Jas. 3:1.)

III. 1 Tim. 4:8-10 - Godliness is profitable for all things.

- A. Compared to bodily discipline, much better profit.
 - 1. Holds promise of the present life.
 - 2. Holds promise of the life to come. 3. Cf. Mk. 10:29, 30.
- B. Godliness requires discipline. (Lk. 9:23; Titus 2:11, 12.)

IV. Titus 3:5—8 — Salvation is by grace, regeneration.

- A. Salvation is by grace. (Eph. 2:8, 9.)
 - 1. Not by works of our righteousness.
 - 2. But according to his mercy.

- B. Salvation by grace is salvation by washing of regeneration. (Jn. 3:3, 5: Eph. 5:26.)
- C. Salvation by grace results in...
 - 1. Hope of eternal life.
 - 2. Good deeds and works. (Eph. 2:10.)

The Godhead

Introduction

Several reasons why we need to study this subject.

1. The oneness holiness doctrine or Jesus only doctrine are prevalent and must be exposed as unscriptural.
2. A study of this kind will help us appreciate the infiniteness and omniscience of God.
3. Through this study we will be better able to understand the things involved in our salvation.

Discussion

I. First, consider the meaning of the term "Godhead. "

- A. It is from a Middle English word — "Godhood". This word means simply that which makes God God.
 1. Some examples:
 - a. "Manhood" is that which makes a man a man.
 - b. "Childhood" is that which makes a child a child.
 - c. "Fatherhood" is that which makes a father a father.
 - d. Therefore, "Godhood" is that which makes God God.
 2. This word can be translated "divinity" or "deity. "
- B. "Godhead" is used only three times in the New Testament.
 1. *Acts 17:29* — "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. "
 2. *Romans 1:20* - "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. "
 3. *Colossians 2:9* - "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. "

II. Second, Let us consider the trinity of the Godhead.

- A. There are three beings who partake of Godhead, Godhood, or divinity.
 - 1. They are:
 - a. God the Father. (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20.)
 - b. Jesus the Son. (Col. 2:9.)
 - c. The Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:11.)
 - 2. There are many passages which list these three beings, but perhaps the most familiar is Matthew 28:19.
- B. These three beings are distinct one from the other. One of the many great examples of this is Matt. 3:16, 17.
- C. However, these three beings are ONE. There is complete *unity* among them.
 - 1. That they are three yet one is clearly seen in Gen. 1:26.
 - a. God says, "Let us make man" (plural.)
 - b. We know that Jesus was involved in the creation (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16), and that the Spirit was also involved. (Gen. 1:2.)
 - c. The conclusion is that there are three beings who possess such unity that they three can be described in the singular!
 - 2. HOW are they one?
 - a. In unity of Nature: all three are divine and eternal. (Heb. 9:14; Gen. 1:1; John 1:1.)
 - b. In unity of Purpose: that of reconciling man to God. (2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:16-18.)
 - c. In unity of Revelation: Everything spoken by God the Father, by Jesus the Son, and by the Holy Spirit are in complete harmony. (Jn. 16:13-15.)

III. Third, let us consider the Godhead at work.

- A. In creation, God, Christ, and the Spirit were involved in the work of Creation.
- B. In the scheme of redemption.
 - 1. God the great planner, purposer and designer. (Eph. 1:11.)
 - 2. Christ executed, carried out the plan. (John 6:38; 2 Tim. 1:9.)
 - 3. The Holy Spirit revealed it. (1 Cor. 1:9, 10.)
- C. In Baptism. (Matt. 28:19.) The truth expressed is that dis-

ciples are baptized into a relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1. God becomes one's father.
 2. Christ becomes one's head.
 3. Holy Spirit becomes one's guide and leader. D. In the church.
 1. God is the Father of the children in his house, the church. (2 Tim. 3:15.)
 2. Christ is the head of the church and savior of his body, and he will deliver it to God. (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 15:24.)
 3. The Holy Spirit is the life and unifying force of the church. (Eph. 4:1-3.)
- E. In prayer.
1. God is the hearer and answerer of prayer.
 2. Jesus is mediator who made it possible for man to speak to God.
 3. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities. (Rom. 8:26.)

Conclusion

1. In this study we have seen the meaning of the term Godhead, the trinity of the Godhead, and the work of each respective member of it.
2. It is hoped that this will better enable us to understand the things involved in salvation and to appreciate them.

Restoring The Erring

Introduction

1. God's great love and concern for his children who stray is nowhere more clearly pictured than in Luke 15.
 - A. He is like the shepherd who would leave 99 sheep in the wilderness to find one who had strayed from the flock.
 - B. He is like the woman who had 10 pieces of silver, lost one, and would seek diligently till she finds it.
 - C. He is like the father whose young son left him to go to the far country, and when he came back ran with loving arms to welcome him home.
2. Since we are to be imitators of God, (Eph. 5:1) ought we not to have the same love and concern for our brethren who err?
3. Our lesson concerns the work of "Restoring the Erring. " It is hoped that it will awaken us to our duty and give us God's plan for accomplishing this grave task.

Discussion

I. Faithful brethren have an obligation to brethren that sin.

- A. In all ages certain obligations have rested upon men as a result of their being brethren.
 1. Cain and Abel - God asked Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother? "(Gen. 4:9.)
 2. Abraham and Lot — Abraham suggested that there be no strife among them for, he said, "we be brethren. " (Gen. 13:8.)
 3. Joseph and his brethren — In Genesis 45, Joseph felt an obligation to his brethren to rescue them from famine.
 4. How good and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psa. 133:1.)
- B. The same is true of the church. We are brethren (Matt. 23:8.) Certain obligations rest upon us as brethren, which are of a general nature.
 1. Love of the brethren. (1 Pet. 1:22.)

2. Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. (Heb. 10:24.)
 3. Have the same care one for another. (1 Cor. 12:25.)
 4. Many other general obligations such as these.
- C. Yet, God has placed upon the shoulders of faithful brethren *the special duty* toward brethren that sin.
1. We are to *convert* them from the error of their way. (Jas 5:19, 20.)
 - a. "Convert" is often thought only to apply to alien sinners, but when brethren forsake the way of righteousness, they need to be converted.
 - b. "To convert" means to "turn around, " to get men to come back to the right way again.
 2. We are to *restore* them from their fault. (Gal. 6:1.)
 - a. "Restore" means to correct, mend.
 - b. Used in Matt. 4:21 of mending nets; Greeks used it for the work of a surgeon in setting a broken limb.
 - c. We are to correct brethren that sin, get them to make amends for their faults.
 3. We are to *save* brethren from the fire. (Jude 23.)
 - a. Brethren who sin are lost; they are heading down the road that leads to destruction - to hell.
 - b. We are to save them by pulling them out of their wicked way. (ASV and RSV - "snatching them. ")
 - 1) So serious is their condition that there is no time to waste.
 - 2) They are so close to the fire that there is only time to *snatch* them from the flames so to speak.
 - 3) They are "lingering on the brink of woe" and as Lot and his family lingered that the angels had to "snatch" them by the hand out of the city (Gen. 19:16), we must snatch brethren out of the fire who sin.
- D. It is a serious obligation indeed with grave consequences if we fail to do our best at discharging it.
1. Such failure will result in the destruction of the soul of the brother who sinned.
 2. Failure will result in the church being polluted and corrupted, and its influence damaged. (1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 11:2, 3; Eph. 5:27.)

3. Failure will result in our own souls being lost. (Ezek. 3:18-19.)

II. God has revealed a plan for saving brethren that sin. (Matt. 18:15-17.)

- A. This plan is applicable to cases involving two brethren.
 1. *Step One:* Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.
 - a. Go to him. When one puts off taking care of such matters, opportunity for hatred and malice often gender in the heart.
 - b. Go, not to anyone who will listen, *but to the one who sinned.*
 - 1) There is no need to involve anyone else in this private matter.
 - 2) The brother who sinned may have done so ignorantly.
 - 3) You may have been mistaken; you may have imagined that the brother has sinned against you when really it is a simple misunderstanding.
 - c. If the brother who sinned will hear and turn from it - repent — "thou hast gained a brother" — *Case closed.*
 - d. But, what if the brother who sinned refuses to hear and repent? Then another step must be employed.
 2. *Step Two:* Take one or two more with you that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
 - a. Perhaps the other two brethren can exert influence on the brother who sinned to convince him to repent.
 - b. Also, should further steps be needed, these will be able to verify the action taken.
 - c. *Implied* at this point is that fact that if the brother who sinned hears the two witnesses and repents, a brother is gained.
 - d. But, what if he will not hear the two other brethren? Then another step is to be employed.
 3. *Step Three:* Tell it to the church.
 - a. The good graces and influence of the whole body of disciples in a UNITED effort is brought to bear upon

- the brother who sinned, in trying to get the brother to repent.
- b. But, what if the united effort of the congregation fails to bring about repentance? The Lord has no other means to be used to restore him.
 - 1) *He is to be avoided as the Jews avoided the Gentiles and Publicans.*
 - 2) *The Faithful are to have no religious fellowship or association with him until he repents.*
- B. This plan is also applicable to cases of open, public sin on the part of brethren.
1. When sin is open and publicly known to all, the plan is applied beginning with the second step (The first step does not apply.)
 - a. The elders of the congregation, who have the prime responsibility of watching for the souls of the flock (Heb. 13:17) go to the sinful brother acting as the witnesses.
 - 1) If the sinful brother will hear them, a brother is gained.
 - 2) If he will not hear them, they are to tell it to the church.
 - b. The members of the congregation in a united effort are to go to the brother who has sinned publicly, and they are to try to influence him to repent.
 - 1) If the sinful brother responds to the efforts of the congregation and repents, a brother is gained.
 - 2) If he does not hear the congregation, he is to be to the members as an heathen and a publican.
 - i) He is to be avoided.
 - ii) The faithful are not to have fellowship with him until he repents.
 2. Paul commanded the use of this plan in Corinth.
 - a. In Corinth, a brother was guilty of incest and would not repent. (1 Cor. 5:1.)
 - b. Paul emphatically commanded that the brethren take action.
 - 1) They were to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved. (1 Cot. 5:4, 5.)

- i. This meant that they were to exclude him from their fellowship that he might see the enormity of his sin and repent.
 - ii. This action was to be carried out by the entire congregation, (v. 4.)
 - 2) They were to purge out the old leaven, (v. 7.) This was the leaven of this man's wickedness (v. 8), that the congregation might be pure.
 - 3) They were not to keep company, associate, or even eat with him or any immoral brother who wouldn't repent. This included brethren who were:
 - i. *Fornicators* — those guilty of sexual sin.
 - ii. *Covetous* — greedy.
 - iii. *Idolators* — those who worshiped anything other than God (money, objects, possessions, etc. cf. Col. 3:5.).
 - iv. *Railers* — those characterized by scornful, abusive or reviling speech,
 - v. *Drunkards*.
 - vi. *Extortioners* — robbers and thieves.
 - 4) They were to put away from themselves the wicked person, (v. 13.)
3. Paul commanded the use of this plan in Thessalonica.
 - a. There was public sin there among the brethren. Some of them refused to work to provide for themselves; and were busybodies. (2 These. 3:11.)
 - b. Paul commanded that they should take action.
 - 1) They were to withdraw themselves from those who walked disorderly. (2 These. 3:11.)
 - 2) They were to note, not have company with those who would not obey Paul's work, that they might be ashamed of their sin and repent. (2 These. 3:14.)
 - 3) They were not to count them as enemies but to admonish them as brothers. (2 These. 3:15.)
- C. From these facts, several observations are in order.
 1. Christ's plan demands that every possible means be used to influence the sinful brother to repent before withdrawal of fellowship was implemented as the last resort.
 2. Christ's plan is for two main purposes:

- a. Getting the sinful brother to repent by making him ashamed of his wickedness. Withdrawal of fellowship is intended to have the same effect as the hog pen in the far country in the case of the prodigal son — *to make one come to himself, repent, and come back home!*
- b. Purging the congregation of sin, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. (1 Cor. 5:6, 7.)
3. Christ's plan demands that the door be left completely open for the sinful brother to come back and repent, and demands that even after fellowship has been withdrawn — to admonish him. (2 Thes. 3:15.)
4. Christ's plan is fair, decent, humane, and designed for nothing *but the good of all concerned.*

III. God's divine plan for restoring brethren who sin works!

- A. A case in point: The fornicator at Corinth. (2 Cor. 2:1-11.)
 1. The punishment of withdrawal of fellowship was sufficient to bring him to repentance, (v. 6.)
 2. The brethren were thus to forgive him and comfort him. (v. 7.)
 3. They were to confirm their love toward him. (v. 8)
 4. The reason why the sinful brother was restored was because the brethren had obeyed Paul's instructions to withdraw from him. (v. 9.)
- B. In order for God's plan to work today, it *must be executed exactly as it was revealed!*
 1. Each step must be carried out completely and in its proper order.
 2. The proper spirit, attitude, and disposition must be maintained at all times.
 - a. Meekness (Gal. 6:1.)
 - b. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. (Jude 23.)
 - c. Considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. (Gal. 6:1.)
 3. The purpose — *to save the brother who is lost* — must be kept clearly in mind at all times.
 4. If withdrawal of fellowship is necessary, we must con-

tinue to admonish the sinful brother to repent and keep the door open to him to come back if he repents, and make sure he understands that *if and when he does repent, he will be received back in full fellowship.*

5. The congregation as a whole must combine in a united effort and participate.
 6. If repentance results, all must forgive, confirm their love, and comfort the penitent brother. (Must not be like the elder brother of Luke 15.)
 7. If one of these points is neglected, the plan is hindered.
- C. We cannot say that it doesn't or won't work *until we have put it into practice exactly as it is revealed.*
1. If we say that it will not work, we must be wiser than God who devised it. (1 Cor. 1:25.)
 2. If we say that it will not work, it may be because we do not have the faith and love to put it into practice!

Conclusion

1. God's word *commands that his plan be used.*
 - a. Jesus commands it. (Matt. 18:15-17.)
 - b. Paul commanded it. (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thes. 3:6.)
 - c. We have no choice in the matter.
 - 1) To restore, convert and save brethren who sin is as much commanded as faith, repentance, confession and baptism.
 - 2) Restoring brethren that sin is *one of the things that the church must do to be saved.*
2. When brethren sin and God's plan is carried out completely and exactly as revealed, it will work.
3. We may think, "We can't afford to practice discipline. " But the truth is "We cannot afford NOT to execute God's plan. "

The Reality Of Hell

Introduction

1. There is no way in which to describe hell in human language to the extent that men would fully comprehend its horror.
 - A. Man has never been there and seen it, heard it, or felt it.
 - B. Therefore, no word in man's tongue can adequately describe it.
2. Yet, Jesus has described it in the most vivid terms available to Him.
 - A. Even from Jesus' description we cannot fully comprehend hell.
 - B. But, from what Jesus says, we can know the *reality* of such a place, and know that *we do not want to go there!*
3. Our lesson is presented to remind us of the *reality* of hell and to instill within us the strong desire to *avoid* it at all costs!

Discussion

I. Hell is real; it exists!

- A. Widespread unbelief in a hell is professed in our land today.
 1. Many say that they do not believe in hell.
 - a. *The Gallop Opinion Index*, February, 1969: People were asked the question: "Do you believe in hell?" 65% said "yes"; 29% said "no"; and 6% said "no opinion. "
 - b. It is likely that this 29% has increased during the last ten years.
 2. Many *religious groups* have eliminated the Bible concept of hell from their thinking. According to *Religions of America*, Leo Rosten, ed.,
 - a. **Jehovah's Witnesses** say "Hell is the grave; it is not a place of fiery, eternal torment. "
 - b. **Christian Scientists** say "hell is a present state of thought rather than a future dwelling place. "

- c. **Unitarian Universalists** say "Heaven and hell are states of mind created by human beings. "
 - d. **Jews** "no longer accept the literal idea of a heaven or a hell. "
- B. Two friends were talking on religious topics. They discussed the subject of punishment for sin in a future life. They settled to their own satisfaction that there was none. They decided that hell was a myth. They argued that God was a God of love and could not consign his creatures to everlasting punishment. The conversation dropped when a Christian who had been listening silently to the discussion said, "Suppose it is true after all?" "Suppose it is true after all the God must punish sins? How would you stand before him? What could you say to him? How would you fare before the judge?"
- C. Well, Jesus Christ said that hell is *real* - it exists and that men are in danger of it, can be cast into it, and can be destroyed therein.
 - 1. **Matt. 5:22** — "... but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire. "
 - 2. **Matt. 5:29** — "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. "
 - 3. **Matt. 10:28** — "... but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. "
 - 4. **Matt. 23:33** — "Ye serpents, ye generations of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?"
- D. Therefore, for anyone to say that hell does not exist would be to say that the Son of God spoke of a place that did not exist and that he didn't know what he was talking about!

II. Hell is a place of the most terrible horror, suffering, and despair that has ever existed.

- A. It is described in terms of *the valley of Hinnom* (Gr. *Gehenan*.)
 - 1. Hinnom was the scene of idolatrous practices in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh which consisted in offering children as burnt sacrifices. (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6.)
 - 2. In the days of Jesus, it had become the garbage pit of

Jerusalem - into this valley dead bodies were cast to be consumed by the dogs... and the fires were kept burning to consume the rubbish of the city.

- B. It is described in terms *of fire*.
1. Various passages describe it thusly:
 - a. Matt. 13:42 - "the furnace of fire. "
 - b. Matt. 18:9 - "the hell of fire. "
 - c. Mark 9:43 — "the unquenchable fire. "
 - d. Rev. 19:20 - "the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. "
 - e. Rev. 20:10 - "the lake of fire and sulphur. "
 2. Since hell is in the spiritual realm, there will not likely be a literal, material fire. Yet, Jesus used fire to *symbolize* the horror of the destruction of hell... *and the reality is always greater than the symbol of it!*
 3. I know of no one who can stand the smell of burned eggs. That is what sulphur smells like. That is how horrible the smell of hell is!
- C. It is described as "*outer darkness* where there is *weeping* and *gnashing* of teeth. " (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 25:30.) There is also *wailing*.
1. This image probably comes from the Roman dungeons used in Jesus' day. They were commonly constructed underground. They were shut out from the sun. The unhappy prisoners without light, company or comfort spent their days and nights in weeping and gnashing or grinding their teeth from grief and despair.
 2. When the wicked shall have been consigned to hell, the sun, moon, and stars shall have been destroyed. (2 Pet. 3:12.) The Lamb of God shall be the only light. (Rev. 21:23.) Since hell shall be totally separated from the glory of his power (2 Thes. 1:9) it shall be characterized by the blackest of darkness.
- D. It is described as "*the second death*. " (Rev. 2:11; Rev. 21:8.)
1. Jesus made reference to two deaths which carry the idea of finality with them in Matthew 10:28.
 - a. "Kill the body" - this is the first death.
 - b. "Destroy both soul and body in hell" - this is the second death.

2. Death means "separation". Hence, there are two separations.
 - a. Separation of the body from the spirit — the first separation.
 - b. Separation of the body and soul from God — the second separation.
 3. Paul described hell as the second death — the second separation when he said, "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence of the Lord ...* " (2 These. 1:9 - RSV - "exclusive from the presence of the Lord. ")
 4. Hell is the *worst* death, far more worse than physical death.
- E. Hell is a *million times more horrible* than all the things that are most detestable and most repulsive to man. Yet, this is no less than what sin rightfully deserves! (Heb. 10:29; Matt. 25:46; 2 These. 1:9.) *Punishment* - a Greek word which means "what is justly deserved. "

III. Hell is eternal.

- A. Jesus called it "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46) "everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41.)
 1. He said the fire is "unquenchable. " (Mark 9:43.)
 2. He said that hell was a place "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. " (Mark 9:47.)
 - a. This is a reference to the valley of Hinnom - the garbage pit of Jerusalem - to the maggots and worms who preyed on the garbage and the dead bodies. By this Jesus emphasizes that *hell is never ending!*
 - b. As the fires were kept burning continuously in the valley of Hinnom, so shall hell's torment never end.
- B. Paul called it "punishment of eternal destruction. " (2 These. 1:9.)
- C. Jude said of the destiny of false teachers, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness *forever!* (Jude 13.)
- D. John said of the inhabitants of the lake of fire and sulphur - "they will be tormented day and night. " (Rev. 20:10.)
- E. Combine all the horrors of hell, the repulsiveness of the valley of Hinnom, the unquenchable fire and sulphur, the blackest of darkness, the weeping, wailing, and gnashing

or grinding of teeth, total and final separation from God, good, and beauty, *and then add eternity* to it, and you can *begin* to conceive of the horrors of hell.

1. Even in the Hadean world, the realm of departed spirits, the rich man in torments of that realm sought relief, but there was none.
2. Rev. 9:6 can be applied to the punishment of hell: "In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them. "
3. There shall be *no end ever* to the eternal, horrible suffering in hell!

IV. Hell is a prepared place.

- A. Primarily, it is prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25:41.)
- B. Secondly, it is prepared for those who follow the devil.
 1. It is prepared for the immoral. (Rev. 21:8.)
 2. It is prepared for those who are disobedient (Matt. 7:23; Mark 16:15, 16) and who by their disobedience have failed to have their names written in the book of Life. (Rev. 20:15.)
 3. It is prepared for those who love not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes. 2:12.)
 4. It is prepared for apostate Christians. (Heb. 10:25-39.)
- C. One of the saddest features of hell is that many of the folks who will be there would have never dreamed they would be lost. (Matt. 24:37-39.)

Conclusion

1. Hell is real — it exists. It is horrible billions of times beyond our more terrible nightmares. That horror will never end - it is everlasting.
2. What Peter said concerning the end of time is truly applicable to the description of hell the Bible gives: "Seeing then that all these things shall be..., what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness...?" (2 Peter 3:12.)
 - a. Do you think that you can neglect the services of the church and still escape the horrors of hell?

- b. Do you think that you can use profanity and still escape the damnation of hell?
 - c. Do you think that you can drink beer and whisky and still escape the punishment of hell?
 - d. If you think you can do these things and escape hell, you are deceiving yourself!
3. If anything could encourage a person to obey the gospel, some thought about the horrors of an eternal hell should. If anything could encourage a Christian who is not living right to straighten up, some serious thought about the damnation of hell should.
 4. God doesn't want anyone to go to hell. (2 Pet. 3:9; John 3:16.) But neither will he force anyone to be saved and avoid hell. If you land in hell at least, it will be of your own choosing.
 5. I take no reservation in saying that the Bible teaches that if you do not attend all the services of the church that you possibly can, you are bound for hell. If you are characterized by immorality of any sort, whether it be immodest dress, dancing the modern dance, drinking alcoholic beverages, using profanity, fornication, covetousness, lying, or stealing, you have set your course for eternal fire of hell. *You must repent* in order to escape.
 - a. Simply being on the church roll will not save you from hell.
 - b. Simply having been baptized will not keep you from eternal torment. Christians living ungodly lives will be lost.
 - c. You must be characterized by holy living and godliness; you must have your name written in God's book.
 6. If you want to escape hell, you must obey the gospel. You must turn away from your godly living.

What's A Woman To Do?

1 Tim. 2:8-15

Introduction

1. In the church here at Lobelville, according to some averaging I have done, the female members outnumber the male members 2 to 1.
 - a. This in itself would be enough to say about women. Its teachings are ageless and timeless... it is all-sufficient. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)
2. In view of the ERA, the Women's Liberation Movement and the noticeable shift in the behavior and thinking of women in general, there is a vast need to re-clarify some issues about women as they pertain to the church.
3. Therefore, I want to read 1 Tim. 2:8—15 and simply ask Paul "What's A Woman To Do?"

Discussion

As we allow Paul to answer, he tells us...

- I. What Christian women are not permitted to do in the church ... and why.**
 - A. What they are not permitted to do:
 1. They are not permitted to lead prayer. V. 8 states that the men are to do this. (When Paul says "the men" these words are in contradistinction with "the women. ")
 2. They are not permitted to teach men. V. 12a. ("Men" is a direct object of the verb "to teach. ")
 3. Are not permitted to have authority over men. V. 12b. (Not to "domineer, " or "lord it over" the men.)
 4. They are not permitted to speak... they are to keep silent. (V. 12c. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:34, 35.)
 - a. In this context (vv. 26—39) Paul has reference to a special type speaking: viz., prophesying or speaking in tongues.

- b. We are aware that women sometimes prophesied. (1 Cor. 11:5; Acts 21:9.)
 - c. It could be that when Paul said women were not allowed to speak, he had reference to such speaking as would be done if women prophesied in the church: the world "have the floor". He may mean, "they are not permitted to prophesy but should be subordinate. "
 - d. He cannot mean total silence, for nowhere does the Bible suggest that women are excluded from the command of Eph. 5:19 - "speaking to yourselves... "
- B. But, why are women prohibited from doing these things? (Vv. 13, 14.)
- 1. Reason No. 1 - "Adam was formed first, then Eve. " (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:8, 9.)
 - 2. Reason No. 2 — "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor... "
 - a. Men... not easily deceived *as a rule*. (Note: there is no suggestion that Adam was deceived... he simply became a transgressor to share the fate of his beloved.)
 - b. Woman... easily deceived *as a rule*. (Perhaps why she is referred to as "the weaker sex. " (1 Pet. 3:7.)
 - c. Of course, there are exception to both, but the rule still holds true.
 - 3. Thus, the women by nature are disqualified from a leadership position in the church... primarily because they are easily deceived.
- C. If such is the case with the woman, can she be saved? Is she not doomed to constant deception and transgression? (V. 15.)
- 1. "She shall be saved through child-bearing". But what does this mean?
 - a. In Gen. 3:16 — a three-fold curse: Pain in child-bearing; Desire for her husband; and Husband rule over her.
 - b. Prior to this passage, no mention of woman's desire being for her husband... of her husband's being ruler over her.
 - i. That Adam was not then ruler over Eve is obvious

- from the fact that she ate the fruit without his consent.
- ii. It is likely that if Adam had been present to keep the woman safe from the subtlety of the devil, she may never have eaten.
 - c. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:12 — Paul says there is a sense in which "the man is also by the woman. "
 - d. Thus, it seems reasonable that Paul means that *by bearing children, men are produced to lead in the church, viz., to keep the women safe from deception and transgression.*
 - e. Therefore, God's curse becomes a blessing - as man was greatly benefitted as a result of the curse placed on him (man motivated to progress and better himself) so the curse upon the women proves to be her blessing!
2. This being "kept safe" or being "saved" is conditional:
- a. Faith
 - b. Love In Modesty
 - c. Holiness
- D. So, it is easily seen why it is best that women are not permitted to serve as elders, deacons, and preachers, because of their nature. But God has well provided a way to keep women safe from deception: the *leadership of the male children they bear.*

Consider:

II. What Christian women are permitted to do... and its importance.

- A. What they may do:
- 1. They are permitted to profess religion (lit. profess to worship or to reverence and respect God) and *must dress accordingly I*
 - a. You can tell much about someone's *profession* by the clothes he wears. (E. g., my experience of being mistaken for a lawyer at ECM hospital. Cf. Bib overalls and straw hat usually = a farmer.
 - b. Just look at the ladies and young girls in the church ... you can tell much about their *profession* by the clothes they wear!

1. Swimsuits, tight jeans, or shorts in public.
 2. Expensive clothes they don't really *need* and much gold and jewelry. (Note v. 9.)
 3. Wear short or low cut dresses - even to church. What are these professing? Worldliness!
- c. How do women who profess *religion* and *godliness* adorn themselves?
1. Modestly — with a sense of the shame of nakedness.
 2. Sensibly — with sound judgment, aware of the effects their apparel has on others.
 3. In seemly apparel — decent, orderly, and well-arranged (the opposite of tacky and shabby.)
 4. By good deeds —
 - a) As Paul describes "real widows" (those who are worthy of the honor of being supported by the church) he is describing women who profess godliness. In 1 Tim. 5:10 he gives a commentary on what he means by good deeds.
 - b) Paul gives another commentary in Titus 2:3—5. What young women are to be taught.
 - c) This adornment is well exemplified in two NT women:
 - i. *Lydia* (Acts 16:15 — hospitality.)
 - ii. *Dorcas* (Acts 9:36ff — esp. v. 39.)
 2. They are permitted to *learn*, v. 11. (The women were not permitted to do this under the pagan and Jewish way of life. Thus, woman is elevated by Christianity.)
 3. They are permitted to teach and train other women. (As noted in Titus 2:3-5.)
 4. They are permitted to participate in the worship — no prohibition of women participating in the song service, prayers, Lord's supper, giving, studying. (Again, in Jewish synagogue, women weren't even allowed inside. Wherever Christ is honored and obeyed, women are lifted up.)
- B. The importance of what Christian women are permitted to do:
1. Many a husband has been won... *without a word* by the proper adorning and chaste behavior of a Christian wife. (1 Pet. 3:1-6.)

2. If older women didn't teach younger women, *who knows what home-life would be!*
3. Although we primarily sing to worship God, and secondarily to edify one another, imagine if the only singing we had was that done by the men... how depressing, rather than upbuilding!
4. Just look at the difference women made in NT times.
 - a. Euodias and Synteyche (Phil. 4:3) labored with Paul and Clementi in the gospel. (Perhaps wealthy like Lydia and gave financial assistance, and spread the gospel to other women at Philippi.)
 - b. Pheobe (Rom. 16:1, 2) a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae: a helper (Greek — one who stands by in case of need) of Paul and many.
 - c. Philip's four virgin daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21:9.)
 - d. Timothy's grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice. (2 Tim. 1:5.)

Conclusion

1. The question is... "Are you undone because of what you are not permitted to do?... or are you taking full advantage of the opportunities given you? Are there any Loises or Eunices, any Dorcases or Lydias, in this congregation?"
2. Exodus 4:2 — Moses was asked, "What is that in your hand?"
 - a. Marge Green in *A Life With Wings*, one of her fascinating books for women, lists 18 things that the average Christian woman has in her hand.
 - b. Here they are: Wedding ring, little child, my home, a broom, a comb and brush, pots and pans, washing machine and ironing board, sewing machine, telephone, pencil or pen, steering wheel, artistic ability, liking for small children and they like me, a listening ear, ability to write, ability to sing, am employed outside my home, I have my Bible.
3. Have the women been short-charged or cheated?
4. I challenge you to do more of what you ought to do and be more of what you ought to be!

The Impossibility Of "The Impossibility Of Apostasy" (1)

"Passages which false teachers use to prove the doctrine of 'once saved always saved' teach no such thing!"

Introduction

1. This week I heard a denominational preacher speak at a funeral service and his remarks can be summed up by the words "once saved always saved. "
 - a. It is sad such a gross and blatant misapplication of the scriptures is being given.
 - b. But sadder still is the fact that I have heard many of you right here in this congregation call this false teacher "brother. "
 - c. If you are so careless as to call this liar and deceiver "brother, " why should I not be afraid that you might be so careless as to *accept his doctrine!*
2. As Paul said, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren. "
3. Tonight, we begin a series on "The Impossibility of The Impossibility of Apostasy. ' "
4. In our first lesson I want to show that the passages which false teachers use to prove the doctrine of "once saved, always saved" teach nothing of the kind!

Discussion

I. John 3:16; 5:24; 1 Jn. 5:11, 13.

- A. Since Christians are said to have eternal life or everlasting life, false teachers assume that once saved always saved.
- B. This is a failure to recognize the *sense* in which Christians have eternal life.
 1. Everlasting life or eternal life is something that exists *in the world to come*. (Mk. 10:29, 30.)
 2. It is something which the righteous will enter *at the judgment*. (Matt. 25:46.)

3. It is something which will begin *at the resurrection*. Jn. 5:24-29.
 4. It is something which children of God have *in promise*. (1 Jn. 2:25; Titus 1:2.)
 5. In view of these considerations, children of God have eternal life *in prospect and in promise* rather than *actuality*, and now their lives take on the quality of the life that is promised to them when this life is over. (cf. Col. 3:1-3.)
- C. In each of these passages, the promise of eternal life is *conditioned* upon *continuing to believe*.
- D. A man who has believed can *cease* to believe and thus forfeit the promise of eternal life. (1 Cor. 15:2; Heb. 3:12.)

II. John 10:28.

- A. This is true *only as long as* Christians hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow him. (John 10:27.)
- B. Christians can *stop* hearing the voice of Jesus and *stop* following him.
- C. They can do as many of Jesus' disciples did. (John 6:66.) D. This promise is conditional, too.

III. Romans 8:35-39.

- A. False teachers assume that since nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, once saved always saved.
- B. There are two problems with this assumption:
 1. The love of God is not synonymous with eternal salvation.
 - a. Rom. 5:8; John 3:16 show that God's love is extended to *the world* and to *sinner*s.
 - b. Yet the fact that God loves the world and sinners doesn't mean that all sinners and all the world will be saved.
 - c. When men reached the age of responsibility they *separated themselves* from the love of God in the first place.
 2. Inseparability from the love of God is *conditional*.
 - a. There must be the response to that love: faith. (Jn. 3:16.)

- b. All things work together also to those who love the Lord. (Rom. 8:28.)
 - c. Hence, the meaning is, *so long as there is genuine faith* and love on the part of a Christian, nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of God.
 - d. But Christians can *separate themselves* from the love of God by ceasing to have faith.. (Heb. 3:12.)
- C. Therefore, the passage proves nothing of the sort as to the doctrine of once saved always saved.

IV. 1 Peter 1:3-5.

- A. Those who teach 'once saved always saved' assume that being kept by the power of God is unconditional.
- B. The truth is that being kept (guarded) but the power of God is only possible as long as there is faith — "through faith. "
- C. Peter, of all people, knew that faith can fail. (Luke 22:31, 32.)
- D. Furthermore, Jesus "kept" (guarded) the twelve apostles, yet one of them was lost - Judas. (Jn. 17:12,)
- E. The "power of God" by which Christians are "kept" is the *faith* which God's word enables them to have.

V. 1 John 3:9

- A. False teachers fail to see just what John is saying and misinterpret his words to mean "once saved always saved. "
 - 1. "Doth not sin" (present active indicative) means "does not practice sin as a way of life, as a life's habit. "
 - 2. "He cannot sin" (present active infinitive) means "he cannot continue to live a life of sin, " the major emphasis of which being on sin.
 - 3. Thus, John's words allow for committing single acts of sin (as though ignorance or being deceived) but do not allow for willful, habitual sin as a way of life.
- B. False teachers of "once saved always saved" fail to recognize that this is conditional.
 - 1. Conditioned upon "his seed" (the word of God, Lk. 8:11) remaining in the Christian.
 - 2. Conditioned upon abiding in him. (1 Jn. 3:6.)

- C. Therefore, a Christian cannot live a life of habitual sin *as long as he abides in Christ and his word abides in him*. But this *can cease* to be the case!

VI. Jude 24.

- A. God is able to keep us from falling. His keeping us from falling is conditional.
- B. God is only able to keep from falling those who:
 - 1. Build themselves up on their most holy faith. (V. 20.)
 - 2. Pray fervently and regularly. (V. 20.)
 - 3. Keep themselves in the love of God. (V. 21.)
 - 4. Anxiously watch for the coming of Christ. (V. 21.)
- C. A person may *cease* to do these things and thus *refuse to utilize the power of God which can keep him from falling*.

Conclusion

1. The clearest way to see the fallacies and falsity of the doctrine of "once saved always saved" is to recognize that every promise, blessing and benefit which God's word allots to the Christian is conditional.
2. Christians can fail to meet the conditions and thus they can fail to receive the promise, blessing, or benefit.
3. In the case of the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy, there is no proof to be submitted. God provides eternal salvation, but *only* on the condition of faithfulness. (Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:10.)
4. In the next lesson in this series, we will notice further the impossibility of the impossibility of apostasy. We will study the fact that "Once saved always saved denies man a free will. "

The Impossibility Of "The Impossibility Of Apostasy" (2)

"Once saved always saved denies the Christian a free will. "

Introduction

1. Who hasn't heard the statement, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. "?
2. There is a doctrine which implies, "You can lead a person to salvation and you *can* force him to remain saved. " That doctrine is the impossibility of apostasy.
3. In our lesson, we briefly point out that once saved always saved denies the Christian a free will. He must remain saved whether he wants to or not!

Discussion

I. The free will of man is clearly revealed in the scriptures.

- A. In man's being made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27.)
 1. God is a being of volition, of will. (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4.)
 2. Man is like God in this regard. He was made a being with a free will and the ability to exercise volition.
- B. In man's having been given a choice to make. (Josh. 24:15.) The *principle* of this choice is universal and timeless.
- C. In man's salvation's being conditioned upon his will to be saved. (John 7:17; Rev. 22:17; Matt. 16:24.)
- D. In the fact that God's Son, in whose steps we are to walk, and to whose image we are to conform, possessed a will of his own. (John 6:38; Matt. 26:39.)

II. The doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy denies Christians the use of their free will.

- A. Denies that Christians are made in the image of God.
- B. Denies that man has a choice in the matter of his eternal destiny.

- C. Denies that man's salvation is conditioned on his will to be saved. (Irresistible grace?)
- D. Denies the humanity of Jesus.
- E. Any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is itself a false doctrine. Therefore, once saved always saved is a false doctrine!

III. The doctrine of once saved always saved puts the Christian in a most undesirable position.

- A. That of an animal. One thing which differentiates between man and animals is the ability of volition and will.
- B. Reduces him to that of a helpless "pawn. " If once saved always saved, communism is a most attractive and desirable way of life!
- C. That of a mindless robot. If once saved always saved, man is not superior to machines!

Conclusion

1. How scriptural would it be to hog tie an individual and baptize him?
2. We can but invite, warn, and encourage folks to be Christians and remain in the bounds of Biblical authority.
3. If it is inconceivable for us to force folks to be Christians, how likely is it that God would force folks to *remain* Christians?
4. That's how inconceivable the doctrine of once saved always saved is! It denies the Christian the use of his free will.

"The Impossibility Of 'The Impossibility Of Apostasy'" (Conclusion)

"They did, so we can!"

"The Bible comes right out and says Christians can fall."

I. Passages which teach that Christians can fall.

A. Hebrews 6:6 - "If they shall fall away. "

1. Who is he writing to? Christians. (Vv. 4, 5.)
2. Therefore, Christians can fall away.

B. Hebrews 4:1 - Christians can come short of the promise.

1. Who is "us?" Christians. (Surely, the writer considered himself to be a Christian.)
2. Therefore, Christians can fall away.

C. Hebrews 10:26 - "if we sin willfully. "

1. Who is "we"? Christians including the author himself.
2. This sin possible *after* having received a knowledge of the truth.
3. Therefore, a Christian can fall away.

D. Hebrews 10:29 - a sanctified person can trod under foot the son of God.

1. He counts as unclean the blood wherewith he was sanctified - shows he is a Christian.
2. Therefore, Christians can fall away.

E. I Peter 1:14 - Christians can fashion themselves after their former lusts.

1. Who were his readers? (V. 2.) Christians.
2. Therefore, Christians can fall away.

F. 1 Peter 4:15 — Christians can suffer as murderers, thieves, etc.

1. His readers — 1:2 — Christians.
2. Therefore, a Christian can fall away.

- G. 2 Peter 2:20—22. Christians can turn from way of righteousness.
 - 1. Only ones who have escaped — Christians.
 - 2. Therefore, Christians can fall away.
- H. I John 1:8—2:2. Note: "*We* have an advocate. " John could sin.

II. Some did fall away, therefore men can fall away.

- A. Ananias and Saphira fell. (Acts 5.)
 - 1. Were of the "multitude of them that believed. " 4:32.
 - 2. Were among them upon whom great grace was. 4:33.
 - 3. Yet they sinned... lied to the Holy Ghost, tempted the Spirit. 5:3, 9.
- B. Simon the sorcerer fell. (Acts 8.)
 - 1. Verse 13 — his heart was right with God because he believed and was baptized.
 - 2. But his heart came to be *not right with God*. Needed to repent, needed to be forgiven, was in the bond of iniquity, (v. 21.)
 - 3. This is a classic example of the fact that a child of God can fall.
- C. Galatians who tried to be justified by the law of Moses were fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4.)
 - 1. Written to "churches" 1:1, 2.
 - 2. Readers had been "in the grape of Christ. " 1:6. D. Hymeneus and Alexander. (1 Tim. 1:19, 20.)
 - 1. They once held faith. Can't say they never truly believed.
 - 2. They once held a good conscience. Can't say they were not truly converted.
 - 3. Yet, they put both of these things away and were guilty of blasphemy.

III. Application of the falsity of the impossibility of apostasy.

- A. We must take heed lest we fall. (1 Cor. 10:12.) Must beware of the devil and sin. Must realize the danger of sin and the condemnation men can fall into, even as children of God.
- B. Yet *must realize* that there is security for the faithful Christian. (1 Jn. 1:7.)
The *very passages* false teachers use to

prove the impossibility of apostasy if properly applied in view of their conditions provide security for the believer. C. The possibility of apostasy doesn't equal the *probability, of apostasy*. Just because a Christian *can* fall does not mean he *will* fall. In fact, a proper consideration of the fact that one *can* fall makes him more careful to *avoid* falling.

Conclusion

1. We have surveyed several proofs of the Impossibility of the Impossibility of Apostasy in this three-part series.
 - a. The passages false teacher use to try to prove once saved always saved, teach no such thing.
 - b. The doctrine of once saved always saved implies a denial of the Christian exercising his free will.
 - c. The Bible explicitly and implicitly, by command and example, says that it is possible for a child of God to so sin as to be lost eternally.
2. Be warned. Many false prophets have gone out into the world. Try them. Avoid them. Do not allow yourself to be deceived by them. Hear the words of John. (1 John 4:1.)
 - a. Once saved always saved is not the only false doctrine being taught today. There are thousands of others.
 - b. We must recognize that in the battle for truth and right, we must indeed have our loins gird about with truth. Such comes through diligent study of the truth.

God Demands Discrimination (1)

I. God demands discrimination.

- A. Discrimination is a common word. It is used in our vernacular synonymously with prejudice and ill-treatment.
- B. The Bible says that God demands discrimination. Oh, not the type the world speaks of, but discrimination nonetheless.
 - 1. The primary meaning of the word "discriminate" is "to have good taste or judgment, to make a distinction. "
 - 2. In the Bible the word "discern" is used. This word is synonymous with "discriminate. "
 - 3. The Bible translates the Greek word *diakrino* which means to separate, discriminate, then, to learn by discriminating, to determine, to decide.
- C. Our lesson is a study of the things the word of God teaches that demand our discrimination.

II. God demands discrimination between the sexes.

- A. In appearance. (1 Cor. 11:14-15.)
- B. In their participation in leadership roles in the worship service. (1 Cor. 14:34.)
- C. In the home. (Eph. 5:22.)
- D. In sexual relationships. *Homosexuality is a sin!* (Rom. 1:26-27.)

III. God demands discrimination regarding the Lord's Supper.

- A. To eat and drink the Lord's Supper without discerning the Lord's body is to eat and drink condemnation upon oneself. (1 Cor. 11:29.)
- B. Here is why:
 - 1. To so eat and drink is to partake in an unworthy manner. (1 Cor. 11:27a.)
 - 2. To so eat and drink is to profane the Lord's body and blood. (1 Cor. 11:27b.)

- C. What does it mean to discern the Lord's body?
 - 1. It means to separate it in our minds from ordinary bread and fruit of the vine. It means to discriminate between their use as emblems and their ordinary use.
 - 2. We must examine ourselves each time we partake to make sure we recognize the difference! (1 Cor. 11:28.)

IV. God demands discrimination between the holy and the profane. (Ezek. 22:26.)

- A. Willful absence from the assemblies of the church is a profaning of that which is holy. (Ezek. 22:26.) (RSV - "disregarded my sabbaths. " - Heb. 10:25.)
 - 1. Although the assemblies are *not the Sabbath, they like the Sabbath are holy times* separated and set apart for special purposes.
 - 2. To willfully be absent is to make common that which is holy.
- B. To act in an irreverent manner during the worship is profaning that which is holy. (2 Tim. 3:15.)
- C. To use forms of the name of God and terms applied only to him as *by words* is a profaning of that which is holy. (Ps. 111:9; Ex. 20:7. Cf. Acts 22:16.)

God Demands Discrimination (2)

I. God demands discrimination between the church of the NT and fake churches. (Eph. 4:4.)

- A. Christ said: "I am *the true* vine... and ye are the branches. " (Jn. 15:1.) He spoke of *His* church. (Matt. 16:18.) All others are counterfeits and belong to the men that founded them and to which the members are faithful. *Must be able to tell the difference!*
- B. Must discriminate which church bears the marks of identity that the church of the NT bore:
 - 1. Establishment.
 - 2. Terms of entrance.
 - 3. Worship.
 - 4. Organization.
 - 5. Mission and work.
- C. Christ is savior of *only one* body: *the* body... *His* body. (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18.)

II. God demands discrimination between matters of faith and matters of opinion.

- A. Meaning of faith and opinion.
 - 1. Matters of faith are those matters concerning which the Bible *explicitly* teaches, or *implicitly* teaches.
 - a. Must evangelize. (Matt. 28:18, 19, 20.)
 - b. Must care for widows and orphans. (Jas. 1:27.)
 - c. Must meet for worship and have the Bible components in the service.
 - 2. Matters of opinion are matters concerning which the Bible has *not explicitly* taught, or has not *implicitly* taught.
 - a. Whether evangelism done by radio, TV, papers, horseback, car, train, plane, etc. *Just so work done!*
 - b. Whether widows and orphans cared for by a corpor-

ate home supported by churches or by individual homes. *Just so work done.*

c. Whether meet at 10: 00 or 11: 00, order of service. *Just so we worship with proper components.*

B. Division could be avoided altogether if we would keep this in mind and live by it. (1 Cor. 1:10.)

"In matters of faith... *unity*; In matters of opinion... *Liberty*; In all matters... *charity*, " was the plea of the great leader of the past.

III. God demands discrimination between right and wrong... good and evil.

A. Why it is necessary:

1. Must imitate good and not evil. (3 Jn. 11.)

2. Must eschew evil and do good to enjoy life and see good days. (1 Pet. 3:11.)

3. Must avoid all forms of evil and hold fast to that which is good. (1 These. 5:21, 22.)

B. How can this be accomplished?

1. Maturity in the word. (Heb. 5:13-14.)

2. Training of the faculties by practice. (Heb. 5:14,)

C. No borderline Christians, no situation ethics.

IV. God demands discrimination.

A. A great day is coming! *A day of discrimination... a day of judgment.*
(Judgment translates a form of *krino*; discrimination is *diakrino*.)

B. Only those who have discrimination in this life will survive there.

Why Do The Righteous Suffer?

Introduction

1. Why do the righteous suffer? Surely this is a question which all thoughtful Christians have pondered.
2. You might say, "To attempt to answer would involve your getting in over your head! You are too young... too inexperienced to provide the answer. "
 - a. Some things cannot be learned by age and experience, but only by divine revelation.
 - b. Romans 11:33, 34. Certainly the ways of God are past finding out.
 - i. Not saying that the ways of God cannot to some extent be known,
 - ii. Rather, such knowledge is beyond mere human wisdom ... Man's wisdom apart from the word of God cannot know them.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 2:9-13. Certainly God has revealed many such things to us by his Spirit.
 - d. I am convinced that a satisfying answer to the above question is one of those things.
3. The crucial issue to eternal salvation is not whether we fully *understand* the answer, but how we *deal* with the reality of suffering in our lives.
 - a. E. g. One may not comprehend *how* baptism saves; the crucial issue is not whether one knows the answer to the question, "How does baptism save?", but rather how he deals with the reality that it does save (1 Peter 3:21) and whether he is obedient to the command to submit to it! (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Mark 16:15, 16).
 - b. I believe that we can believe in God and be faithful to him without fully understanding the answer to the above question.
 - i. There are many reasons why we should remain faithful apart from answering this question.

- ii. There are sufficient reasons why we should remain faithful apart from answering this question.
- iii. Certainly God gives us all things we need in order to believe and remain faithful. (2 Peter 1:3.)
- 4. You say, "Why then even study the question?" I am convinced that a satisfying answer is available and that knowing the answer will help our faith to grow and enable us to be more faithful.
- 5. Our study will follow three thoughts:
 - a. Sources of Suffering (of the righteous.)
 - b. Sovereignty and Suffering.
 - c. Survival amid Suffering.
- 6. I hasten to remind you that our study will not be intended to deal with the subjects of divine judgment, suffering of the wicked, etc., but simply; "Why do the righteous suffer?"

Discussion

I. Sources of suffering (of the righteous).

- A. Consider first the sources which *human speculation* assigns to the suffering of the righteous.
 - 1. *God* - We know of cases in which Christians have forsaken God when reproached, when they suffered severe illness, or when they lost a loved one. They blamed God.
 - 2. *Themselves* — We have also known of cases in which Christians suffered tragedy and were overcome with guilt as if their suffering were punishment for their personal sins.
 - a. This has been the answer espoused by men for ages! That such is the case is seen by considerable numbers of cases.
 - b. E. g.,
 - i. *In the case of Job* — The speeches of Job's "comforters" seem to carry the import: "You must have sinned or you wouldn't be suffering! Why not just admit your transgression and hope that God will be merciful. "
 - * Job disproved their speculation: "The wicked are prospering. " This was one of his arguments.
 - * God himself informed them of the fallacy of their words. (Job 42:7.)

- ii. *In the case of the man born blind* — (John 9:1 -3.) They evidenced the thinking of many Jews of their time: either he sinned or his parents sinned, else he would not be suffering.
 - * The facts disproved their speculation: the man was *born* blind.
 - * Jesus denied the truth of their analysis as to the source of his suffering. (John 9:3.)
 - iii. In the case of Paul shipwrecked on Melita. (Acts 28:1—6.) If the viper were a means of divine judgment, a miracle to prevent it would have been contradictory. This case shows that this way of thinking was quite widespread, iv. *In the case of sufferers in Galilee and Jerusalem.* (Luke 13:1—5.) Jesus denied by implication that the suffering which befell those mentioned was the direct result of their sins.
 - c. This is *not* to say that *some* suffering is not the direct result of their personal sin. E. g., (John 5:14) alcoholism — disease of the alcoholic and suffering of his family; fornication — venereal disease, illegitimacy, etc. *But*, to say that *all* suffering is the result of personal sin is to speculate on a matter which the word of God has plainly stated the truth *to the contrary!*
- B. Now consider the sources to which God's revealed truth assigned the suffering of the righteous:
- 1. *The sin of Adam.* (Gen. 2:16, 17; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22.;
 - a. The meaning is that all human beings sinned *representatively* in Adam.
 - i. Illus. (Heb. 7:9-10.) — Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek *representatively* in Abram.
 - ii. Illus. (Continuing Paul's line of reasoning) Christians are righteous *representatively* in Christ. (Rom. 5:18.)
 - iii. Illus. (Ex. 20:5.) — God visited the iniquities of the fathers on their great grandchildren. They sinned *representatively* in their progenitor.
 - b. This is why infants (who are pure, innocent and sinless) and the mentally incompetent (likewise) die as

- well as all humans — "For all sinned" — *Representatively* in Adam as the head of the race.
- i. This is *not* to say that sin or guilt is inherited! (Ezek. 18:4.)
 - ii. This is *not* to say that a man will answer on the day of judgment for any sins other than his own individual sins! (Rom. 14:12.)
2. *The cursed earth.* (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:19-23.)
 - a. Storm, drought, earthquakes, disease, etc., are the results of the curse upon the earth.
 - b. Also, accidents, likely are due to man's inability to adequately deal with the laws of nature governing the cursed earth.
 - c. The earth was cursed as penalty for Adam's sin. (Gen. 3:17.) — "Because... hast eaten of the tree... "
 - i. All humans sinned *representatively* in Adam.
 - ii. Therefore, all humans are susceptible to the effects resulting from the curse upon the earth.
 - d. This is why all humans (infants, etc. as well) suffer diseases, accidents, etc.
 3. *Satan afflicts men.*
 - a. It was Satan who put forth his hand upon Job's possessions and smote Job. (Job 1:12; 2:7.)
 - b. It was Satan who afflicted Paul with his "thorn in the flesh. " (2 Cor. 12:7.)
 - c. It was Satan who afflicted the "bent over" woman with her infirmity. (Luke 13:11, 12, 16.)
 - d. It can also be reasonably asserted that Satan, as Lord of demons (which are styled his angels) was responsible for all the afflictions resulting from demon possession in the NT.
 4. *Evil men* who persecute, reproach, revile, mock, hate, etc., the righteous for Christ's and righteousness' sake. (2 Tim. 3:12, 13.)
 - a. Four basic reasons:
 - i. 1 Pet. 4:3, 4 — Because of refusal to run to the same excess of riot with them,
 - ii. John 3:19 - They love darkness rather than light; When men walk in the light and shine as lights (1

Jn. 1:7; Phil. 2:15) their evil deeds are reproved thereby.

iii. John 15:19 — The righteous do not belong; They are no longer "of the world. " Therefore, evil men hate the righteous, (cf. John 7:7.) iv. 1 Pet. 2:12 — Because sometimes faithfulness to Christ demands obedience to him rather than men.

* Cf., e. g. Acts 5:28-29.

* Cf., Christians in Roman Empire who were commanded to worship the Emperor or be condemned to death.

- C. This is a basic rundown of the sources of the suffering of the righteous.
1. The scriptures by implicating these sources has eliminated God as a source of the suffering of the righteous.
 2. By the evidence considered, personal sin is eliminated as a source of the suffering of the righteous.
 3. Rather, the sin of Adam, the curse upon the earth, Satan, and evil men are the sources of the suffering of the righteous.
- D. Thus, the first part of the answer to the question is provided: *The righteous suffer because of the introduction of sin and evil into the world.*

II. The sovereignty of God and suffering of the righteous.

- A. How can the omnipotence and sovereignty of God and the fact that the righteous suffer be harmonized?
1. Sceptics say: "If God is all powerful he would eliminate suffering of the righteous. The righteous suffer, therefore God is not all powerful.
 2. Furthermore, the Bible says that it is the will of God that the righteous suffer. (1 Pet. 4:19.)
 3. Explanation:
 - a. First, the argument of the sceptics is unsound: Their major premise is mere assumption and cannot be proved. (Imagine finite man deciding what the infinite God should do!)
 - b. In Gethsemane there is provided the greatest argument for the harmonizing of the sovereignty of God

- and suffering of the righteous. (Matt. 26:53.) — No greater suffering: no more righteous man!
- c. Third, the sovereignty of God and the suffering of the righteous can be harmonized if we understand the *sense* the suffering of the righteous is the will of God. Here is the answer:
 - i. God Almighty rules — He is sovereign! (Many passages state this.)
 - ii. Since God rules then he either *causes* the righteous to suffer or *allows* the righteous to suffer.
 - iii. That God does not *cause* the righteous to suffer (as seen in the Bible's telling us what are the causes of the suffering of the righteous) has been established.
 - iv. Therefore, God *allows* or *permits* the righteous to suffer.
 4. Hence, the question is no longer "Why do the righteous suffer?" but it becomes "Why does God permit the righteous to suffer?"
- B. The answer to this question is that it is *good* that the righteous suffer!
1. Is such a statement reasonable? Consider:
 - a. All things which God does are good. (Ps. 145:17, et. al.)
 - b. God allows the righteous to suffer.
 - c. Therefore, it is good that the righteous be allowed to suffer!
 2. The fact that it is good that the righteous suffer is clearly seen in:
 - a. The good of a righteous man being allowed to die. (Phil. 1:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; Rev. 13:13; Num. 23:10.)
 - b. The good of the righteous being allowed to suffer the loss of loved ones to death.
 - i. An object lesson on preparation for eternity, on the brevity and uncertainty of life. Moses prayed "Teach us to number our days." (Ps. 90:12.) Here is one way God does so.
 - ii. A productive experience - produces *desire* to go where they are (if they were righteous.)

- c. The good of the righteous being allowed to suffer the effects of the cursed earth.
 - i. An object lesson on the consequences of sin. ii. To teach us compassion, empathy, and other attitudes which make us more like God and Christ.
- d. The good of the righteous being allowed to suffer affliction of Satan *and* persecution, etc., by evil men.
 - i. Trial and purifying of faith. (1 Pet. 1:3-7; 4:12.)
 - ii. Patience, steadfastness, character, hope (James 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5.)
 - iii. Humility. (2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 5:6.)
 - iv. Assurance (if endure it faithfully.)
 - * Of God's approval. (1 Pet. 2:19, 20.)
 - * Of the Spirit of God resting upon us. (1 Pet. 4:14.)
 - * Of the love of God. (Heb. 12:6.)
 - * Of likeness to Prophets and Christ. (Matt. 5:11; Heb. 12:3-11.)
 - v. Discipline conforming us to his holiness. (Heb. 12:3-11.)
 - vi. Enables us to overcome temptation. (1 Pet. 4:1.)
 - Desire for the will of God stronger than physical passions in one who endures suffering faithfully, vii. Eternal life, glory, etc. (Matt. 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:7-9; Rev. 2:10; 7:16-17.)
- 3. The good in righteous being allowed to suffer is further proved by the *providence* of God: *The means whereby the righteous being allowed to suffer works for good.* (Rom. 8:28.)
 - a. The providence of God is clearly at work in God's providing *information* to help us understand.
 - i. Understanding the good in the righteous being allowed to suffer enables us to *rejoice* in it.
 - ii. The *knowing* of what the suffering of the righteous produces is the occasion for joy. (Jas. 1:2; Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 12:9b-10; Jas. 5:10-11; Matt. 5:10, 11; 1 Pet. 4:13.)
 - iii. Illus. John 16:20-21, cf. Rom. 8:18; Heb. 12:2.
 - b. The providence of God is clearly at work in providing aid for the righteous as they suffer faithfully.

- i. God's grace, power, strength provided. (2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Pet. 5:10.)
 - ii. Wisdom enabling us to understand and profit by suffering provided on request. (Jas. 1:5.)
 - iii. Watchful care and protection provided. (1 Pet. 1:15ff; 3:12; 5:7.)
- C. Having seen the foregoing, there is nothing which harmonizes better with the sovereignty of God than the suffering of the righteous!
 - 1. A carnally minded, materialistic sceptic (or Christian for that matter) who looks at everything from the view point of physical sensation (what *feels* good or bad to him) will have no difficulty refusing or being unable to see the harmony... the good in the righteous being allowed to suffer. (Heb. 12:11.)
 - 2. Were God not to allow the righteous to suffer, he would be robbing them of one of the greatest blessings available to them.
 - a. Illus. of the sad plight of the over-protected child, (pp. 61 of Dobson's *The Strong willed Child*.)
 - b. Certainly we would be misfits for the kingdom of heaven, to live in the presence of the Suffering Servant of God and with the suffering saints of ages past if suffering of the righteous were not allowed.

III. The simple secret to survival of suffering.

- A. Christ the supreme example — "trusted to him who judges justly. " (1 Pet. 2:21-23.)
- B. 1 Pet. 4:19- "entrust their souls to a faithful Creator. "
- C. 2 Tim. 1:11, 12 — God is able to keep that which we commit to him.
- D. What is the deep meaning of faith? *Trust... Trust!* E. Understanding the reason *why God allows the righteous to suffer* should be strong encouragement for us to place our full trust in God! *Only the Christian is able to do this!*

Conclusion

- 1. What we have accomplished in this study:
 - a. We have identified the source of suffering.

- b. We have seen the harmony of the sovereignty of God and the righteous being allowed to suffer.
- c. We have seen the simple yet magnificent secret to Survival of Suffering.
- 2. The lesson was for the purpose of enabling us to deal with the suffering we as Christians undergo.
- 3. If I have failed to help you to understand why the righteous suffer, and even after studying this lesson together...

Tempted and tried we're oft made to wonder
Why it should be thus all the day long,...

Let us remember that

Farther along we'll know all about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.

— W. B. Stevens

Mechanical Instruments Of Music In Worship

Introduction

1. It seems that everywhere I go to represent the church, someone, upon learning that I am a preacher of the churches of Christ, will ask, "Why don't you folks use instrumental music?"
2. Furthermore, I have found through personal observation and by reading that a fair estimate would be that 40% of members of the churches of Christ know no scriptural reason why mechanical instruments of music should not be used in worship and would have no objection if they were introduced.
3. These reasons are only two of the many which prompt a study of the subject of "Mechanical instruments of music in worship. "

Discussion

I. A brief survey of the history of music in worship.

A. Music in Old Testament temple worship.

1. **1 Chronicles 23:5** — "Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith. " King David is seen to be the instigator and organizer of the use of instruments of music in temple worship.
2. **2 Chronicles 29:25** — "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. " King Hezekiah restored the temple worship including the instruments of music under the direction of the prophets.

3. **Nehemiah 12:36** — "And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. " After Cyrus King of Persia allowed the captives to return to Jerusalem, after the walls of the city were complete, they were dedicated with the accompaniment of musical instruments.
 4. From these and many other passages, it is evident that the Old Testament temple worship involved mechanical instruments of music.
- B. Music in synagogue worship from post exilic days to the birth of the New Testament church.
1. During the Babylonian captivity, captive Jews were unable to go to Jerusalem to worship; the temple had been destroyed.
 - a. These Jews wanted to worship and so in their captivity met together and formed synagogues (from the Greek word which means "gathered together. ")
 - b. After Cyrus King of Persia allowed the Jews to return to Palestine, many remained in the lands of their captivity. Along with these Jews, wherever they were located throughout the world, were found synagogues.
 - c. By the way, the fact that these synagogues were found around the ancient world contributed to the propagation of the gospel, for Paul and many other preachers had audiences in these gathering places in most major cities. The development of the synagogues lent much to the "fullness of times" of which the Bible speaks.
 2. The worship and organization of the New Testament church was an adaption of the Jewish synagogue worship.
 - a. The synagogues were overseen by elders.
 - b. The services of the synagogues consisted in reading from the law and the prophets, prayers, sermons, and alms-giving.
 3. *There was no use made of the mechanical instruments* in ancient synagogue worship. (In fact, it was not until

June 14, 1815 in Berlin that *any* Jewish synagogue had the mechanical instrument.)

- C. Music in Christian worship during the apostolic age (Birth of the church to 100 A. D.)
1. New Testament passages which speak of music in worship,
 - a. Matthew 26:30 - "And when they had *sung* an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives. "
 - b. Acts 16:25 - "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and *sang* praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. "
 - c. Romans 15:9 - "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and *sing* unto thy name. "
 - d. 1 Corinthians 14:15 - "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will *sing* with the spirit and I will *sing* with the understanding also. "
 - e. Ephesians 5:19 - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing* and making melody in your heart to the Lord. "
 - f. Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing* with grace in your hearts to the Lord. "
 - g. Hebrews 2:12 - "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I *sing* praise unto thee. "
 - h. Hebrews 13:15 - "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, *the fruit of our lips* giving thanks to his name. "
 - i. James 5:13 — "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him *sing* psalms.
 - j. Revelation 5:8-9 - "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they *sung* a new song, saying.

Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. "

- k. Revelation 14:1—3 — "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping on their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. "
 1. **Revelation** 15:2-3 - "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they *sing* the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. "
 2. Every one of these passages which constitute every line and every work of the New Testament on the subject of music in any kind of setting of worship only picture *singing - vocal music*.
 3. The conclusion — The only kind of music known as part of worship by the writers of the New Testament was *vocal music*.
- D. Music in Christian worship from 100 A. D. to the end of the Protestant Reformation.
1. According to Mr. James W. McKinnon, Ph. D. in musicology at Columbia University, "The Fathers of the early church were virtually unanimous in their hostility toward musical instruments. " (*The Church Fathers and Musical Instruments*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc. as quoted by James D. Bales in "The

- 'Church Fathers' and Instrumental Music", *Gospel Advocate*, October 26, 1972, p. 676.)
2. In Spring, 1965, McKinnon also published an article in *Current Musicology* entitled "The Meaning of the Patristic Polemic Against Musical Instruments. " The major point he made is the fact that *until after the fourth century, instruments in the church were not used*. He says that until after the fourth century, "the issue of instruments in the church was never raised. "(Quoted by William Woodson in "Barriers Against Instrumental Music — I", *Gospel Advocate*, November 16, 1967, p. 728.)
 3. McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 8, p. 739, state "... pope Vitalian in 660 first introduced organs to churches. But students of ecclesiastical archaeology are generally agreed that instrumental music was not used in churches until a much later date; For Thomas Aquinas, A. D. 1250, has these remarkable words; 'Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps or psalteries, to praise God withal, that she seem not to Judaize. "'
 - a. This introduction of musical instruments into worship was preceded by several centuries of other departures from the faith such as in organization, doctrine, worship, etc.
 - b. These departures along with the introduction of mechanical instruments of music into worship are in fulfilment of Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Tim. 4:1, 2, etc.
 4. Philip Schaff: *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4, p. 439 states, "The Latin church (what we call the Catholic church, TM) introduced it (the organ, TM) pretty generally, *but not without the protest of eminent men* (emphasis mine, TM), so that even in the Council of Trent a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass. "

The Catholic or Latin church, in which history says the mechanical instrument was first introduced, is the result of a division between it and the Eastern Orthodox or Greek Orthodox Church in 1054 A. D. (It should be noted that the

mechanical instrument has for the most part *never* been used by Greek speaking peoples in the Greek Orthodox Church.)

5. These mechanical instruments of music continued to be in use throughout the middle ages until the Protestant Reformation. "The early reformers, when they came out of Rome removed them (the instruments, TM) as the monuments of idolatry. " (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*.)
 - a. "Luther called the organ an ensign of Baal,... Knox called the organ of chest of whistles. " (McClintock and Strong, op. cit.)
 - b. Erasmus (Desideriu), a contemporary of Martin Luther, says, "We have brought into our churches a certain operose and theatrical music; such a confused, disorderly chattering of some words, as I hardly think was ever heard in any of the Grecian or Roman theatres. The church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes, and culcimers; and human voices strive to bear their part with them.... Men run to church as to a theatre; to have their ears tickled. And for this end organ-makers are hired with great salaries, and a company of boys who waste all their time in learning these whining tones. —*Commentary on 1 Cor. 14:19* (as quoted by M. C. Kurfees, *Instrumental Music in Worship*,?. 190.)
 - c. John Calvin, reputed founder of Presbyterianism says, "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law... Instrumental music, we therefore maintain, was only tolerated on account of times and the people, because they were as boys, as the Sacred Scripture speaketh, whose condition required these puerile rudiments. But in gospel times we must not have recourse to these unless we wish to destroy the evangelical perfection and to obscure the meridian light which we enjoy in Christ our Lord. -*Calvin's Commentary on the Thirty-third*

Psalm, and on 1 Sam 18:1—9 (as quoted by Kurfees, pp. 190, 191.)

- E. Music in Christian Worship from the Restoration Movement to the present.
 - 1. It is obvious that the followers of the Protestant reformers did not hold to the thinking of their leaders on the subject on music in worship, and as Philip Schaff said (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4, p. 439) "in recent times the opposition (to the organ that the reformers were characterized by, TM) has largely ceased. " Thus, most religious groups which owe their origin to the Protestant Reformation use instruments of music today.
 - 2. The pioneers of the Restoration Movement who desired to speak where the Bible speaks, recognized that mechanical instruments of music in worship *had no authority* in the New Testament. In the course of time, individuals here and there called this in question, and attempts were successfully made to introduce the instruments into churches of Christ. Earl West (*Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 1, p. 312) states, "It is evident that as early as 1851 some churches had put in the instrument..."
 - 3. This was *one* of the issues which resulted in the division between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church. "... the first U. S. Census Report of a distinction between churches of Christ and Christian churches was made in 1906. " (Basil Overton, "Piano Propaganda, " *The World Evangelist*, January 1978, p. 2.)
 - 4. Since that time, numerous debates and controversies have stirred on this issue.
- F. This is a brief history of music in worship from Old Testament times to the present.

II. Some observations from the foregoing are in order.

- A. The argument is often submitted in defense of using mechanical instruments of music in worship, "If God allowed it to be used in Old Testament Temple worship, he will allow us to use it today. "

1. It should be noted again that Christian worship was not patterned after Old Testament temple worship, but after Jewish synagogue worship in which there was no use of mechanical instruments of music.
 2. Christianity did not allow *many* things which were allowed under the Judaistic economy, e. g., plurality of wives, binding of circumcision, etc.
 3. Old Testament temple worship included many things found neither in synagogue worship nor in Christian worship, e. g., animal sacrifices, burning of incense, etc.
 4. Therefore, the fact that God allowed it under the national arrangement he had with Israel does not mean he allows it in Christian worship.
- B. History clearly shows that the use of instruments of music in worship is *an innovation of men and was not the practice of early disciples!*
1. The facts remain that if men use mechanical instruments of music in worship, they do so after the ways of Old Testament temple worship, after the Catholic tradition beginning in the 7th century and prevailing in the 13th century, and not by the authority of Christ nor after the historically verified practice of the church from its beginning to the 7th century]
 2. There is *no* direct command, *no* apostolic example, and *no* necessary inference in the New Testament for instrumental music of a mechanical nature in the worship.
 3. There *is* the *strongest* authority for using *vocal* music in worship found in the New Testament.
 - a. Direct command: Hebrews 13:15; James 5:13; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.
 - b. Apostolic example: Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:15.
- C. The fact of the matter is that *the apostle Paul specified the only instrument for use in Christian worship: the heart!* Eph. 5:19.
1. Since God specified gopher wood for building the ark, Noah would have been unauthorized to use pine. Since God specified the fire that was to be used in burning the incense, Nadab and Abihu were punished when they used strange fire.

2. By the same principle, *when God has specified the instrument — the heart* — it is wrong to use some other instrument!
- D. The overwhelming conclusion is that mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship are *unscriptural, anti-scriptural, and without any divine authority whatsoever.*

Conclusion

1. Now, it is realized that this lesson has not dealt with all the arguments that could be presented in connection with the subject of instrumental music in worship. This would involve more time than is allotted to the contemporary pulpit.
2. However, we have proven conclusively *two great facts*, namely,
 - a. Mechanical Instruments of music were not to be seen in Christian worship during the time at which the church was established and the New Testament was being written!
 - b. From the time of the birth of the church until the late 7th century, history shows that it was *not* the practice of Christians to use mechanical instruments of music in worship; they are innovations which have *no connection with apostolic authority whatsoever*]
3. So, it is a question of whether men are going to worship in the manner in which their fancy or their tradition dictate, or whether they are going to worship as the New Testament directs and as the early Christians to the 7th century worshiped.

Speaking In Tongues

Introduction

1. Perhaps there is no subject which is the basis of misunderstanding more than that of speaking in tongues.
2. More and more, religious groups are beginning to have speaking in tongues appear in their ranks.
3. There are many in this country who claim to have the baptism of the Holy Ghost and to speak in tongues.
4. The Bible does not in any way teach that this is the case. In fact, there is abundant evidence that such cannot be today.
5. Our study is an examination of the various passages which deal with the subject of speaking in tongues.

Discussion

In order to understand the subject of Speaking in Tongues, we must look at...

I. **Mark 16:17, 18.**

- A. This is a part of the Great Commission given by the Savior prior to his ascension. The context clearly shows that these statements were primarily directed to those present
- B. Our study centers in the word "follow": (parak ol ouq w) lit., "to follow close up or side by side, hence, to accompany. "
 1. This definition implies a need that existed which the signs were designed to fulfill.
 - a. As the apostles started out on their world-wide mission, they were unknowns, their early converts were unknowns, and the Jesus Christ they preached as Savior was an unknown.
 - b. Had they simply gone out and begun preaching in the name of Jesus that men obey the gospel of Christ, folks would have said, "Who is Christ; Why should we obey him?"
 - c. But, since accompanying the apostles and their early

converts were these signs, men readily saw that they were representatives of *divine* power and that what they said had a *divine* source and was to be heeded.

2. Did this need exist past the end of the first century?
 - a. By the end of the 1st century, the sound of the gospel of Christ had gone forth to the ends of the earth.
 - b. By the end of the 1st century, these signs, these credentials, had been recorded in a book — the New Testament.
 - c. These signs or credentials being in permanent written form did away with the need for the performance of signs.
- C. Let me illustrate it this way:

Modern science is but the result of the experimentation of scientific minds of days gone by. Galileo discovered the law of gravity. Benjamin Franklin discovered electricity. Thomas Edison invented the iridescent light bulb. These simple discoveries and inventions are used in thousands of modern contraptions and machines. Now, does a modern scientist have to go out and discover gravity every time he is going to design some mechanism, the workings of which depend on that law? No, that law has already been discovered and its discovery permanently recorded in the annals of history. Does a modern scientist have to go out and fly a kite every time he intends to utilize electric power in some mechanism he intends to design? No, that fact has been already discovered and permanently recorded. No progress would be made at all if we could not stand on the experimentation and discoveries of minds of the past. So it is with the signs which were to accompany the hearers of Mark 16:17, 18. By the end of the 1st century, these signs had been permanently recorded in the Book — the New Testament. There is no longer a need for men of all time to perform them.
- D. So, we have the signs following us as we preach; they are in *written* form.

II. Acts 2:1-13.

- A. The purpose of the tongues in this passage was to evidence divine guidance.

1. Everyone present on the day of Pentecost could understand Greek — a universal language throughout the world-encompassing Roman Empire.
 2. The apostles spoke in the native tongues of those present *in order to secure their attention, and to prove that they spoke by miraculous inspiration.*
 3. It is likely that Peter spoke in Greek in verses 14ff.
- B. Salient points which help us to understand the truth about the speaking in tongues described in this passage:
1. Only recipients of tongues-speaking power were the 12 apostles.
 - a. 1:26 tells who the antecedent of "they" in 2:1 were.
 - b. There were women present in the group in Acts 1:14; How do we know that they did not speak in tongues? 2:13 - "These men... "
 - c. The only individuals (with the exception of Cornelius) who spoke in tongues were the 12 apostles and those upon whom the apostles' hands had been laid, (cf. Acts 19:6.)
 2. Every man heard them speak in his own language.
 - a. Verse 8 - tongues wherein the hearers were born: *human languages**.
 - b. Verse 11 - "our tongues": *Human languages]*
 - c. No room for any of this "ecstatic, " so-called "heavenly language, gibberish, " etc., of the Pentecostals. [*Human Languages]* (Modern so-called tongue speakers speak in "no man's tongues!")
- C. Modern men have never and can never reproduce what occurred on Pentecost, though attempts have been made.
1. A clinical psychologist, Dr. John P. Kildahl, has authored a book *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, which is the result of two major research projects and ten years of intensive independent research by the author. They tape recorded dozens to tongue speakers. The researchers observed great differences between the interpretations given to the tongues-speaking. One man who was raised in Africa (the son of a missionary) attended a tongue-speaking meeting at which he arose and spoke the Lord's prayer in an African dialect. It was im-

mediately interpreted as a message about the imminent second coming of Christ.

2. Why are such efforts at tongue-speaking ludicrous and ridiculous?
 - a. They are not apostles of Christ.
 - b. They can not possibly have the apostles' hands laid upon them.

III. I Corinthians 13:8.

- A. Pentecostals say that tongues are for all times. Heb. 13:8 is often given as proof.
- B. Paul in 1 Cor. 13 — they placed too much emphasis on the gift of tongues.
 1. They looked upon the gift of tongues as being the most spectacular of gifts which would elevate them in the eyes of those present in the assembly.
 2. What they really needed was love.
- C. In showing them that tongues were not nearly as important as love, he went about to remind them of the *temporary nature* of tongues and of all gifts, especially in comparison to love.
 1. Love never fails, he says in verse 8. After faith and hope have been swallowed up in sight and reality, love will continue.
 2. The spiritual gifts (of which tongues were one) would *fail, cease, vanish away*. But when?
 3. Verse 9—11 give the answer — when that which is perfect is come.
 - a. Paul viewed the church during his day as being in infancy, or childhood, (v. 11.)
 - b. When the church became full grown, mature, there would be no longer any need for the gifts which were necessary during the babyhood of the church.
 - c. By the end of the 1st century, the church had matured, the entire *New Testament of Christ* had been revealed: *that which is perfect had come*. (Jas. 1:25; Jude 3.)
 - d. Illustration:

When a child is born, it takes the bottle, the only manner in which it may be nourished. But when the

child matures, acquires teeth, and can digest solid food, the bottle is no longer needed. Mom puts it away for good. It would be as needless for a full grown man to take a bottle as it would be for the matured New Testament church to require spiritual gifts which Paul says belong to its infancy!

IV. 1 Corinthians 14:2.

- A. What is the "unknown tongue" in 1 Cor. 14:2? The answer to this question is *essential* to an understanding of the subject of "speaking in Tongues. "
1. Pentecostals say it is a heavenly language, "the tongue of angels" which no man on earth can understand.
 2. Yet, the word translated tongues frequently refers in Biblical Greek to *human languages*.
 3. Actually, there is no indication that Paul or anyone else in the 1st century ever spoke a heavenly language but merely spoke a human language. When the term "unknown tongue" is used, it specifies *a human language* with which neither the speaker nor the hearer are familiar.
 - a. In 1 Cor. 13:1 — the word "though" merely suggests a "suppose it to be the case" situation. (Subjunctive mood)
 - b. Consider Acts 2:13 - To some of the Palestinian Jews present on Pentecost, the *human languages* which Peter and the eleven spoke were "*unknown tongues*" in the sense in which Paul used this term in 1 Cor. 14:2.
 - c. Illustrations:

It would be like me speaking Norwegian to you who are only familiar with English - I would be speaking in an *unknown tongue*.
When Paul came to Athens, he found a statue which read, "*The Unknown God*". Paul, however, *knew him*, thousands of others *knew him*, but the Athenians did not know him; to them he was *The Unknown God*.
- B. The conclusion from these considerations is that the only tongues spoken by miraculous power were *human lan-*

guages. The only sense in which they were called *unknown tongues* was when the speaker or the hearers were unfamiliar with them.

Conclusion

1. There are many other passages which might have been incorporated into this study. These are the prominent ones.
2. It should be noted that on many points of comparison, modern so-called tongue-speaking fails to correspond with that which we read of in the New Testament; it is a counterfeit on this count. Also, modern so-called tongue speaking is false and fake because the word of God has clearly stated that such surely ceased in the New Testament era.
3. Let us try the spirits whether they be of God. Do not be taken in by so-called tongue speakers. They are false teachers.

The Lord's Supper

Introduction

1. We must be careful about many things, especially about assuming the Bible teaches something without *thoroughly* investigating.
 - a. I once heard someone object to saying "the broken body of Jesus" but I was able to point out 1 Cor. 11:24.
 - b. I recently said that "fruit of the vine" does not appear in the New Testament in connection with the communion, but found out I was wrong. (Matt. 26:29.)
2. Much misunderstanding exists concerning the Lord's Supper.
 - a. One of our sisters recently told me of her experience in the hospital. The local brethren brought the Lord's Supper on Sunday afternoon. Her roommate was asked if she wanted to partake, but expressed that she did not know what the Lord's Supper was all about, even though she was a member of a religious group.
 - b. The creeds, manuals, doctrines, and practices of the religious world exhibit a disregard for the teaching of the Bible on the subject of the Lord's Supper.
3. It is an important part of the worship (though the others are equally important); it is an individual matter, therefore, it is essential that each individual understand it and study it.

Discussion

- I. **The Lord's Supper has its background in the institution of the Passover of the Old Testament.**
 - A. How do we know this?
 1. In 1 Cor. 5:7, Christ is referred to as our Passover - reflects this background.
 2. The Lord's Supper was instituted while Jesus and his apostles were eating the Passover feast. (Matt. 26:26.)
 - B. To get the background of the Passover and to see its relation to the Lord's Supper, let us notice Exodus 12:1 -28.

1. Note verse 11 — It was the *Lord's* Passover.
 2. Note verse 14 — It was a memorial.
 3. Note verse 27 — It was a feast commemorating a *sacrifice*.
- C. When Jesus instituted his supper, he applied the principles of the Passover to his own sacrifice for our sins, and commanded us to observe it. Hence, the song, "When I See the Blood. "

II. A look at some details pertaining to the Lord's Supper.

- A. The scriptural *time* of its observance: *the first day of every week*.
1. The 1st day of the week.
 - a. It was the day our Lord rose again.
 - b. It was the day upon which the church was established and the Lord's Supper first observed after the ascension. (Lev. 23:15- The day of Pentecost always on the first day of the week; Acts 2:42.)
 - c. It was the day the record says that the church at Troas assembled to break bread, i. e., observe the Lord's Supper.
 2. The 1st day *of every week*.
 - a. From Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:20; 1 Cor. 16:2, we learn that the brethren had a regular day on which they assembled.
 - b. Acts 20:7 tells us one purpose for which they assembled regularly on the first day of the week: to observe the Lord's Supper.
- B. The scriptural *form* of its observance. (Matt. 26:26—29; Lk. 22:15-20;! Cor. 11:23-25.)
1. The emblems — unleavened bread; fruit of the vine — representing the body and blood of Christ.
 2. Giving of thanks (No record of what Jesus said in his giving of thanks, therefore, we cannot bind as to the exact words that must be used.) Let the prayers be limited to *giving of thanks!*
 3. Some say that the bread and fruit of the vine actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus. When he said "This is my body; This is my blood, " his body had not been crucified, nor his blood shed!

- C. The proper attitude toward its observance and the meaning it should have. (1 Cor. 11:23-29.)
1. We partake *remembering him*. (vv. 24, 25.) It is a memorial, thus thinking of hunting, fishing, job, money, etc., excluded.
 2. *Showing the Lord's death till he comes again*, (v. 26.) Means by partaking of his supper, we show our faith and trust in his death for us, and that we believe he is coming again.
 3. *"Examine yourself."* (vv. 27, 28.) *Does not* mean think and see if you have sinned lately! *It is a matter of whether one is worthy to partake*, for all Christians have right to partake. What it *does* mean is to look at yourself, examine whether or not you are observing the Lord's Supper properly, with your mind on Him and his sacrifice: *in a worthy manner*. (c. 27.)
 4. *"Discerning the Lord's body."* (v. 29.) Means we must realize the difference between ordinary bread and the observance of the Lord's Supper. (The Corinthians failed to discern the Lord's body and looked upon the Lord's Supper as a regular meal.)
 5. The consequences of taking the Lord's Supper lightly are serious!

III. Some practical observations.

- A. It is communion with the Lord *himself!* and at *his* table! (Matt. 18:20; Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 10:21.)
1. He is not here physically, but in a new and special way: in Spirit.
 2. We sometimes forget about this "unseen guest."
 - a. How would you dress if you were invited to the White House to eat with the President? Probably, you would put on your best suit, or even rent a tuxedo!
 - b. Yet, when we eat the Lord's Supper, we are eating in a far more important house than the White House -*The Lord's House!*... And we are eating at the table of one far greater and more important than the President — *The Lord's Table!* ... *Yet, we dress like we are going to a ball game!* Whom do we love most, God or men?

- c. It is *His* table, *His* supper, and we ought to honor Him *in every way we can*.
- B. How can we learn to partake in a more worthy manner?
 1. Read the record of the crucifixion often to grasp the significance of the Supper.
 2. Read 1 Cor. 11 often, so see the seriousness of the Lord's Supper.
 3. Live in such a manner as to be anxiously awaiting his coming (Titus 2:13.)

Conclusion

1. The Lord's Supper is a wonderful privilege for those in the kingdom of Christ. (Matt. 26:29.)
2. It is a serious part of the worship and must be viewed with the seriousness and importance that it deserves!

The Virgin-Birth Of Jesus Christ

Luke 1:26-56; Matt. 1:18-25

Introduction

1. The doctrine of the virgin-birth of Christ is an essential and important one. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, the Christian religion is a fraud.
 - a. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, he is not the son of God and is a liar, because he said he was the son of God.
 - b. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, the New Testament is a fraudulent document, because it says that Jesus was born of a virgin and that he is the son of God.
 - c. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, he is merely a man; he is an illegitimate child of an adulteress, and cannot be savior of the world.
 - d. Thus, if Christ was not born of a virgin, he is a fraud and the faith is false.
2. However, many "so-called" Christian religious organizations fail to see the essentiality of the virgin-birth of Christ.
 - a. Some regard the doctrine of the virgin-birth as merely an *attempt* to explain the presence, power and action of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - b. In others, a majority of the members accept it while a substantial minority reject it.
 - c. Some religious groups say, "If you find it spiritually useful to believe it, you may do so; but if not, you may reject it if you like. "
 - d. Other groups view the concept of the virgin-birth of Christ as "old terminology" which is no longer pertinent to the religious needs of people today.
 - e. How can any of these groups consider themselves "Christian" who view one of the cardinal truths of Christianity so lightly?
3. There are three sources of proof that Jesus was born of a virgin which we will consider in this lesson:

- a. Prophetic proof.
 - b. Psychological proof.
 - c. Testimony proof.
4. Before examining these lines of proof, several points must be securely established:
- a. Joseph was *not* the natural, physical father of Jesus. He was his *legal* father.
 - 1) He had not known Mary sexually before she was found with child. (Matt. 1:18.) This is why he suspected her of unfaithfulness.
 - 2) He did not know Mary sexually until after Jesus was born. (Matt. 1:25.)
 - b. Since Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus, only two other possibilities exist:
 - 1) Either Mary was an adulteress and Jesus was an illegitimate child,
 - 2) Or, Jesus was born of a Virgin.
 - c. Our lesson is designed to prove that Mary was *not* an adulteress and that Jesus was *not* an illegitimate child.
 - d. When these facts are proved, the only possibility left is that Jesus was born of a Virgin.
5. We will read Luke 1:26-56 and then Matthew 1:18-25; This is their chronological order.

Discussion

I. There is prophetic proof that Jesus was born of a Virgin.

- A. Genesis 3:15 - God foretold that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent.
 - 1. No mention in this passage of the seed of man.
 - 2. Thus, God foretold that a birth would occur in which the only human seed involved would be that of a woman.
 - 3. The only time this ever occurred was in the birth of Jesus.
- B. Isaiah 7:14.
 - 1. When King Ahaz refused to ask for a sign from the Lord Isaiah gave a sign to the house of David. (Isa. 7:10—13.)
 - 2. The sign given to the house of David was that "the virgin would conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. "

3. In the birth of Jesus, Matthew by inspiration said that Isa. 7:14 was fulfilled. (Matt. 1:20-23.)
- C. Jeremiah 31:22** — This chapter promises the coming of Christ and the New Covenant that will be made with the people of God after his coming.
1. Jeremiah is saying that by a specific creation a *NEW* event would occur. It would be one which the earth had never before witnessed.
 2. The prophet says that a woman shall compass a man. (Figurative for conception.)
 3. Note again the emphasis placed upon woman. There is no mention of a man's seed being involved in this conception.
- D.** Some implications of denying these prophetic proofs of the virgin-birth of Christ:
1. To deny the virgin-birth of Christ is to imply that God lied when he promised a deliverer of the seed of woman. (Cf. Titus 1:2.)
 2. To deny the virgin-birth is to imply that Isaiah and Jeremiah were false prophets. (Cf. Deut. 18:22.)

II. There is psychological proof that Jesus was born of a virgin.

- A.** The reaction of Mary proves that she was not an adulteress.
1. The nature of betrothal in the ancient near east:
 - a) More binding than modern engagement.
 - b) Could only be broken upon the grounds of adultery.
 2. The law of the Rabbis: "If a virgin espoused to a man is found to be with child, he shall denounce her before the council and they shall stone her with stones till she die; And thus shall ye put sin out from among the people. "
 - a) Compare this with Deut. 22:13-21. A similar situation.
 - b) So the Law of Israel stated that if a virgin engaged to be married to a man were discovered to be with child, the man should denounce her before the Sanhedrin. The officiating priest must then conduct an examination, direct the search for evidence in confirmation, and pronounce the sentence of judgment. The offended lover was to cast the first stone in the execution, in which all the community were forced to join.

3. The actions of Mary.
 - a) Aside from the legal penalty, natural womanly modesty would cause her to conceal the fact of her pregnancy.
 - b) But, to the contrary, she hurries to her cousin Elizabeth and presents herself to her in this condition!
 - c) And who was Elizabeth *but the wife of the officiating priest Zacharias, the official who would conduct the examination and pronounce the sentence of condemnation!*
 - d) Our knowledge of psychological reactions tells us that these are *not* the actions of an adulteress carrying an illegitimate child!
- B. The character of Mary proves that she is a most *unlikely* illegitimate mother.
 1. She was a virgin in every sense of the word. (Luke 1:26, 27, 34.)
 2. She was a maiden of Israel who had been reared in a pious home.
 3. She was deeply learned in the word of God. (Lk. 1:46— 55.)
 - a. In these eleven verses Mary cites from memory 23 separate Old Testament passages which in their original form consist of 26 verses.
 - b. Are these the words of the heart of a woman guilty of adultery?
- C. Mary's silence at the trials and execution of Jesus proves that he was not an illegitimate child and that she was not an adulteress.
 1. Why was Jesus condemned? *Because He claimed that God was His Father.* This constituted blasphemy under the law of Israel if these claims were not true; if they were not, he deserved to die.
 - a. Lev. 24:16.
 - b. Matt. 26:63—66 — The council considered Jesus' claim blasphemy.
 2. No psychologist would concede that a mother who loved her son would stand by and allow him to be tortured and slain *if she could prevent it.* No mother would

- allow her son to die just to protect her reputation. (Cf. 1 Kings 3:16-27.)
3. Mary was present at the crucifixion. She had followed Him through His trials. She could have stopped the crucifixion at any point. All that she would have had to do was step out and say, "*I will name this man's father.* " That would have blasted the claim of Jesus and forced him to retract it and thus his life would have been spared.
 4. But Mary stood by and said nothing. The only explanation is that she knew *Jesus died for a fact*. Mary knew that he was born of her while she was a virgin; she knew that he was conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. She knew he was the Son of God.

III. There is testimony proof that Jesus was born of a virgin.

A. By Elizabeth.

1. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. (Lk. 1:41.)
2. Even before Mary had an opportunity to tell Elizabeth that she was with child of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth acknowledged that Mary was the mother of the Lord. (Lk. 1:42-44.)
3. Also, Elizabeth reconfirmed by inspiration the truthfulness of what the angel had said to Mary. (Lk. 1:45.)
4. Had Mary been an adulteress and conceived an illegitimate child, would Elizabeth have made such statements as these?

B. The Testimony of Simeon.

1. On the 41st day after Jesus was born (eight days plus 33 days of purification) his parents carried him to be dedicated in the temple. Being the firstborn, he must be presented to God and a sacrifice of the turtle doves or young pigeons must be made. (Lev. 12:1—6; Ex. 13:2, 12; Luke 2:21-24.)
2. Simeon was living at Jerusalem; he was inspired of the Holy Spirit. He was a righteous and devout man. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Christ.
3. Luke 2:25—35 tells what happened.

4. So Simeon acknowledged Jesus as Christ and blessed Mary and Joseph.
 - a. If Jesus was an illegitimate child, he could not enter the temple, much less be the Christ. (Deut. 23:2.)
 - b. Had Mary been an adulteress, Simeon could not have blessed her as he did.
 - c. Yet, inspired Simeon recognized that the child was the Christ and he did bless Mary.
- C. The Testimony of Anna the prophetess.
 1. She was an old devout woman. She was inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Luke 2:36-37.)
 2. She spoke to the people who were looking for the redemption of Israel. In speaking to them she spoke about Jesus. (Lk. 2:38.)
 3. Would it be reasonable that this inspired woman would identify Jesus as the Redeemer of Israel if he was an illegitimate child?
- D. The Testimony of Paul the Apostle. (Gal. 4:4.)
 1. Note that Paul said simply "made of a woman. " (Nothing is said about a man being involved in his being made.)
 2. Thus, inspired Paul recognized that no human father was involved in the conception of Christ.
 3. Paul could not have made this statement which excludes a human father if Jesus had been an illegitimate child.
- E. The inspired writer of Hebrews says that Jesus Christ is high priest of our profession. (Heb. 3:1.)
 1. Deut. 23:2 says that an illegitimate child cannot even enter the assembly of the Lord, much less serve as HIGH PRIEST!
 2. Would an inspired writer, who knew the Law as well as the writer of Hebrews did, proclaim as High Priest an illegitimate child? NO!
 3. The conclusion is that Jesus, our High Priest, *was not an illegitimate child*

Conclusion

1. It has been adequately proved that Mary was NOT an adulteress and that Jesus was NOT an illegitimate child.
2. Since Joseph was not Jesus' natural father, and since Mary

was not an adulteress and Jesus was not an illegitimate child, *the only alternative left is that Christ was born of a Virgin.*

3. The virgin-birth of Christ is one of the most convincing proofs of the DEITY of Christ. He is God and he is man. Thus, he was able to ATONE for the sins of man; he is able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; he is able to carry our prayers to the Father and enable him to understand.
4. Yet, the virgin-birth has no meaning to one who has never obeyed Christ, one who has never allowed Christ's sacrifice to atone for his sins.
5. The virgin-birth has lost its meaning to one who continues to live as a lukewarm, unfaithful Christian.
6. If you need to obey the gospel or to be restored, please do so now as we stand and sing.

Prove All Things

1 These. 5:21

Introduction

1. In a court of law, defendant is asked where he was on the night in question. He says he is in place other than where crime was committed. Prosecutor asks, "Can you prove it?" He cannot. Do you think the jury will be convinced that he was not at the scene of the crime?
2. Christian says, "You are wrong religiously; I am right. " He says, "Can you prove it by the Bible?" "Well,... I am not sure. " Do you think that person will have the desire to forsake that wrong way?
3. Paul said in 1 These. 5:21 - "Prove all things. " In our lesson, we want to consider several things which pertain to this statement.

Discussion

- I. **Here we have a command, an obligation, a responsibility: but what does it mean?**
 - A. The dictionary defines the word "prove" — "to test, prove, with the expectation of approving. "
 - B. Paul helps us to understand what he means by using this same term in another passage: 1 Cor. 3:12, 13.
 1. Put gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble in a furnace. What will come out? The gold, silver, and precious stones. Why? They have been tried and approved. The wood, hay and stubble can't stand up to the trial or test.
 2. Put Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo, and three other men in Babylon into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. Who will come out? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo. Why? They are the servants of Jehovah, the others are not.
 3. God's word is a fire. (Jer. 23:29.) Put every doctrine,

preacher, religious organization and practice into the fire of God's word. What will come out? What will stand the test? The NT church, the NT preachers, the NT doctrine, the NT plan, the NT worship. Why? Because the word of God sanctifies or sets apart the true from the false and wicked. (Jn. 17:17.)

- C. We have the obligation to try the spirits (preachers and teachers - 1 Jn. 4:1-4); to try the doctrines (Matt. 15:8, 9) and the practices to see if they will be approved by the word of God.

II. A problem — men trying and proving things in the wrong fire: Consider some wrong fires vs. the right fire.

- A. Some wrong fires:
 - 1. The fire of feeling. (Prov. 28:26.)
 - 2. The fire of parents. (Acts 7:51.)
 - 3. The fire of the majority. (Ex. 23:2.)
 - 4. The fire of the conscience. (Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 4:1-4.)
 - 5. The fire of creeds, manuals, confessions, synods, conferences, councils, etc. (Matt. 28:18.)
- B. *The right fire*: The word of God. (Jer. 23:29; Jn. 17:17; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)
- C. We have the obligation of trying all things in the religious world by the fire of God's word. Anything that will not pass the test should be renounced and taught against. We also *should* and *must* encourage our denominational friends to try their religion in the fire of God's word.

III. A Question: Are we obeying the Command when it comes to our lives and practices?

- A. It is futile for us to encourage others to try their faith and practice in the fire of God's word if we ourselves will not do the same.
- B. There is a need for constant self-examination on our part, to prove the things we do, to try them. If we cannot prove them by the word of God, we need to abandon them. (2 Cor. 13:5.)
- C. There is a need for us to re-evaluate the fire we try our faith and practice and lives in.
 - 1. Do we accept and bind on others certain things *simply*

- because we were always taught that way? If so, wrong fire.*
2. Do we accept and bind on others certain things *simply because we think it is right!*
 - a. **An example:** We have decided that a person who is baptized by someone other than a gospel preacher cannot be a Christian. What about those baptized Judas? We have bound that which Christ has not bound.
 - b. **An example:** We have decided that a person's prayer will not be heard unless he says, "in Jesus' name, Amen. " Again, we have bound where Christ has not bound.
 3. Do we do things a certain way and try to force others to do them that way *simply because that is the way we have always done it!* If so, we have bound where Christ has not bound.
 4. We have no right to try or prove any man in *any other fire than in God's fire — His word!*
- D. There is a need for a re-evaluation of whether our lives can pass the test.
1. Where is the proof in God's word for distinguishing a preacher above any other brother; for calling a preacher "brother" yet failing to do so to other brethren?
 2. Where is the proof in God's word for brethren missing worship services?
 3. Where is the proof in God's word for brethren divorcing, and remarrying without scriptural grounds? Where is the proof for fornicators being fellowshipped by the church?
 4. Where is the proof for calling false teachers (such as neighborhood denominational preachers) "brother" as if they were Christians?
 5. Where is the proof in God's word for Christians failing to put the kingdom first?

Conclusion

1. On the day of judgment, every man's life will be tried with fire. That fire will be the word of God (Jn. 12:48.)

2. Since we will be judged by the word, we ought to prove our way of life, worship and service by the word.
3. If we can't prove the way we live, worship and serve by the Bible now, do you think we will be able to do so on the day of judgment?
4. The command is "Prove all things. " This means "Try all things by the word of God. "

The Folly Of Making Adjustments In God's Plan

Introduction

1. I have had many cars that ran fine until I started making adjustments; I am not qualified to make them... TV, etc.
2. Today, I want to impress upon all that we are not in the position to make adjustments in God's plan. His plan is perfect (James 1:25) and works perfectly to the salvation of the soul if it is obeyed exactly as given.

Discussion

- I. Satan — the first and foremost of adjusters of God's Plan.** Genesis 3.
 - A. He made what seemed to be a SMALL adjustment in God's plan - added that little three-letter word "not". Really a BIG adjustment - said the opposite of what God said.
 - B. Accepting the adjusted plan, Adam and Eve died spiritually and physically, and as a result every person born into a world where sin is and where death is.
 - C. Need to realize that even *the smallest* adjustment in God's plan is fatal!
- II. What if Noah had adjusted God's Plan?** Genesis 6:14-22.
 - A. God specified ONE ark. What if Noah had tried to build five? They would have run out of time and not one would have been built.
 - B. God specified, concerning the building of the ark:
 1. *Type of wood - gopher.* What if Noah had preferred and used maple or cedar because he thought it was pretty and that God wouldn't want an ugly ark?
 2. *Rooms in the ark.* Suppose Noah had made one big living area.
 3. *Type of finish.* What if Noah had reasoned, "Pitch. How

- messy. It would be much easier to paint the ark. I think I like green."
4. *Dimensions*. Suppose Noah had suggested, "I would like a more streamlined ark. It would glide through the water better than just a big box. "
 5. *Window and door*. If Noah had made adjustments, he might have reasoned, one window at the top of the ark which goes all the way around it will not be as stylish as God's ark should be. One picture window with several smaller windows with shutters would be much nicer. " Suppose Noah thought to himself: "Well, if we are going to have only one door, it really ought to be a front door. "
 6. *Stories*. Suppose Noah had said, "Three stories is not really what I had in mind. We need eight stories, one for each member of the family to have his own story. "
- C. If Noah had so reasoned and made those adjustments in God's plan, the Noah family would have perished in the flood along with the whole human and animal race.
- D. But, Noah did EXACTLY what God specified, v. 22.

III. What if Moses had made adjustments in God's Plan? Exodus 25.

- A. God specified and showed Moses exactly how the tabernacle, its furniture, the ark of the covenant, and the priestly garments were to be made.
1. Now, Moses could have reasoned, "I think the ark would be more in keeping with Jewish ideals if it had seven cherubim instead of two. After all, there are seven angels of presence. "
 2. Moses could have thought, "Instead of just a table, a lampstand, and an altar of incense, we ought to put a few couches and chairs for the priests to sit in while they are in the Holy Place. "
 3. Moses could have reasoned, "Those garments that the priests are to wear will surely cost too much, be too expensive. We want to save the Lord all we can, so we will make the garments out of a cheaper type material.
 4. Moses could have thought, "That tent of meeting is so

plain, we ought to have some paintings and windows with drapes in that thing so it will be more stylish."

- B. No, Moses made everything according to God's instruction given in Exodus 25:40. He made everything after the pattern.

IV. Naaman would have liked to have made adjustments in God's Plan. 2 Kings 5:1-19.

- A. Elisha's message was clear and plain - dip seven times in Jordan.
- B. Naaman was not at all pleased with Elisha's message. He told how he thought it should have been.
 - 1. "I thought..." v. 11. Would have replaced God's simple way with a more elaborate plan.
 - 2. "Are not Abana and Pharpar... better." v. 12. Would have made adjustments in the locating of the cleansing.
- C. But, when he complied EXACTLY with God's plan, resulted in complete cleansing.
 - 1. Could have reasoned, "After seven times, I will be tired and worn out, surely five will be enough."
 - 2. If he had done so, he would have been disappointed.

V. The blind man could have made adjustments in God's Plan. John 9:1-7.

- A. Christ made spittle clay and anointed the eyes of the man; told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam.
 - 1. Could have reasoned to himself, "If I could get some of that imported eye salve from Laodicea, it would work so much better. Besides, it won't be as messy."
 - 2. Could have thought to himself, "You know, here we are near the temple and the pool of Siloam is all the way across town. How does he expect a blind man to get there. Why, the pool of Bethesda is only a little piece from here; I think I'll go there."
 - 3. Could have reasoned, "Why, that doesn't make sense. If the remedy is going to work, it needs to stay on there for a while, yet he says I ought to go now and wash it off."
- B. No, the Bible explicitly says, "He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." V. 7.

VI. Application to modern day adjustments in the plan of God.

A. Some examples today.

1. Bible says, "There is one body". (Eph. 4:4.) That one body is the church you read about in the New Testament. Yet, men say, "Join the church of your choice, one is as good as another. " Just like the blind man reasoning, "One pool is as good as another, I can wash in the one of my choice. "
2. Bible says, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins. " (Acts 2:38.) "Baptism doth also now save us. " (1 Pet. 3:21.) Yet, men say, "Repent but you don't have to be baptized if you don't want to; Baptism is not essential anyway. " What difference is there in Satan saying, "Ye. shall NOT surely die" and men saying "Baptism doth also NOT save us?"
3. The Bible says, "Singing and making melody *in your hearts* to the Lord. " (Eph. 5:19.) Men say, "Sing and make melody on mechanical musical instruments. Besides, it's so much prettier than just plain singing and we like it better. " What difference is there between that and Noah saying, "Let's make the ark out of maple or cedar or pine. It is much prettier than gopher, and much easier to work?"

Conclusion

1. On and on we could go with examples, but the point is clear: God's plan must be carried out exactly as revealed. It is perfect, James 1:25.
2. When we make adjustments in God's plan it is no longer God's plan, it is ours. Man had been trying for centuries before Christ to save himself and could not. *Only God's plan carried out exactly as revealed* can and will save man.

Why We Believe The Bible

Introduction

1. What if someone were to come up to you today and ask you, "Why do you believe the Bible?" Could you *convincingly* answer them? Or would they go away thinking, "He sure has a blind faith in the Bible"?
2. 1 Peter 3:15 says you and I must be ready to give answer.
3. Our lesson is an examination of a *small* part of the vast evidence available which proves "*Why we believe the Bible.* "

Discussion

- I. **We believe the Bible because of the claims it makes for itself.**
 - A. The Bible claims that its writers wrote by *divine inspiration*. (2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.)
 - B. The Bible claims to be COMPLETE in its revelation. Jude 3 (ASV):2 Peter 1:3; James 1:25.
 - C. The Bible claims to be INDESTRUCTIBLE.
 1. Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23-25.
 2. It has lived up to its claim.
 - a. Attempts of the past proved useless.
 - 1) Twenty-five hundred years *a. go*, *Jehoiakim*, king of Judah cut the roll of Jeremiah's prophecy with a penknife and cast it into the fire. (Jer. 36:20—26.) The prophecy of Jeremiah is with us today, but Jehoiakim died and received "the burial of an ass. " (Jer. 22:18, 19.)
 - 2) In the earth 4th century, the *Roman Empire Diocletian* staged a relentless attack on the Bible. He sought to burn every copy. About two years after he began his attack, he put a monument upon a pile of ashes of burnt Bibles which read "Extinct is the name of Christian. " Twenty years later, the

Roman Empire Constantine was seeking to put the New Testament in all the churches in the Empire.

- 3) *Voltaire* predicted that the Bible within 100 years would be a forgotten book. b. Contemporary attacks are failing.
 - 1) *Higher criticism* - So-called "scholars" of the late 19th century came up with their documentary hypothesis which said "Moses didn't exist; All the OF was written after the return from Babylon, etc. " Now, many archaeological finds disprove that false theory more and more.
 - 2) *Modernism* - Men today try to explain away the miracles of the Bible and the prophesies of the Bible. But the evidence is too convincing; their efforts are futile.
 - 3) Empires, dynasties, kings, presidents, and centuries come and go, but the Bible remains "an anvil that has broken a million hammers. " As David wrote in the long ago, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. " (Psa. 119:89.)

II. We believe the Bible because of its unique revelation.

- A. It is a revelation of an all-powerful, holy, good, just, and loving God.
 1. All the theological systems 'of the heathen world fulfill the idea "Like people, like gods. "
 - a. The ancient Greeks, though refined and enlightened as they were, had a theology which was but a transcript of fallen humanity. They worshiped Uranus, who is said to have hated and imprisoned his own children, Venus, goddess of licentiousness, Bacchus, the God of drunkenness, and many other gods and goddesses of like character were worshiped.
 - b. The ancient Scythians were an extremely cruel people, thus their gods Odin, Thor, and others are said to have delight in nothing better than in scenes of blood.
 2. How infinitely removed from all such human weaknesses, follies, and sinful passions is the God of the Bible. (1 Pet. 1:15, 16.)

- B. The Bible is a revelation of the needs of all mankind for all ages. (2 Pet. 1:3.)
 - 1. It reveals man's origin and nature.
 - 2. It reveals God's scheme for man's salvation.
 - 3. It reveals how men ought to live.
 - 4. It reveals man's destiny.
- C. It is the revelation of the most powerful message the world has ever seen or will see. (Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16.)
- D. It is a revelation which is unique in its influence — it has been more influential than any other book.
 - 1. The moral statutes of the Bible have served as standards of law which order is established upon and justice enacted in America and the nations of the world.
 - 2. The Bible teaching on the free moral agency of man was the founding concept of the United States.
 - 3. The Bible has greatly influenced music and art.
 - a. Handel's "The Messiah" was plainly taken from descriptions found in Isaiah and Revelation.
 - b. Songs such as Samuel Francis Smith's "America", Francis Scott Key's "Star Spangled Banner", and Albert Pike's "Dixie" as well as many others are filled with Bible phrases and expressions.
 - c. Michelangelo, Da Vinci, to name a few, produced the world's masterpieces based on Bible events. (The Sistine Chapel, the Last Supper.)
 - 4. The Bible has greatly influenced literature and education.
 - a. From Shakespeare to Milton to the Declaration of Independence, the influence of the Book of books is seen.
 - b. Harvard was the first college in America and was established to provide a more thorough study of the Bible and to prepare young preachers of the word.
 - 5. The Bible has influenced great and influential men.
 - a. Thomas Jefferson read the Bible regularly.
 - b. Abraham Lincoln searched it late into the night by light of the fireplace.
 - c. Daniel Webster read the Bible through in its entirety twice a year.

III. We believe the Bible because it could only be the product of God Almighty.

A. Only God's influence upon its writers could provide for its accurate *scientific foreknowledge*.

1. The spherical shape of the earth.
 - a. When the Bible was written, it was universally believed that the earth was flat. Not until Toscanelli suggested it, Columbus believed it, and Magellan proved it did the world accept the earth's rotundity.
 - b. But the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 40:22, "It is God that sitteth on the *circle* of the earth. "
2. The suspension of the earth.
 - a. The Greeks and Romans of ancient times, advanced though they were, believed that Atlas had the earth on his shoulders. Later, when men sailed around the world, they discovered that nothing visible holds it in place.
 - b. God had already told Job that, for in Job 26:7, Job wrote: "... He... *hangeth the earth upon nothing.* "
3. The paths of the sea.
 - a. Matthew Maury was the founder of the science of oceanography. Before him, shipping lanes were unknown.
 - b. One day while he was ill, his son read the eighth Psalm to him, which said, "... the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through *the paths of the sea.*"
 - c. Within a few years, he had charted them and they are followed by ocean-going vessels today.
4. Many, many, more instances could be given, but time does not permit.

B. Only divine guidance could be responsible for the perfect *geographical accuracy* of the Bible.

1. Though the mistakes of geography books must constantly be corrected and are subject to revision, the Bible is correct in every instance.
2. They went *up* to Jerusalem because it was on a hill; they sent *down* to Jericho because it was of lower elevation. The cities, towns, plains, deserts, hills, and mountains

mentioned in the Bible have been found exactly where the Bible locates them.

- C. The exact *medical foreknowledge* of the Bible attests to its divine authorship.
 - 1. In the time of Aristotle, men believed that man produced the "seed" of reproduction and that women were nothing more than providers of the "soil" where the seed grew. But Genesis 3 and other passages speak of the "seed of women." Now we know what the Author of the Bible knew 4000 years ago.
 - 2. God instituted the practice of circumcision the eighth day. Not until recently have men learned the medical value of it.
 - 3. When the Black Death swept over Europe in the 14th century, killing an estimated 60 million persons, medical men were of little help. It was religious folk who led in applying the quarantine principle of Leviticus 13:46. Millions of lives were saved by the Bible!
 - 4. The critics might ask, "Didn't Moses learn all this in Egypt?" The 1552 Papyrus Ebers, discovered recently, is a textbook on the "cures" practiced in Moses' day in Egypt. Moses did not mention one of them. He wrote by divine inspiration!
- D. The Bible's *perfect unity and harmony* can only be accounted for by divine guidance.
 - 1. The Bible consists of 66 books, was composed by forty different authors, during a period of about 1600 years, under the most *diverse* circumstances conceivable.
 - a. Moses wrote Genesis-Deuteronomy in the wilderness when science, literature, and arts were in their infancy.
 - b. David composed most of his psalms under the exciting, distracting, and embarrassing influences of a regal court.
 - c. Daniel and Ezekiel wrote their prophesies while in captivity.
 - d. Paul wrote several of his important epistles in a Roman prison.
 - e. John wrote Revelation as a banished exile on Patmos.

2. Yet, there is not one single discrepancy or contradiction in the Bible. It has perfect *unity and harmony*. Some illustrations of this harmony:
 - a. **Promises of the Bible.**
 1. Genesis 3:15 — the seed of woman; Genesis 22:18 — the seed of Abraham; Genesis 49:10 — Shiloh of Judah; Deuteronomy 18:15-19 — a prophet like Moses, etc. Seems to speak of several persons.
 2. But *every one* of these promises harmoniously appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - b. **Sacrifices in the Bible.**
 1. Early in the Bible - sacrifices offered. Throughout OF history — sacrifices offered. What was their purpose? There was not found on earth a Jewish rabbi or Gentile philosopher who could answer this question.
 2. But every sacrifice pointed clearly, distinctly, and exclusively to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross!
 - c. **Perfect harmony of doctrine.**
 - 1) Martin Luther once thought that Paul and James were opposed to one another. In Romans, Paul emphasized faith WITHOUT the works *of the law of Moses* was that which saved. James, in his epistle, emphasized that faith without works was dead. Thus, Luther rejected James. After he had studied more carefully, he saw the unity between James and Paul: the faith that saves, does so apart from the works of the law of Moses, but is an *obedient* faith.
 - 2) There APPEAR to be contradictions in the Bible,
 - a) For example, the Bible teaches that (1) the word of God saves, (2) the gospel saves, (3) grace saved, (4) mercy saves, (5) Christ's blood saves, (6) Christ's life saves, (7) preaching saves, (8) heeding the doctrine saves, (9) faith saves, (10) repentance saves, (11) confession saves, (12) baptism saves, (13) works save, (14) obedience saves, (15) hope saves. *Fifteen* things in the Bible teaches *save us*. Is the Bible contradicting itself? Not one of these things is contrary to the other. All are involved in salva-

tion. The Bible has perfect and complete harmony and unity.

b) There *appear* to be contradictions in nature, but it is an evident fact that nature is a UNIT.

i) Some vegetables are poisonous, others are non-poisonous, and are nutritious.

ii) Some animals are rational, others are irrational.

iii) Some of the planets move westward, some move eastward; some in orbits nearly circular, others in orbits that are elliptical,

iv) Yet, in all this, there is UNITY, HARMONY.

D. Only God's being the Author of the Bible could account for its STYLE.

1. The writers did not conceal their own sins and faults.

a. Moses wrote about his sins.

b. David (Psalms 51) wrote about his sins.

c. Paul called himself "chief of sinners. "

d. John wrote about his rebellion and sin.

2. They wrote no praise of themselves.

3. The lack of emotionalism with which they recorded emotionally charged events, (e. g. the crucifixion of Christ.)

4. The unparalleled brevity of their writing.

a. All of creation in 2 chapters!

b. The flood — just a few words about it — One book: "The Genesis Flood" as big as the Bible itself!

E. The Bible's prophesies and their fulfillments attest to divine authorship.

1. Of events in the history of Israel.

a. The Babylonian Captivity.

b. The return from Captivity.

c. The Destruction of Jerusalem. (Matt. 24.)

2. Of world events.

a. Daniel — Four kingdoms of the world.

b. Revelation — the end of the Roman Empire and triumph of Christianity.

3. Of the Messiah and the church. Acts 3:12-26; Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 2.

4. In Isaiah alone - 42 prophesies.

a. 10 of them fulfilled in Isaiah's time.

- b. 13 of them fulfilled after his time.
- c. 19 of them fulfilled in Christ.

IV. We must believe the Bible because it will judge us in the last day.

- A. John 12:48; Romans 2:16.
- B. Fancy this: A man is brought before the court on the charge of speeding. He stands before the judge and says, "I saw the sign with Speed Limit 55 written on it, but I don't believe in a speed limit, therefore, let me off. " Do you think he has a chance? Yet, such is like appearing before the judgment bar of God and saying, "Don't condemn me to torment! I didn't believe the Bible, therefore, I cannot be held responsible for violating it.
- C. NOT SO! 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

Conclusion

- 1. It is not enough to *believe* the Bible; **MUST OBEY IT.**
- 2. To believe the Bible is to believe **WHAT IT SAYS** about the doom, of those who do not obey it!

Rendering To Each His Due

Matt. 22:15-22.

Introduction

1. The question, "Is it lawful?", "is one of importance as they live in this world.
2. We are not of the world, but we are in the world... Certain realities we must face and deal with according to God's will.
3. One of those is Caesar (the governing authorities.)
4. Our lesson is intended to provide a firm basis from God's truth upon which we may act and be approved of God.

Discussion

I. There are certain things which belong to God.

- A. All things, the earth, and its inhabitants, etc. (Psa. 24:1.)
- B. All power, all authority. (Acts 17:24-26; Rom. 13:1; Matt. 16:18; 18:18; 28:18; 1 Cor. 15:27-28.)
- C. The body, spirit, life and possessions of the Christian. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 12:1; Mal. 3:8.) That is why failure to give to God constitutes robbing God.)
- D. Mankind's worship of Jehovah as the only true and living God. (Rom. 1:19-23.)
- E. Revenge. (Heb. 10:30.)

II. There are certain things which belong to Caesar (The governing authorities.)

- A. Taxes, tribute, custom, etc. (Matt. 22:15 22; Rom. 13:7a.)
- B. The authority to execute wrath upon wrongdoers — even to the point of inflicting capital punishment. (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14.)
- C. Our subjection, respect, and honor. (Rom. 13:5; 7b; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14, 17.)

III. However, there are some things which belong only to God.

- A. The authority to give governing authorities their authority. (Rom. 13:1.)
 - 1. God has given them the authority to be a terror to evil works and to praise good works. (Rom. 13:3.)
 - 2. God has given them the authority to be a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. (Rom. 13:4.)
- B. The power to determine what *is* evil and what is good. (Implied in God's omnipotence and omniscience.)
 - 1. Yet, the governing authorities in our nation are either now or soon will be resuming to determine what is evil and what is good! (That which only belongs to God.) E. g.:
 - a. Legalizing abortion on demand. God has said it is sin, (Ex. 20:13) a fetus is a living human being. (Psa. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:4, 5; Gal. 1:15.)
 - b. Upholding so-called homosexual rights. God has said it is a sin. (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27.)
 - c. Demanding TOTAL equality for women. God has said that women do not have total equality. E. g.:
 - 1) In the leadership of the home. (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23; 1 Pet. 3:1.)
 - 2) In the leadership of the church. (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; Cf. Gal. 3:28 - equal in status but not in role.)
 - 3) By nature. (1 Pet. 3:7; - RSV - "weaker sex".)
 - 2. When governing authorities demand subjection to these laws, they are demanding that which they have no authority to demand. They are demanding that we render unto Caesar the things that are God's!
 - 3. Notice the underlying cause of this presumption: ATHEISM cleverly disguised in a philosophy called HUMANISM.
 - a. Humanism regards all things to be mere matter in motion. Matter in motion *is the total and final reality*. The idea of a creator is regarded as a myth.
 - b. With God out of the picture, man grants himself the liberty to decide for himself what is evil and what is good.
 - c. According to humanism, truth and right are situation-

al and relative, rather than eternal and absolute, d. Thus, under the influence of humanism, the governing authorities presume to determine what is right and wrong.

- C. The ultimate result of this presumption on the part of the governing authorities is described in Psa. 2:1—5.

IV. The Christian must render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's.

- A. He must render unto the governing authorities only that which they have the right to demand.
- B. When there is a conflict, when the choice must be made, we must "obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29; Cf. 1 Cor. 7:15.)
- C. This may mean suffering for righteousness' sake. (1 Pet. 2:19, 20.) But this will receive the acceptance of God.

Conclusion

1. What can the Christian do?
 - a. Vote for and support politicians who have a true respect for what God has said is right and wrong.
 - b. Write officials and let them know your convictions.
 - c. Pray. (1 Tim. 2:1-2.)
2. No where in the world is the Christian afforded more freedom to influence governing authorities than in America. Let us take advantage of it.

Standing On The Promises Of God

Standing on the promises of God...

I. I am standing on exceeding great promises. (2 Pet. 1:4.)

- A. Greater than man could make much less keep.
- B. The GREATEST promises for they involve man's greatest needs:
 - 1. Salvation from past sins. (Acts 2:38.)
 - 2. Forgiveness of present sins. (1 Jn. 1:7-9.)
 - 3. Peace with God (Rom. 5:1), and with ourselves.
 - 4. Eternal salvation. (Mk. 10:29, 30; Jn. 3:16.)

II. I am standing on precious promises. (2 Pet. 1:4.)

- A. More valuable than the whole world. (Matt. 16:26.)
- B. MOST precious because of what it cost Jesus to make them possible. (1 Pet. 1:18, 19.)
- C. Precious to Christians because on them rests every ounce of hope that we have for the hereafter. (Titus 1:2.)

III. I am standing on the promises that cannot fail.

- A. Made by him that cannot lie and him whose counsel is immutable. (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:17.)
- B. Made by him who has divine power, glory and excellence. (2 Pet. 1:3, 4.)
- C. Made by him who has the only perfect record for keeping promises.

IV. I cannot fall.

- A. Because I'm "listening every moment to the Spirit's call... resting in my Savior as my all in all. " B. Because I'm a partaker of the divine nature by means of the promises of God. (2 Pet. 1:4.)
 - 1. Man made in the image of God, but lost in the fall. But, by the promises of God, it is restored.

2. A recipient of the promises of God "has escaped the corruption of the world. " (2 Pet. 1:4; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 2:15, 16; Rom. 12:2.)
- C. Because I'm adding to my faith with INCREASE. (2 Pet. 1:5-7.)
- D. Because I'm useful and fruitful in the service of God. (2 Pet. 1:8.)

Only by standing on the promises of God can I have the abundant entrance into heaven. (2 Pet. 1:11.)

Won't you obey him and stand with us on the promises of God?

Do What You Can With What You Have Where You Are

Introduction

1. Shortly before Jesus was crucified, He was eating in Simon's house. While He was there, a woman anointed Him with a precious ointment. She was criticized by some who observed this act. But Jesus defended her action and said, "She hath done what she could. " (Mk. 14:8.)
2. If we were all called to appear before the judgment bar of God at this very moment, could Jesus say this about our lives?
3. Let's examine ourselves and see how well we come up to this standard.

Discussion

- I. **A marvelous principle is expressed in this statement: "She hath done what she could. "**
 - A. God expects of each of us that which we CAN do.
 1. 1 John 5:3 — "... and his commandments are not grievous. " This means that the commandments of God are not a heavier burden. than we can bear.
 2. There are two things involved in determining one's capability; what one CAN do:
 - a. *Opportunity* - "As we therefore have opportunity ... "(Gal. 6:10.)
 - b. *Ability* — "... to every man according to his several ability. " (Matt. 25:15.)
 3. If you are doing all that you have OPPORTUNITY to do *and* all that you have ABILITY to do in God's service, it can be said of you, "He has done what he could. "
 - a. Not all people have the same opportunities nor the same abilities.
 - b. But all men have SOME opportunities and SOME abilities.

- c. We are comforted by the fact we will not give account for someone else's opportunities and abilities, but we are sobered by the fact that we **WILL** give account for our own opportunities and abilities.
 - 4. We must always remember that any effort **LESS** than our **BEST** is not acceptable to God.
 - a. Employers accept nothing less than the best from their employees. Yet, we are employees of God. (Eph. 4:1.)
 - b. The military accepts nothing short of the best from troops. Yet we are soldiers of God's army!
 - c. Should we be surprised that God expects as much of us as we do of others?
- B. There is a wonderful promise to those who do what they **CAN** to — opportunities and abilities will *increase!*
 - 1. Lk. 16:10 — "He that is faithful in that which is least faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. "
 - 2. The way we let God know what we would do if we were blessed with much is by *what we are doing with the little that we have.*
 - a. This principle observed in childrearing: When a child is given a little responsibility and is trustworthy in that, more responsibility can safely be given. It is unwise to give great responsibility to a child who has proved unreliable in little.
 - b. This principle is applied in the divine qualifications of elders and deacons:
 - 1) *A man under consideration for elder* who cannot rule his own house is not capable of taking care of the church of God and is not qualified. (1 Tim. 3:4, 5.)
 - 2) *As to deacons*, 1 Tim. 3:10 — "Let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. "
- C. This principle will either save us or condemn us on the day of judgment. We must consider, "Am I doing all that I *can* do? Am I doing my best?"

II. Applying this principle: A look at some prominent areas of Christian living and asking "Am I doing all that I can do?"

- A. What about in Bible study? Am I doing all that I CAN do in this area?
1. Our responsibility is clear: 2 Tim. 2:15 says that we must be handlers of the word of truth; Jesus told the Jews to "search the scriptures", (John 5:39); Our 1st century brethren set us a noble example of "searching the scriptures daily", (Acts 17:11); Hosea said, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. " (Hosea 4:6.)
 2. Though our opportunities and abilities may differ in this area, the principle applies the same for all: (Eph. 3:4.)
 3. All that God expects of us is that we do all we CAN.
 - a. In view of this, if you are not attending Bible Study on Sunday Morning and Wednesday night unless you are sick, etc., you are not utilizing every opportunity to study that you have. You are not doing all you can.
 - b. If the Lord were to comment on your love for the truth and your diligence in the study of God's word (and mark it that he will on the day of judgment) would He say, "He has done what he could"?
- B. Attendance in worship is another area. Am I doing all that I CAN in this area?
1. Our responsibility is crystal clear on this: When we willfully absent ourselves from ANY assembly we are guilty of sin. (Heb. 10:25.)
 2. Due to sickness, HAVING to work, etc., some do not have the opportunity to be at every service... *but the question is: Are you present at every service you CAN attend?*
 3. All God expects of us is that we do what we can, but He demands that much]
- C. What about helping those who are in need? Am I doing all that I CAN in this area?
1. TRUE religion involves this. (Jas. 1:27). Helping others is the natural result of obeying the second great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. "

- (Matt. 22:39.) This love is to be shown, not just spoken. (1 Jn. 3:8.)
2. Someone might say, "I can't help others, because I do not have much myself. " God expects us to do what we CAN.
 - a. Dorcas was a righteous woman who did all she could to help others. (Acts 9:36-43.)
 - b. Matt. 10:42 — If all you CAN do is give a cup of cold water God accepts that *but He expects that...* That you do all you can.
 3. The problem is, all of us can afford a cup of cold water, but we don't even do that. God expects us to do what we CAN.
- D. Giving of our means is an area we need to ask about: "Am I doing all I CAN in this?"
1. Since Cain and Abel, God has commanded men who served him to give offerings to Him. He commands the same of us. (1 Cor. 16:2.)
 2. God demands all to give liberally. (1 Cor. 16:3.)
 - a. Someone objects, "I do not get much, so I cannot give liberally, "
 - b. Well, what about the woman who gave more than the rich men yet she only had two mites? (Mk. 12:43, 44). Is there anyone here who only has a nickel (the equivalent to two mites)? If that is all you have you can still give liberally.
 - c. How is this possible? (2 Cor. 8:12.) God wants you to give what you CAN, of what you have.
 3. If the Lord were to compare my giving with my prosperity, would He be able to say, "He has done what he could?"

Conclusion

1. There are many other areas in which it is obvious that we are not doing all that we CAN do, but these are some of the most obvious:
2. Ask yourself: "Am I doing what I CAN in the area of Bible study?" If the answer is "no", you need to repent. Ask yourself, "Am I doing all I CAN in the area of attendance?" If the answer is "no", you need to repent, *because you have sin-*

ned against God and every faithful member of the church here. Ask yourself, "Am I doing all that I CAN to help others?" If the answer is "no", you need to repent. Ask yourself, "Am I doing what I CAN in the area of giving?" If the answer is "no", you need to repent.

All that God requires of anyone is that he does what he CAN. But He does require that much!

Mother's Day

Introduction

1. History of Mother's Day. The first known suggestion for Mother's Day in the United States was in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe, author of "Battle Hymn of the Republic, " but it was not until May of 1915 that the President of the U. S. proclaimed it as a national day of observance, being the second Sunday of May.
2. Sad situation: We have "Pickle Week" but "Mother's Day" right along with "Mule Day", etc. Sadder still is the fact that the only honor that many mothers get is on the second Sunday in May.
 - a. God says *every day* is a day when Mother is to be honored. (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3.)
 - b. Many break God's commandment by their tradition, however, by only honoring mother *one day* out of the year. (Matt. 15:3-4.)
3. Since mother should be honored *every day*, "Mother's Day" should be a day of *special honor* for her.
4. Let us look at some reasons why mothers deserve a special day in addition to every day honor.

Discussion

- I. **Mother — the most influential profession in the world.**
 - A. Some Bible mothers bear witness to this point.
 1. For good — Samuel's mother, Hannah; Moses' mother; Ruth's mother-in-law; the mother of Jesus.
 2. For evil — Jacob's mother, Rebekah; Herodias, who instructed her dancing daughter to request John's head on a charger.
 - B. In history.
 1. Abraham Lincoln said, "All that I am or ever hope to be I owe to my angel mother. "

2. I have known of FEW great men who did not owe their success to their mother's influence.

II. Mother — the most "taken for granted" person in the world.

- A. Too many times when husband is asked what his wife does, the reply comes back, "*Oh, she's just a housewife.*" I have a poem written by a Christian in McMinnville, TN which reads,

So they say she was just a housewife
That was all she had to do;
No career nor prescribed profession
Could portray what she could do.
 But who kept the house so spotless?
 Who mended and laundered the clothes?
 Who made a plain meal a party?
 Brought happiness to all that she knows?
They said she was just a housewife
But not this mother of mine;
For the beauty and grace with which she reigned in our home
Could not be penned by word or rhyme.
 She was never too busy to comfort
 Either broken bone or heart;
 She knew how to solve all our problems
 With love and understanding, with her an accomplished art.
We knew she prayed for us often
As she went about her work each day;
The example of Jesus living in her
Was showered on us day by day.
 She knew the needs of our neighbors
 And when they had crosses to bear;
 My mother had just the solution
 To help them and prove that she cared.
Her door was never fastened
To those to whom she could give aid;
Though the hours were long and tedious and hard
Her strength seemed to match them, untiring and unafraid.

The people who knew her said she was a Christian
My daddy said she was a queen;
To me she's the most beautiful person
Either heaven or earth has seen.
So they say she is just a housewife
And maybe that's truly her lot;
If so, I pray God will give every house one
For she's the best thing that our house has got.
(Elsie N. Rondy, 10-18-61)

- B. We have failed to stop and consider just how much mothers are worth.
 - 1. Proverbs 31:10 says her price is far above rubies.
 - 2. Recent article in **Parent's Magazine** says if you could hire someone to do all the work a mother does, it would cost about \$700 a week. (That's over \$36, 000 per year!)
 - 3. But all things considered, a mother is worth far more than that!
- C. When she's not there we are reminded of how much she means to us and how much we depend upon her. Listen to this poem — "*Where's Mother.* "

My wee one lay mid the snowy sheets,
And smiled in peaceful slumber sweet.
Soon he opened his blue eyes wide
And saw me standing by his side.
His baby lips quivered, loud he cried,
"Where's Muvver?"
Small Anne was playing in the yard;
She ran too fast and fell so hard.
Up the steps she ran past me,
With bleeding hands and aching knee.
Tears in her eyes, she could not see,
"Where's Mother?"

When Jack comes in each day from school,
Throws his coat and cap upon a stool,
Into the kitchen he quickly strides,
Thinking of cookies and apple pies,
If she's not there he always cries,
"Where's Mother?"

My lovely daughter came up the steps,
And right by my chair she swept.
She asked not for sister, or brother,
But asked the same old question over,
"Where's Mother?"

I was their dad, so I could not see
Why they asked for Mother instead of me.
But the next day, when I came from town,
Before I laid my burden down,
I asked the children standing round;
"Where's Mother?"

III. Mother — the hardest job in the world.

- A. Giving birth — the many months of pain and agony; no one knows what it's like but a mother. I once read of a woman who bore twenty children. It takes a special person to be a mother.
- B. Not only is giving birth all that's involved, but think of what mother copes with daily.
 - 1. The first day of school.
 - 2. The first date.
 - 3. The first broken heart.
 - 4. Nights of worry over late dates, auto accidents, and teenage escapades.
- C. It's not over when the children are grown up and gone, either.
 - 1. She's free, but lonely.
 - 2. She is then a woman wondering about *adult* children: Where they are, what they are doing.
 - 3. She tells herself they still love her and need her as they used to, while missing the days when the patter of little feet echoed through the house.
- D. An especially hard job - a mother with an unbelieving husband.

IV. Mother — What makes a good one?

- A. Proverbs 31:10-31 gives a sublime description of good mothers.
- B. Let us try to see the description of a good mother in this acrostic:

M—is for <i>Modesty</i> .	1 Tim. 2:9. How can we expect children of our world to be modest when their mothers are immodest in speech, behavior, or dress.
O--is for <i>others</i> .	All Christians are to forget self and think of others. Good mothers seem to have an extra measure of selflessness.
T—is for <i>Teachers</i> .	They teach us right from wrong, read us our first Bible stories, hear our first prayers, and <i>teach with their lives!</i>
H--is for her <i>Heart</i>	Good mothers are all heart. They <i>of purest gold</i> . have limitless compassion.
E--is for <i>Eternity</i> .	Though she cares for the here and her primary concern is about the eternal welfare of the family. This is why she is the one who sees that everyone is dressed and ready for Bible study and worship.
R—is for <i>Righteous</i> .	A good mother is in a right relationship with God. She loves Him, depends on Him, prays to Him and worships Him faithfully. She is right with others in work and service.

Conclusion

Let us honor Mothers today — *in a special way* — but let us honor them every day by love and respect, obedience; *by being the type faithful Christian she taught us to be and exemplified before us.*

Modest Apparel

1 Timothy 2:9

Introduction

1. America is in danger!
 - A. Arnold Tonybee, a noted historian, wrote,
"Out of the 21 civilizations preceding this one, 19 of them have been destroyed by a mixture of atheism, materialism, socialism, and alcoholism... of the 22 civilizations that have appeared in history, 19 of them collapsed when they reached the moral state the United States is now in. "
 - B. Robert R. Taylor, Jr., a noted gospel preacher, wrote, "A person would have to be blind in one eye and not be able to see out of the other to miss the obvious connection between indecency of dress and the rapidly skidding morals of our day."
2. I submit that one of the major factors contributing to the breakdown of morality in America is *immodest dress*. Why?
 - A. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. " (Prov. 14:34.),
 - B. Disregard for the ordinances of God does not result in righteousness, but it results in sin.
 - C. God has said, "Women, wear modest clothes. " (1 Tim. 2:9.)
3. Paul wrote this for Timothy to teach *women in the church* to wear modest clothing.
 - A. It is obvious that many women in the church have forgotten this.
 - B. Therefore, there is a need to remind all of this great principle.

Discussion

- I. **What does the Bible mean when it speaks of modest apparel?**
 - A. Every dictionary consulted, both Greek and English, gives

a simple definition which may be summarized in one word: *decent*.

1. Decent implies good, proper, and right.
 2. These are standards which *do not change*, but are constant.
 3. Hence, when Paul said, "Women adorn yourselves in modest apparel... " he was giving a universal principle applicable for all time.
- B. Modesty is in the middle of two extremes. Both these extremes involve *immodesty*. They are:
1. *Overdress* - Such as which existed in Paul's day and described in 1 Tim. 2:9.
 - a. Take a look at the fashion of Paul's day:
 - 1) According to secular histories of that time, women were spending hours on elaborate hairdos, weaving jewels into their braids, and trying to outdo one another in the clothing they wore. They tried to have the most expensive, the most colorful, or the most unusual dress.
 - 2) Rome was noted for its lasciviousness.
 2. The word of God verifies this:
 - a. One of the works of the flesh (of which it is said, "that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. ") given in Galatians 5:19-21 is *lasciviousness*.
 - 1) Webster defines lasciviousness: 1. Inclined to lechery: lewd, lustful. 2. tending to arouse sexual desire.
 - 2) To be responsible for arousing sexual desire in another person is SIN, the sin of lasciviousness.
 - b. It has already been shown that modern fashions do and were designed to excite sexual desire on the part of males who see females wearing them.
 - c. Thus, to wear immodest clothing is lascivious and can cause one to lose his soul!
- C. An encouragement to premarital sex and sex crimes.
1. Dear Ann Landers: I have had enough of you. I am a 17-

stead of telling the girls to give the eight-handed idiot a "clap in the chops" or however you worded it, why don't you put the blame where it belongs — on the girl.

No guy in his right mind ever starts to paw a perfect lady. The chick who suddenly finds a guy's hand all over her had asked for it — in one way or another! Sometimes it's not in words; it's the way a girl gets herself together. The miniskirts are a pretty good eyeful when a girl is standing up. When she's sitting down, it's like she's wearing a bikini. No normal guy can look at all that flesh and not get ideas.

Transparent blouses and sweaters and jeans that fit like sausage casings are worn to get guys excited; he wants to do more than just look. So, please, Ann Landers, since you are supposed to give advice, give it to the girls. They are the ones who need it! — *Tired of being turned on.*

Dear Tired: There is a great deal of truth in what you say, and I'm glad you took the time to say it. The moral of the story is simply this, girls: Don't let your clothes issue an invitation you don't mean to fulfill. When you turn a guy on, he can be awfully hard to turn off. -Ann Landers.

2. According to the **National Decency Reporter**, "Apart from the lack of modesty and decency involved, do provocative miniskirts (and by the way, the shorts, jeans, swimsuits, etc. have the miniskirt beat when it comes to immodesty,) cause sex crimes? The nation's top law enforcement officers in 62 cities think so. They are convinced that the miniskirt is a serious cause of sex crimes. "
3. Tokyo, Japan, (Associated Press)
"The Tokyo metropolitan police blame the miniskirt for a 100 percent increase in reported sex crimes in the first nine months of 1967 over the same period of 1966. "
4. If these statements apply to miniskirts, how well do they apply to shorts, halters, swimsuits, etc., which show more of the female body than a miniskirt ever did?

III. A Bible illustration of immodesty and its consequences.

- A. David, a godly man who loved God and his way. (1 Sam. 16:6-13.)
- B. Yet, a very infamous and heartbreaking episode in David's life is the direct result of immodesty. Listen to the story: 2 Sam. 11:1-5.
 - 1. In addition to the fornication and conception of an illegitimate child, many other tragic events transpired as a result.
 - a. Killing of Uriah. (2 Sam. 11:5.)
 - b. Exposure of David for what he had done by the prophet Nathan. (2 Sam. 12:1-7.)
 - c. Curse placed upon the house of David - "sword shall not depart" (2 Sam 12:1-7.)
 - d. The child dies. (2 Sam. 12:15.)
 - 2. All this, plus the agony and pain it caused was the result of sin, but *behind that sin and contributing to it* was a woman who bathed in the public eye.
 - 3. What a difference modesty would have made in the lives of these people.
- C. Is it any wonder then, why God desires his children to adorn themselves in modest clothing?

IV. God has a simple test to help us determine if we are modestly clothed. 1

Timothy 2:9; Titus 2:5.

- A. "Can I wear this with *shamefacedness!*"
 - 1. Shamefacedness means "with a sense of shame. "
 - 2. Clothing which does not reflect a shame of one's nakedness is not modest clothing.
- B. "Can I wear this with *sobriety!*"
 - 1. Sobriety means "sound judgment. "
 - 2. Clothing which does not reflect sound judgment of how God would have us to dress is not modest clothing.
- C. "Can I wear this with *discreetness!*"
 - 1. Discreetness means "self-control. "
 - 2. Clothing which does not reflect self-control or promote self-control in others is not modest clothing.
- D. "Can I wear this and at the same time be *chaste!*"
 - 1. Chaste means "pure from carnality" (not chased, but chaste!)

2. Clothing which excites the passions and lusts of the flesh is not modest apparel.

Conclusion

1. In order for us to have any influence upon the world, we must live soberly, righteously and godly before the world.
2. The church will greatly be hampered in reaching the lost if its members are involved in "the same excess of riot. "
3. Not only will the church not have influence, *but members who engage in sin like we have discussed today or any sin, unless repented of, will lose their souls.*

Things God Hates

Proverbs 6:16-19

I. God hates all sin.

- A. The Bible expressly states God's hatred for various sins, from which we generalize that God hates *all* sin.
 - 1. Jeremiah 44:3, 4 — God hates idolatry; service rendered to other gods.
 - 2. Amos 5:21 — God hates perverted, pretentious worship.
 - 3. Revelation 2:6, 15 - God hates false doctrine.
 - 4. Malachai 2:16 - God hates cruel and faithless divorce.
- B. For God not to hate all sin would be inconsistent with his character.
 - 1. 1 John 1:5 — light and no darkness at all.
 - 2. 1 Pet. 1:16 — Holy, in the sense of separate from sin.
 - 3. James 1:13 — God cannot be tempted with evil.
- C. God hates sin to the extent that he will ultimately destroy it completely.
 - 1. 1 John 3:8 - The reason the Son was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. *Has* destroyed sin's reign (Rom. 6:12—18.)
 - 2. 1 Cor. 15:24-26 - When the end comes, Christ will have destroyed all enemies including death (the wages of sin, Rom. 6:23.)
 - 3. 2 Pet. 3:10—13 - speaks of the end of time - earth and works therein burned up. New heavens and new earth — *wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

II. There are certain instances in which God's hate for sin is intensified! (Proverbs 6:16.)

- A. Herein is a figure of speech used to emphasize indefinite-ness and limitlessness.
 - 1. Amos used this figure. (Amos 1:3, et al.) He emphasized that the transgressions of Damascus were so many, that God could not turn away from punishing them.

2. Eliphaz the Temanite used this figure. (John 5:19.) He emphasized the unlimited extent to which God delivers.
 3. Jesus used this figure. (John 11:9.) He used it to emphasize that John the baptizer was greater than the people thought.
 4. We use this figure sometimes ourselves. We might say, "I wouldn't part with that car for \$1000, or even \$10, 000. " We emphasize that we will never sell at any price.
 5. So, the writer says, here are things which the Lord hates and I mean REALLY hates!
- B. What intensifies the Lord's hatred in the case of sin? In short, when sin is practiced as a business!
1. "A proud look" (ASV - "haughty eyes"). God hates the sin of pride, but his hatred for pride is intensified against eyes that practice pride as a business, eyes always haughty. (This would apply to any use of the eyes to practice sin as a business, cf. 2 Pet. 2:14 - "eyes full of adultery. ")
 2. "A lying tongue. " God hates lying for certain, but a tongue which is exclusively devoted to the business of lying intensifies the hatred of God. (Cf. Hos. 12:1 -"Ephraim... daily increaseth lies and desolation. ")
 3. "Hands that shed innocent blood. " God's hate is intensified against cruel murder committed by those who practice murder as a business.
 4. "A heart that deviseth wicked purposes. " God's hate is intensified when the heart is used totally and exclusively as a workshop of evil devoted to wicked purposes. (Cf. Gen. 6:5.)
 5. "Feet swift in running to mischief. " God's hate is intensified when feet just can't wait to execute evil plans, when they are exclusively devoted to transporting one to wickedness.
 6. "A false witness who uttereth lies" (RSV - "breatheth out lies"). God's hate is intensified against habitual perjury, in which a false witness gives false testimony under oath "with every breath. "
 7. "He that soweth discord among brethren. " God's hate is intensified against discord being sown as a regular crop; when one makes a business out of harvesting dis-

cord among brethren. This goes for any sin practiced as a business!

- C. That God's hatred is intensified when sin is practiced as a way of life or a business is evidenced by the harsh judgment of God against such.
 - 1. In the case of the world prior to the flood. (Gen. 6:5.) Indeed this resulted in the worst destruction of all time.
 - 2. In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen. 18:20.) Their sin was very grievous and it cried out for destruction. God rained fire and brimstone and destroyed the entire plain.
 - 3. In the case of Israel. Eventually, Israel practiced sin as a national business and God greatly punished them.

III. We must hate sin. (Amos 5:15.)

- A. This is difficult, because the world is in love with sin. (Micah 3:2.)
 - 1. Many are in love with the pleasures of sin. (2 Tim. 3:4.)
 - 2. Many are in love with darkness rather than light. (John 3:19.)
 - 3. They are constantly using every means in their power to try to get us to fall in love with sin, too.
- B. We must hate sin in order to be like God, to imitate him. (Eph. 5:1.)
 - 1. We are admonished to be holy, for God is holy. (1 Pet. 1:18.)
 - 2. We are admonished to walk in the light as He is in the light.
 - 3. In doing this, we automatically hate sin, for God hates all sin.
- C. We must hate sin with a passion in order to *avoid it*.
 - 1. Disease is something that no one likes. Every one *hates* disease. This hatred leads men to do all they can to prevent it, to avoid it.
 - 2. So it must be with the disease of sin.
 - 3. Yet, many in the church try to love sin and at the same time, serve God. *This is an impossibility.*

The Book Of Life

Luke 10:20

I. It's author - God.

- A. God, the great writer.
 - 1. Writes all our members in his book. (Psa. 139:16.)
 - 2. Writes of the book of books - the Bible. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)
 - 3. Writes his law upon our hearts. (Heb. 8:10.) Hence, we sing, "write on my heart every word... " "stamp thine own image deep on my heart. "
- B. God the author of the book of life. (Ex. 32:32.)
 - 1. Has been writing this book since the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:18; 17:18.)
 - 2. Writes the book of life in *erasable ink*. (Ex. 32:32; Rev. 3:5; 22:19.) The book of life constantly subject to revision.
 - 3. *Date* of publication — the end of time. (Rev. 20:12.)
 - 4. *Place* of publication — heaven. (Lk. 10:10.)

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II. Its table of contents — What it contains.

- A. A record of *individual names*. (Ex. 32:32, 33.)
 - 1. God is mindful of *individuals*.
 - 2. Denotes *individual responsibility*.
- B. A register — an *official* list of names. (Ezek. 13:9 - ASV, marg.)
 - 1. A *citizen* register — a list of the citizens of God's kingdom. (Phil. 3:20 ASV.)
 - 2. A *family* register — a list of the members of God's family. (Eph. 3:14.)
 - 3. An *employee* register — a list of those who work for the Lord. Eph. 4:1.
 - 4. A *reservation* register — a list of these for whom heaven has been reserved. 1 Pet. 1:4.

5. A *military* register — a list of soldiers in the Lord's army. (2 Tim. 2:3.)
6. A *race* register — a list of those running for the mark of the prize of the high calling of God. (Heb. 12:1.)

III. Its theme — eternal destiny.

- A. The book of life will be open at the judgment. (Rev. 20:12.)
- B. It will *certify* the destiny of the saved by virtue of their names being written there in.
 1. By it the roll call of the sheep will be made. (Cf. Matt. 25:31-33.)
 - a. Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd and know my sheep... " (Jn. 10:14.) The shepherd "calleth his sheep *by name*..." (Jn. 10:3.)
 - b. Christ's sheep have their *names* written in the book of life and Christ shall "call them *by name*" (Cf. Rev. 3:5.)
 2. By it the guests of the marriage feast of the Lamb shall be summoned. (Rev. 19:9.)
 - a. Elite festive gatherings have a list of the guests' names; no one admitted unless name on the list.
 - b. Only those on the Lamb's "guest list" — the book of life — shall be called.
 3. No "clearance" at the gates of pearl except for those who are written in the book of life. (Rev. 21:21.)
- C. It will *certify* the destiny of the lost by virtue of their names *NOT* being written in the book of life.
 1. Those not written - cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15.)
 2. There will be fathers who will not hear their son's name - failed to teach them; Mothers who will not hear their daughter's name called - failed to teach them; Husbands, wives, etc.

IV. Its characters — How do I make sure my name is written in heaven?

- A. Many rolls and books important to men - honor roll, sur-

vivors' roll, pay roll, Guinness' Book of World Records, Who's Who.

1. Can be in all these, yet if not in God's book of life: lost.
 2. Matt. 16:26 might read - "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world's praise, honor, and recognition and lose his own soul?"
 3. Most important to make sure my name is written in heaven. (2 Pet. 1:10.) But *how!*
- B. The *character* of the book of life tells us the answer.
1. It is the book of *Life* — the book of the *living*. (Psa. 69:28.) Must be among the spiritually *alive* to be written. (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:1-4.)
 2. It is the roll of the Lord's Church. (Heb. 12:23.) Must be a member. (1 Cor. 12:13.)
 3. It is the book of the *righteous*. (Psa. 69:28.) Must live *faithfully*. (Rev. 2:10; 3:5.)
- C. Remember, *God is its author*] Must meet *His* standard, *His* terms.
1. *God* adds to the church. (Acts 2:47.) *God* adds names to *His* book of life.
 2. Many will think some mistakes has been made.
 - a. *They* will think their names should have been written - argue with the Lord. (Matt. 7:22.)
 - b. Simple answer — "I never knew you... Your name not written in heaven. ",
- D. When the "roll is called up yonder" *All will be there!*
1. If your name is written in heaven, rejoice!
 2. If not, take steps to get it written!

A Lesson From The Cooking School Of Jesus

Introduction

1. Our lesson about one of the most common things in the household of 1st century Jews — *leaven*.
2. Leaven (which corresponds to our yeast) was a piece of fermented dough which was left over from a previous baking. It was mixed with meal or flour in order to make it rise when baked.
3. Jesus (as He often used the most common things in the world) used leaven to illustrate and elucidate many valuable truths. The apostle Paul also used it. Let us look at the great lessons taught by *leaven*.

Discussion

- I. **Leaven symbolizes the working of the gospel.** (Matt. 13:33.)
 - A. Primarily symbolizes the spread of the gospel.
 1. Small, seemingly insignificant beginning - one man and his 12 disciples — yet in a few years had "*leavened*" the world. (Col. 1:23.) A loaf of bread began with a small piece of leaven.
 2. Worked from center to circumference. (Acts 1:8.) Just as leaven works.
 - B. Secondly, symbolizes the working of the gospel in the hearts of men.
 1. The *extent* to which it works — "until the whole is leavened. "
 - a. The gospel sufficient to get the job done. (Rom. 1:16; Isa. 55:11.)
 - b. Works until it affects every area of life — work, recreation, home, school, etc.
 - c. Works until we become mature in Christ. (Eph. 4:13.)
 2. *How* it works — from within to without.

- a. Changes the heart which in turn produces a transformed life outwardly manifested. (Rom. 12:2.)
- b. Many want it the other way round. (Thusly the law worked; Paul wanted deliverance.) (Rom. 12:2.)
- 3. *Condition* under which it works — "Hid".
 - a. Col. 3:16 — Let the word... *dwell in you richly*.
 - b. Rom. 15:14; Col 1:9; Matt. 5:9; *filled* with knowledge, righteousness.
- C. *Applies* to the congregation:
 - 1. Congregation *filled* with thorough knowledge of the gospel with "rise" in spiritual and numerical growth.
 - 2. As dough without leaven cannot rise, even so the congregation lacking knowledge. (Hos. 4:6.)
 - 3. Are we an "unleavened" congregation as far as knowledge is concerned?

II. Leaven symbolizes the working of false doctrine.

- A. In the case of the "leaven" of the Pharisees and Sadducees -- their *doctrine*. (Matt. 16:6-12.)
 - 1. As the fermentation of sour dough (leaven) ferments the whole lump — the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees corrupted their worship and made it vain. (Matt. 15:9.)
 - 2. As the woman "hid" the leaven in the lump, the false doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees was *skillfully concealed* beneath *the garb of piety* and *holiness*.
 - a. What false teacher will you hear say, "Watch out, for what I give you *is false doctrine!*"?
 - b. Hence, false doctrine corrupts without warning.
 - c. Jesus described the leaven of the Pharisees as *hypocrisy* — a corrupt heart *concealed* beneath outward *appearance* of goodness. (Lk. 12:1.)
 - 3. As leaven causes the dough "to rise", the doctrine of the Pharisees caused them to be "puffed up" — (Lk. 18:11, 12.)
- B. In the case of the Judaizers in the Galatian churches. (Gal. 5:9.)
 - 1. As the whole lump is leavened by a *little* leaven — a *little* false teaching mixed with gospel corrupts the

- whole matter. (Gal. 5:2—4); a *perverted* gospel! (Gal. 1:6-9.)
2. As the leaven is "hid" — concealed — within the lump, *false teachers* creep in unawares, come in privily - like spies. (Gal. 2:4; Jude 4.)
 3. As fermentation *spreads* throughout the dough - *false doctrine spreads*. (Like *cancer* — in most cases — when the symptoms manifest themselves, the cancer has already *spread* throughout.)
 4. As leaven works from within to without — the church's greatest danger *is false teaching from within!* (Cf. Acts 20:30.)
- C. The answer to the problem — *prevention*.
1. If you don't want dough to rise, you can put it in the freezer. The bacteria which make it rise cannot reproduce under such conditions.
 2. Hence, we must "put the freeze" on false teachers —
 - a. 1 John 4:1; 2 John 10; Rom. 16:17.
 - b. False doctrine is like infectious disease — in order to keep others from infection, must put the infected carrier into *isolation!*

III. Leaven symbolizes the working of sin. (1 Cor. 5:6—8.)

- A. As to how sin works in the individual to bring about his ruin.
1. As leaven works from within to without, *one sin leads to another I*
 - a. In the case of David: Lust in his heart — adultery with Bath-sheba — murder of Uriah the Hittite -"Thou art the man!"
 - b. Psa. 1:1: Walking in the counsel of the ungodly — standing in the way of sinners - sitting in the seat of the scornful.
 2. The sins of one member of a man's body corrupt and defile the whole body, just as a little leaven leavens the whole lump. E. g. Jas. 3:6; Matt. 15:11.
 3. As leaven is "hid" in the dough, even so a man's sins can be hidden from his own eyes. (David failed to see that "Thou art the man!")
- B. As to how sin works to corrupt the church.

1. As a *little* leaven is *all that is needed* to leaven the whole, one sinner tolerated in the church may ruin its effectiveness and influence.
 - a. A classic example of this — Achan — one sinner — caused the battle at Ai to be lost. (Josh. 7.)
 - b. We are fighting a battle - a battle against unrighteousness. (Eph. 6.) When we tolerate sin in the congregation, it is like giving a *traitor a medal of honor!*
 2. As the *whole lump* is leavened by the leaven put therein, so Christ has taught against the CHURCH when it tolerates sin. (The Lord had taught against the CHURCH at Thyatira because they *suffered Jezebel!* Rev. 2:20.)
- C. *There is an answer:* "Purge out the old leaven!"
1. Sin is not a monster to be pondered upon, but an impotence to be *gotten rid of.*
 2. In the case of the individual — "Purge out the leaven of sin *before* it runs its course! (Jas. 1:13—15.)
 3. In the case of the church — "Purge out the leaven of sin" *before* its effectiveness and influence are corrupted and destroyed.
 - a. Christ has the plan: Church discipline.
 - b. We *must* be ready and willing to use it when necessary, *for the benefit of the wayward Christian's soul as well as the benefit of the purity of the Church!*

Conclusion

1. Thus, leaven fitly symbolizes the working of the gospel, the working of false teaching, and the working of sin.
2. Let us ever keep mindful of the fact that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. "

"If"

John 14, 15.

Introduction

1. We live in a conditional world.
 - a. The most simple areas of life are such. A clock can tell the time and wake you up IF you set it and wind it up!
 - b. So with the more complex areas. Insurance policies, contracts, guarantees, will, etc., all based upon conditions and special stipulations.
2. Christianity is a conditional matter. Has infinite good to offer but only under certain conditions. Our lesson is intended to cause us to see that Christianity is conditional and that stated conditions must be met before it can bless us.
3. The key word in our study is "IF" — that little word on which hangs so much — that word which suggests *a condition*.
 - a. John 14, 15 — Jesus' "farewell discourse" to his disciples before his death — very important. Like someone who realizes that he is about to die calls those closest to him to reassure them of his love for them, and to make known his last wishes.
 - b. In John 14, 15, Jesus used the word "if" several times stressing that there were many *conditions* that must be met.

Discussion

- I. **Our assurance of heaven depends upon the conditions being met.** (John 14:1, 2.)
 - A. Are there many mansions in the Father's house?
 1. Mansion — literary a abiding place. Denotes that there is plenty of room. (Cf. Lk. 14:22.)
 2. Why Jesus said this. (Lk 13:31-38.)
 - B. The *condition* under which we KNOW that heaven has

plenty of room for us: "IF it were not so, I would have told you. "

1. Jesus never deceived anyone. No guile found in his mouth. (1 Pet. 2:22.)
2. He does not ask us to leave all and follow him and then promise us a home in heaven if there is not enough room for all who follow him.
3. Jesus not like a dishonest real estate man who gives a big build up to a piece of desert.

II. The second coming of Jesus depends on the conditions being met. (John 14:3.)

A. Will Jesus come again?

1. Many scoffers — 1st century and today. (2 Pet. 3:4.)
2. His -coming will surprise many just like the days of Noah. (Matt. 24:37-39.)

B. The condition under which we KNOW that he is coming again: ((IF I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again. "

1. Did Jesus go? (Acts 1:10.) - He did.
2. Since he went, the *condition* was met and we can be rest assured that he will come again.
3. If he had never gone, he could have never come again; the conditions must always be met.

III. Prayer depends upon the conditions being met. (Jn. 14:4; 15:7.)

A. "IF ye shall ask anything *in my name*, I will do it. " — Prayer must be in the name of Christ. (14:14.)

1. He is our mediator. (1 Tim. 2:5.)
2. Prayer in any other name, he will not hear.

B. "IF ye *abide in me* and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. " (15:7.)

1. ONLY those "in Christ" are his children (Gal. 3:26, 27), and thus have a right to call God "Father. "
2. Only those who are living" in accordance with Christ's words have hope of answered prayer.

C. These two conditions in themselves are basic, but we must remember that there are others.

1. Ask in faith, nothing doubting. (Jas. 1:6, 7.)

2. Thing asked for must be according to the will of God. (1 John 5:14.)

If when I kneel to pray,
With eager lips I say,
'Lord, give me all the things that I desire,
Health, wealth, fame, friends, brave heart, religious fire,
The power to sway my fellowmen at will,
And strength for mighty works to banish ill, '
 In such a prayer as this
 The blessing I must miss.
But if I lowly fall,
And thus in faith I call: —
'Through Christ, O Lord, I pray thee give to me,
Not what I would, but what seems best to Thee,
Of Life, of health, of service, and of strength,
Until to Thy full joy I come at length, '
 My prayer shall then avail,
 The blessing shall not fail.

IV. Our relationship with Christ depends upon the conditions being met.

- A. In order to KNOW God, must KNOW Christ. (Jn. 14:7.)
 1. This speaks of an intimate knowledge, growing understanding, clear perception.
 2. Many trying to know God apart from Christ and a knowledge of Christ - Can't be! (Jn. 14:6.)
- B. In order for us to say we love Christ, must keep his commandments. (Jn. 14:15.)
 1. Do you keep his commandments? If not, you can't say you love him, for you've not met the conditions.
 2. Cf. Jn. 14:24 - the opposite holds true.
- C. In order for God and Christ to dwell in us, we must love him and keep his words. (Jn. 14:23.)
 1. Gal. 2:20 - Paul, an example.
 2. Folks today who say that Jesus is in them yet don't obey his commandments speak not the truth.
- D. In order for us to be the friend of Jesus we must do whatsoever he commands us. (Jn. 15:14.)

1. Do you do whatever Jesus commands? If not you are not his friend — you've not met the conditions.
2. Key word — *whatsoever*, that includes BAPTISM. Mk 16:15, 16 and everything else he commands.
3. Christ died for his friends. (Jn. 15:13.) Are you his friend?

V. Hell depends upon the condition being met. (Jn. 15:6.)

- A. "IF a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. "
 1. There would be no one in hell if no one met the conditions of hell - *failure to abide in Christ*.
 2. Mark it - not enough to get into Christ - must ABIDE in him.
- B. The reason why one who does not abide in Christ will land in hell at last is because there is no life outside him. (1 Jn. 5:11.)

Conclusion

1. Hence, Christianity is a conditional matter.
 - A. Jesus himself has met some of the conditions.
 - B. There are certain conditions we must meet in order to be what Christ wants us to be.
2. There is one condition that I wish no one here could meet — the condition of hell — failure to abide in Christ. There is no need for one not to abide in him. Today is an opportunity to get into him.

What Makes A Home A Christian Home?

Introduction

1. Just as there is a difference between a house and a home, there is a difference between a home and a *Christian* home.
2. In this lesson we will discuss the ingredients and features which comprise a *Christian* home.

Discussion

I. The same features which made the first home a home, make a home a Christian home.

- A. God created the first home just like he wants all homes to be.
 1. After God created the home "he saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. " (Gen. 1:31.)
 2. Therefore, the first home as it was when God created it is a pattern for all Christian homes.
 3. Jesus recognized this, Matthew 19:4, 8, and when dealing with marriage and its problems he pointed to "the beginning. "
- B. What features did God have in the home he created?
 1. The one flesh relationship. (Gen. 2:23; Matt. 19:5.) Communion of heart as well as of body.
 2. From this relationship, Moses noted a vital principle about "leaving and cleaving. " (Gen. 2:24.)
 3. Child bearing and rearing. (Gen. 1:28.)
 - a. Children are a heritage of the Lord. (Psa. 127:3.)
 - b. Every Christian home ought to have some, if possible.
- C. When these features are incorporated into a home, it has the makings of a *Christian* home.

II. The same things which make a person a Christian, make a home a Christian home.

- A. In order for a home to be a Christian home, all accountable members must be Christians.
- B. Love for and study of God's word.
 - 1. God's word the textbook for living, (2 Pet. 1:3), also the textbook for building a Christian home.
 - 2. Family devotions add much to making a home Christian. (Deut. 6:4-9.)
- C. Dedication to the will of Christ.
 - 1. Means setting of priorities: Christ-first/ others—second/ self—last.
 - 2. Christ must rule daily decisions. (Gal. 2:20.)
 - a. What about the budget? Can a home be a Christian home if Christ and his church get only the left overs?
 - b. What about time? Do secular activities get more time than the Lord and his church?
- D. Daily prayer. (1 These. 5:17.) Applies to the home as well.
 - 1. Prayer for family growth.
 - 2. Thanksgiving.
 - 3. Seeking God's help in solving family problems. (Cf. Jas. 1:5.)
- E. Christlikeness. (1 Pet. 2:21.) Must characterize each member of the home if it is to be a Christian home.

III. The same features which make for a strong congregation, make a home a Christian home.

- A. Commitment to God's plan.
 - 1. No congregation strong or pleasing to the Lord which is not committed to God's teaching, plan for worship, organization, work, etc.
 - 2. A Christian home is committed to God's plan for the home.
 - a. The permanence of marriage. (Matt. 19:6. — cf. with faithfulness" as per Rev. 2:10.)
 - b. Husband head of the wife; wife submits to husband. (Eph. 5:23. - cf. Just as necessity of leaders who lead and followers who follow.)
 - c. Children obedient to parents. (Eph. 6:1.)
- B. Love and concern one for another.
 - 1. A must in the congregation. (Jn. 13:34, 35.)
 - 2. A must for the Christian home. (Eph. 5:25; Tit. 2:4.)

3. In both church and home — *loving is doing... serving... giving.*
- C. Fellowship — togetherness.
 1. Means "joint participation. "
 2. Early church characterized thereby. (Acts 2:42, 44.)
 3. In the home we need...
 - a. Less TV, sports, clubs, etc.
 - b. More family outings, picnics, camping trips, family projects.
- D. Forbearance — Patience.
 1. A must for peace, harmony, and unity in the church. (Eph. 4: 1, 2.)
 2. Same goes for the home. Can't have a Christian home without some "bending. "
 3. Illus. Big tree uprooted by storm. Little sapling untouched. Why? One knew how to bend, the other did not.
- E. Worship together.
 1. Worship builds up the church and each member. (Heb. 10:24, 15.)
 2. "The family that prays together stays together. " What stronger bond could there be than to worship the same Lord together?

Conclusion

1. We've noticed that in order to make a Christian home, the same features which made the first home a home, which makes a person a Christian, which make for a strong church must be incorporated thereinto.
2. Christian homes don't just happen. They are MADE!
 - a. The only thing some homes lack in being Christian homes is the obedience of the gospel by mom, dad, sister or brother.
 - b. The only thing some homes lack in being Christian homes is a mom, dad, sister or brother being restored to faithfulness.
 - c. Why don't we do what is necessary to make every home a Christian home?

Arise, Go Up To Bethel

Genesis 35:1—5

Introduction

1. The background of Bethel (the house of God). Gen. 28:10-22.
2. In the text, Genesis 35, God commissioned Jacob *logo back to Bethel*.
3. A spiritual lesson - We need as Christians to *go back to the House of God* —
 - i. e. to renew our commitment to God's house:
 - a. In attendance.
 - b. In study.
 - c. In service.

Discussion

I. Going back to Bethel is a family matter. (v. 2a.)

- A. There is a great need to get the whole family back on the course toward serving God.
 1. The family is under great attack today — ERA, divorce, etc.
 2. The vulnerability lies in the fact that families are not strong in serving God *together*.
 3. "The family that prays together stays together. "
- B. Not until we have strong God-serving families will the congregation be strong in serving God.

II. Going back to Bethel involves preparation.

- A. Rachel had stolen the family gods (Gen. 31:19); it was now time to *put away these strange gods!* 1. Too many Christians have let the "gods" of the world come between them and God; have trusted in them rather than the Lord.

2. Going back to Bethel involves putting behind anything that stands between us and God.
3. Covetousness is idolatry. (Col. 3:5.)
- B. *Be clean!* The world *defiles* us when we love it and partake of its things. (Jas. 1:27.)
 1. We must be cleansed of this defilement before God will receive us again. (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.)
 2. The blood of Jesus is the only thing that can cleanse us! (1 Jn. 1:7.)
- C. *Change your garments.*
 1. After one is cleansed from defilement, there must be a i change of life. (Repentance must result in a change of; life.)
 2. We must not continue to touch the unclean thing! (2 Cor. 6:17.)

III. Going back to Bethel is a matter of decision— "Arise!"

- A. In the case of Christians — we must arise from the depths of indifference, lukewarmness, and laziness. (Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:14.)
- B. As in the case of the man born lame, Acts 3, God will not help us until we "arise. "

IV. Going back to Bethel promises the favor and blessings of God. (v. 5.)

- A. Our influence will be renewed. (Matt. 5:13, 16.)
- B. As long as we are faithful, i. e., "dwell there", God will be with us, helping us overcome. (1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:35, etc.)

Conclusion

1. God calls ALL Christians to *go back to Bethel*:
 - a. To cast off the old indifference.
 - b. To renew our commitment to God.
 - c. To return to our first love. (Rev. 2:4.)
2. Won't YOU go back to Bethel? Won't YOU return to the house of the Lord?

"Neither Give Place To The Devil!"

Ephesian 4:27.

Introduction

1. The Bible reveals the nature of sin, how we get into it, and what sin can do.
2. The Bible also reveals *how to stay out of sin*; with such our lesson has to do: *Neither give place to the devil.*
3. Young people, do you want to know how to stay out of sin? "*Neither give place to the devil!*" Adults, do you want to know how to stay out of sin? "*Neither give place to the devil!*"
4. What does it mean? Don't give him any room in your life!

Discussion

I. The devil is trying his best to get a place in our lives — a foothold on our hearts.

- A. He has a plan, a strategy, (2 Cor. 2:11.)
 1. Like a general, he is searching out all the weaknesses of the objective to find the best angle of attack!
 2. He formulates his plan and concentrates all his artillery on those weak points.
- B. This means his plan differs from one person to the next.
 1. With some, his best approach is to keep them from the source of encouragement of faithfulness) *The Services]* (Heb. 10:24, 25.)
 2. With others, he tries to get them to stop studying the Bible, God's "antibiotic" against infection by sin. (Psa. 119:11.)
 3. With others, he heaps difficulties and hardships, the trials of life (as in the case of Job) to try to get them to *doubt God!*
 4. With some, all three are necessary... and he will stop at nothing!

- C. He is able to put his plan into action without men being aware of it.
 1. Lk. 22 — Peter was unaware that Satan wanted to sift him.
 2. Matt. 33 - "while men slept" the tares were sown.

II. What he does when he gets a place in our lives.

- A. Sets up a base of operations; he wants to hold and utilize to the fullest the foothold he has secured!
 1. Christ has a base of operation in the hearts of the faithful (those who attend every service, who study, who trust in God). Phil. 2:12, 13.
 2. But, the devil easily sets up his base of operation in the hearts of those in whom Christ has no base.
- B. From such a base, he can accomplish his evil objectives, such as:
 1. Maintaining perpetual babyhood. (Eph. 4:14, 15.)
 2. Instigating a worldly walk and hypocrisy. (Eph. 4:17, 19, 22.)
 3. Encouraging lying (he is a liar from the beginning and the father of it). Eph. 4:25.
 4. Encouraging unbridled anger. (Eph. 4:26.)
- C. From such a vantage point, he can ultimately:
 1. Get us to the point where repentance is impossible.
 2. Destroy us completely (Judas is an example.)

III. How we might keep him from getting a place in our lives.

- A. Put up a *steadfast* defense, to hold our ground, not to yield an inch! (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thes. 5:22; Has. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9.)
 1. Steadfastness has been the secret of victory in carnal warfare down through the ages; Leonidas; Henry Clay; Stonewall Jackson.
 2. So it is with spiritual warfare, as the battles which Jesus and Paul had with the spiritual wickedness in high places fully illustrate. (Matt. 4:1-11; Gal. 2:5.)
- B. God provides the equipment we need to hold our position and give no place to the enemy.
 1. An all powerful Captain, who has the greatest experi-

- ence in dealing with and fully defeating the foe. (Matt. 4:1-11.)
2. Armor of God. (Eph. 6:10-17.)
 3. The FAITH - the gospel, the *power* of God. (1 Pet. 5:9; Rom. 1:16.)
 4. The work of the Lord. 1 Cor. 15:58. (Deeply involving oneself in the work of God gives no room for the devil!)
- C. With all of this, it is certain that the devil can make *no* advancement that we do not ALLOW him to make; the only place he can get is the one we "give" (as in the text) him!

Conclusion

1. Give the devil an inch and he will take a mile! He did so in the case of Judas.
2. This is how to stay out of sin — and the ONLY way - *Don't give the devil one solitary inch!*

Attendance — The Barometer Of Spirituality: — The Importance of Attending Every Service!

Matthew 7:17-20.

If you do not attend every service you are *able* to attend, such:

I. Indicates disregard for the teaching of the scriptures.

- A. Heb. 10:25. "*The manner of some*" here is forsaking the assembling of ourselves together on *Sunday night* and *Wednesday night!*
 - 1. "Forsaking" means "abandoning, leaving".
 - 2. That is exactly what some here have done with regard to Sunday night and Wednesday night!
- B. Someone says, "You don't *have* to come on Sunday night and Wednesday night; the Bible doesn't say so. "
 - 1. Do you know that there is just as much *apostolic authority* for *daily* assembling as there is for Sunday assembling?
 - 2. Acts 2:46 - *apostolic example* - they met DAILY in the temple.
Acts 20:7 — *apostolic example* — they met. on *the first day of the* week to break bread. No command for either but *authority* for BOTH!

II. Indicates a sinful attitude.

- A. Such a one doesn't have the love for God and Christ he ought to. (Heb. 10:24, 25.)
- B. Such a one is not concerned about his spiritual development like he ought to be. (2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:2.)
 - 1. If you know all you need to know, why aren't you a teacher? Heb. 5:12; we always need more teachers.
 - 2. If you know all you need to know, you are better than inspired men! (2 Tim. 1:25; 4:13.)

- C. Such a one doesn't respect the elders of the church as he ought to.
 - 1. They have an obligation to feed. (Acts 20:28.)
 - 2. They are given the AUTHORITY to determine the amount and when it is to be done.
 - 3. We must obey them. (Heb. 13:7, 17.)
- D. Sum all this up and its spells: *lukewarm Christian**.
 - 1. Such nauseates Christ.
 - 2. Better not to come at all than to come in *lukewarm* manner. (Jesus wished they were either HOT or COLD!)

III. Indicates hypocrisy.

- A. Webster defines "hypocrisy" — "one feigning (appearing) to be what he is not. " A hypocrite is a mild way to say one "living a lie. "
- B. Men say, "I am a faithful Christian" and then only attend a minority of the services.
 - 1. "Faithful" means "full of faith". Would it be likely to say that one is "*full of faith*" who is so *empty* of service?
 - 2. Faithful also means "dependable, trustworthy. " Yet, some so-called "faithful Christians" cannot be depended on to be at all the services (I wouldn't want to depend on them to pray for me, or to be the only one there to help.)
- C. Men say "I am devoted to Christ" but show by their actions that they honor him with their lips, while their heart is far from him.
 - 1. Such never miss a *Ball game*, but miss the majority of services. *Which are they more devoted to?*
 - 2. Such never miss a *Meeting* of the Social or Civic Organization, but miss most of the services of the church. *Which are they more devoted to?*
 - 3. Such never let their children miss school unless sick, but will let them miss the services of God. *Which are they more devoted to?* If the kids land in hell at last, what good would school have done, really?
- D. *Anything* or *Anybody* more than Christ — unworthy of Him. (Matt. 10:37.)

IV. Indicates the need for repentance!

- A. WHY? Because it is a SIN! (Jas. 4:17.) Sin must be repented of to be forgiven.
- B. Simon told to repent of thinking that the power of God could be had for money. Yet, *we need to repent for thinking that eternal life could be had for lukewarm, halfhearted service]*

Three "Nots" That Need Tying

- I. **The first "not": "Judge Not!"** (Matt. 5:1-7.)
 - A. We have a serious responsibility to our brother. (Gal. 6:1, 2; Rom. 15:1.)
 - B. Yet, some take this responsibility as license to go *mote-hunting* and *fault-finding*. No man has such a license! (Rom. 14:4.)
 1. Jesus condemned it plainly and clearly; "Judge NOT!"
 - a. The word Jesus used gives us our word "critic." To be a critic, one must be an expert, which none of us is. (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 3:10.)
 - b. Jesus used the *mote* (a speck of dust or a small splinter) to illustrate that the kind of judging he condemned was the *searching* for of *microscopic, unseen* faults in others.
 - c. The Pharisees were living examples of what Jesus condemned. They "strained at gnats and would swallow a camel"... they overlooked *great faults* in their own lives (extortion, excess, 'etc.) yet, strained to uncover little microscopic faults in the lives of others.
 2. Mote-hunting and fault-finding *backfire!*
 - a. He who hunts motes, finds faults, assumes the office of a critic will be subjected to the same — by MEN as well as by GOD. (v. 1.) Therefore, he ought to live by Matthew 1:12!
 - b. The same judgment and standard he uses will be used on him. (v. 2.)
 - c. The mote-hunter, fault-finding is *devastating* to the *unity* of the Lord's church.
 3. We are supposed to edify one another — *build one another up!* (1 These. 5:11.)
 4. Mote-hunters and fault-finders are in the *destruction business*; they try to *tear down!*.

II. The second "NOT": "grudge not!" (Jas. 5:9.)

- A. It is an understatement to say that the tongue can hurt the church.
 - 1. Who can assess the damage done by a malicious gossip?
 - 2. Is there any way to calculate the hurt done by a lying tongue?
 - 3. What about all those idle words men have spoken?
- B. James here condemns *a sin of the tongue most common among Christians*: In the original means "grumbling, complaining, murmuring, etc. "
 - 1. People complain when things are not done exactly like they think they ought to be done - many churches divided for such.
 - 2. People grumble because they have a sour, unpleasant attitude; they just can't get along with anyone else.
 - 3. *We ask*: is there any thing which has a more adverse effect on the *work, progress, morale, and unity* of the church than such?
- C. The wandering in the wilderness is a testimony to the displeasure God feels toward grumbling, murmuring, and complaining.
 - 1. Numbers 11: Israelites complained: God consumed them with fire.
 - 2. Numbers 12: Aaron and Miriam complained; Miriam stricken with leprosy.
 - 3. Numbers 25: Israelites complained; God sent serpents to bite them.
 - a. How do you like to be around someone who always complains, grumbles, and murmurs about every little matter?
 - b. Do you think God likes it any more now than he did in the days of the Israelites? (Jude 14—16.)
- D. The solution to grumbling and complaining, or how to tie the "NOT":
 - 1. Put that sour, dissatisfied attitude away from you.
 - 2. Realize that everything cannot *and will not* be done exactly like you would like it to be every time.

III. The third "NOT": "Despise Not!" (Matt. 1&:10.)

- A. Jesus began in verse 1 of this chapter teaching his disciples a lesson on humility.
 - 1. The problem of *desiring to be superior* goes way back.
 - a. The disciples: "Who shall be the greatest. "
 - b. Diotrophes: "I love the preeminence. "
 - c. No man, however, has anything to glory about! (1 Cor. 1:29.) We're all on a level! *Dependent on God's grace*]
 - 2. Yet, one who desires to be superior will tend to "despise" i. e. "think down on" others.
 - 3. Jesus' word is clear: One who desires to be superior in things and who despises those he deems inferior, must realize that only the humble (*like a child*, vv. 1 -3) may enter the kingdom!
- B. We need to learn the lesson that is 2000 years old, for we fail to "take heed" when Jesus says, "Despise not... don't think down on others. "
 - 1. We are deceived! (Gal. 6:3.)
 - 2. Because we are *proud, self-conceited, and high* in our own eyes, we think down on others who are:
 - a. Less talented than we.
 - b. Less experienced or less mature than we.
 - 3. Such pride, arrogance, and high-minded conceit can lead only to *defeat and abasement!* (Prov. 16:18; Lk. 14:11; Jas. 4:6.)
 - a. Illus. of Belshazzar. (Dan. 5.)
 - b. Illus. of Peter. (Mk 14:29.)
- C. This "NOT" must be tied, for if it isn't, the UNITY of the church is threatened, and the spirit of unity is not upheld.

"I Was Hungry... "

Matthew 25:35.

Introduction

1. The significance of Christian service is expressed here by Jesus.
 - a. When you serve your needy fellowmen, you are serving Christ. When you neglect to serve your needy fellowmen, you neglect to serve Christ.
 - b. Cf. 1 Cor. 8:12.
2. But, notice what is at the top of the list. (v. 35.) Three simple words which introduce a "world" of opportunity to serve Jesus by serving the needs of our fellowmen.
 - a. We take this to mean physical food and it does. Practical benevolence *is* a vital part of the mission of every church and every Christian. (Gal. 6:10.)
 - b. But, we must remember that men have other and deeper hungers... hungers nonetheless... hungers which can be satisfied through our efforts.
 - c. I am persuaded that with regard to these hungers as well, Jesus will say, "I was hungry and you gave unto me" or "I was hungry and you gave not unto me. "
3. Within the context of the fact that service unto our fellow-men is service unto Christ, let us notice some hungers of men and consider our response thereunto.

Discussion

- I. **"I was hungry... for the bread of life... for the gospel of Christ. "**
 - A. If men are outside of Christ, they are lost. (2 Tim. 2:10.)
 1. Even if their bellies are full and their bank accounts are full, their souls are dying, starving to death. (Lk. 12:15.)
 2. They are starving for the life-giving message of the gospel of Jesus.

- a. It is the bread of life. (John 6:22-40.)
 - b. It is the seed of rebirth. (1 Pet. 1:23.)
 - c. It is the spiritual food whereby the soul can thrive. (1 Pet. 2:2.)
- B. The church... individually and collectively... is the only hope for these starving souls to receive the food they so desperately desire and need.
- 1. In Matthew 14:19, in the story of the feeding of the 5000, there is a picture of the work of the church given in the activity of the disciples.
 - a. Jesus was the source of the food.
 - b. He gave it to the disciples who distributed it to the crowds.
 - 2. Christ has given us the bread of life and the responsibility of seeing that it is distributed to the hungry. (Matt. 28:19. 20.)
- C. On the day of judgment, Christ will say, "I was hungry..." How will he finish it with regard to our dispensing the bread of life? Remember, Christ will view our service to others as our service toward him.

II. "I was hungry... for a Christian example. "

- A. Countless people in the world are looking for a picture, a model, an example of how to 'reach heaven.
- 1. We are there to tell them. Be a Christian... live like Christ. That is right. (Jn. 14:6; 1 Pet. 2:22.)
 - 2. But the majority of people are ignorant of who Jesus really is, and what it means to be like him.
 - a. Jesus taught us that we should be like the Father.
 - b. But he also showed us what the Father was like. (Jn. 14:8, -9.)
 - c. So, it is not sufficient to tell them how to be, but we must show them what it means to be a Christian, to be like Christ.
 - 3. People are like the Gentiles of Jn. 12:20-21. They have a keen desire... a hunger for a glimpse of Jesus.
- B. It is the task of the church and each Christian to satisfy that hunger. (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:15.)

- C. In the judgment Jesus will say, "I was hungry... " How will he finish that with regard to our satisfying men's hunger for an example and demonstration of Christianity?

III. "I was hungry... for compassion and help. "

- A. Kenny Bass recently told that in a small town in South Georgia there lived a man named Sam Tate. Also in this town there was a man known simply as the "town drunk. " One morning he saw Mr. Tate and said, "Sam, the high school boys threw rocks at me last night. " Tate replied, "Well, Jim, maybe they were just trying to make a better man out of you. " In response to that the old drunk uttered a great truth when he said, "Sam, I never heard of Jesus throwing rocks at anybody to make them better. "
 - 1. This is a good appraisal of the approach many Christians take toward sinners and outsiders.
 - 2. The only way sinners and outsiders can be saved is to come inside and be forgiven!
- B. These people are *hungry* — hungry for warmth, concern, help. We must give them these things... show compassion, desire to help... must love the sinner though hate sin.
 - 1. How do we react to the alcoholic, the drug addict, the homosexual, etc. the person with family problems?
 - 2. We usually turn the cold shoulders, talk about them, condemn them. (Knew of one church that told a couple who had marital problems that they were not welcome to attend!)
 - 3. But how did Jesus deal with this hunger for help? (Jn. 8:1-11.)
 - a. He was loving, understanding, compassionate, merciful, though not once condoning her sin.
 - b. He was forgiving and helped her overcome the problem.
 - c. That is the way we should deal with the hunger people in trouble and sin have for help and compassion. (Jude 23.)
- C. On the day of judgment, Jesus will say, "I was hungry... " How will he finish it regarding our satisfying the hunger for compassion and help of our fellowmen?

Conclusion

1. How wonderful, if in the judgment Christ can say to us, "I was hungry... for the gospel, for a Christian example, for compassion... and you gave unto me. "
2. How sad if he says to us, "I was hungry... but you did not give unto me!"

The Fear Of The Lord

Psalm 128

Introduction

1. Why do we have so many problems in our nation today... so many family problems... so many personal problems? I am persuaded that in every case, it is because of a lack of fear of the Lord!
 - a. Certainly, we do not suggest that the righteous don't have any problems; they do. I am suggesting that by a lack of fear of the Lord, *we bring problems upon ourselves* that wouldn't be there if we feared the Lord more!
 - b. Solomon said, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. " (Prov. 14:34.)
2. In Psa. 128, the writer suggests the blessings of the fear of the Lord. (Read.)
When the fear of the Lord prevails,
 - a. Individuals are blessed.
 - b. Homes are blessed.
 - c. Nations are blessed.
3. Let us consider together the subject of the "Fear of the Lord" and see how it can bring blessing into lives. (One thing to keep in mind: "Of course, this is a general statement, or as indicating what will commonly be true as the result of religion."
" — Albert Barnes, p. 252. Cf. Eph. 6:1-3.)

Discussion

- I. **Do you want to receive blessing? Then fear the Lord and walk in His ways.**
 - A. God blesses the labor, the work of a man who fears him. (v. 2.)
 1. Of course, it will be honest work which receives honest pay.
 2. A man who fears the Lord will be a better worker as a result of his religion. (Illustrate.)

- B. The one who fears the Lord is *happy*. "You shall be happy. " (v. 2.)
 - 1. Note how many who have no fear of the Lord before their eyes are unhappy. The things they serve and the ways they walk are the ways of pain and death.
 - 2. The man who fears the Lord has so many things to be happy about. (Phil. 4:4.) — blessings in this life and the life to come.
- C. The one who fears the Lord will have *security*. "And it shall be well with you. " (v. 2.)
 - 1. Why do people have savings, buy insurance, build houses instead of tents, etc.? They are in search of security.
 - 2. Words to "God will take care of you. "
 - 3. Matt. 6:33 — Those who fear the Lord are the most secure people in the world.

II. Do you want to have a good family and for your family to be blessed? Then fear the Lord and walk in His ways! (vv. 3, 4.)

- A. Look at all the problems which affect families that are caused by a lack of fear of the Lord.
 - 1. Alcoholism and drug abuse - deformed babies; sterilization.
 - 2. Horrible and child-deforming diseases that result from sexual promiscuity.
 - 3. People who fear the Lord are generally delivered from these.
- B. Also, children of those who fear the Lord can be trained in the way of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4.)
 - 1. They have the blessings of the fear of the Lord to reap for themselves.
 - 2. They have the hope of sharing heaven with you and you with them for eternity.
- C. Children who fear the Lord will be happy and secure, as their parents who feared the Lord.

III. Do you want our nation to prosper and be preserved? Do you want to continue to enjoy its freedom? Then fear the Lord and walk in His ways! (vv. 5, 6.)

- A. The histories of Israel and Rome prove that when the people of a nation have no fear of the Lord, the nation is doomed.
 - 1. The people of Israel time and time again went after idols and neighboring nations made spoil of them because God was not with them.
 - 2. The great imperial state of Rome was vanquished on account of the decadence of the people — God gave them up.
- B. Communism, humanism, and atheism are threatening our nation today and are making terrifying progress. (These can only thrive when people don't fear the Lord.) We are in danger as a nation on account of lack of fear of the Lord.
 - 1. Danger evidenced by the lack of church attendance (even here on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights.)
 - 2. Evidenced by the lifestyles which are prevalent - sexual free expression, homosexuality, nudity, drunkenness, drug abuse.
 - 3. Evidenced by the anti-religious movement and the crusade for pseudo-science of evolution and for social reforms.
 - 4. As we look around us, it seems that Psa. 36:1 best described us.
- C. The only answer — the *fear of the Lord* — from the roots to the top of the tree.
 - 1. The majority are in the roots and they have control of what happens in the tree.
 - 2. National fear of the Lord begins with individual fear of the Lord.
- D. Proverbs 14:34.

Conclusion

- 1. The blessedness of man, homes, and nations lies in the fear of the Lord... respect for his word and will, obedience to his commands.
- 2. The conclusion of the matter is still, after 2500 years, the same. (Eccl. 12:13.)

How Many Is Few?

I. Few is how many days you have to make the best of your life and prepare for the next. (Job 14:1—2; Cf. Jacob's words at age 130 -- Gen. 47:9.)

- A. The longest life is short.
 - 1. Compared with eternity.
 - 2. Compared with what it might have been if man had not sinned.
- B. The shadow on the dial plate never stands still nor goes back. (Psa. 39:4-6.)
- C. These facts should impress upon us the necessity of:
 - 1. Numbering our days. (Psa. 90:9-12.)
 - 2. Redeeming or buying back the time. (Eph. 5:15—17.)
 - 3. Setting the proper priorities for the few days we have, and pressing on toward the future rather than living in the past.

II. Few is how many will be saved. (Matt. 7:13, 14.)

- A. It seems that the minority is all that is ever saved.
 - 1. E. g. 1 Pet. 3:20 - Only eight out of the vast multitudes of the world's population saved.
 - 2. Genesis 19 — Only three-out of the cities of the plain were spared from destruction.
 - 3. The prophets of old spoke of a "remnant" that would be saved amidst the judgment of God. E. g. Amos 3:12.
- B. Jesus provides us with clues as to why there are so few saved.: Matt. 7:13, 14.
 - 1. He says that many go in at the broad gate because it is so easy to find and enter.
 - 2. But few can even find the strait gate, much less enter it when they do find it.
 - 3. Cf. Luke 13:23, 24 — Even after we've found it, it involves *effort* — "strive" to enter.
- C. Even after finding the gate and entering, many are called,

but few are chosen. Matt. 22:14. (Think that just because you are a church member you will be saved? Think again!)

III. Few is how many laborers there are to gather the harvest of God. (Matt. 9:37, 38.)

- A. Reasons why there are so few laborers:
 - 1. In Jesus' day — the only ones trained to reap were the Scribes and Pharisees and they were corrupt, sinful and unconcerned. Therefore, Jesus trained at least 82 reapers.
 - 2. In our day:
 - a. Few are willing to teach and work.
 - b. Few able to get support (Cf. Matt. 20:6, 7.)
- B. In view of these things we need to pray and be specific Cf. Lk 11:5.
 - 1. For opportunities to train reapers... for Bible class teachers who will train soul winner... for parents who will be soul winners and rear their children to win souls.
 - 2. For the Lord to motivate the lukewarm.
 - 3. That we might open our hearts and our pocket books on behalf of getting the harvest in.
- C. There is no reason for doubt — the Lord of the harvest is God and He is able to send out the reapers. (1 Jn. 5:14.)
- D. We say to the Lord, "Lord, we know not what to pray for as ought..." *Yet, Jesus has told us one thing to pray for and we seldom hear it mentioned!*

IV. Few is how many God can use to make many more.

- A. Matt. 15:34 — the seven loaves and a few small fishes Christ used to feed 4000.
 - 1. Notice that Jesus *gave thanks* for these little bits.
 - 2. Notice that *He gave these to others*.
 - 3. This is what is required for God to make more out of what we have:
 - a. We must be thankful for what we have.
 - b. We must be willing to give what we have away, to share it with others.
- B. God can do well with many or few. (1 Sam. 14:6.)
- C. Let us determine to give what we have for God to use and

then *believe* that He can do with it what He intends to do — *He can!*

- V. Few is how many vessels the Lord will fill up if we only bring Him few.**
- A. 2 Kings 4:1—7. The Lord is able to fill all the vessels we bring Him.
 - B. In this story, the vessels could represent:
 - 1. Our faith. (Jas. 1:5, 8.)
 - 2. Our persistence. (Lk 11:5-10; cf. Jas. 4:2b.)
 - 3. The measure of *our* generosity. (Lk. 6:38. Cf. Mai. 3:10.)
 - C. We could never bring all the vessels, *nor even think of the number* of vessels the Lord can fill up. (Eph. 3:20.)

The Problem Of Compromise

Introduction

1. The story has been told of a battle where the flag got far ahead of the soldiers. An officer called back to his superior and asked, "Shall we bring the flag back to the regiment?" "No, " came the reply, "make the regiment catch up with the flag!"
2. The flag is far ahead of most of the church today. We are falling far behind what we ought to be. Instead of "catching up with the flag, " we are trying to do what the officer tried to do... we are growing lax and lenient. We are giving in. We are compromising!
3. In this lesson, let us examine some principles which I feel the church is compromising, and let us note some applications and solutions.

Discussion

I. There is a standard with which we must endeavor to keep pace.

- A. That standard is the word of God. (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Psa. 119:128.)
- B. That standard is perfectly demonstrated in the life of Christ and we are to observe Him and strive toward imitating Him. (Col. 1:28; 2 Cor. 3:18.)

II. To be satisfied with less than this standard is to compromise.

- A. To compromise is to refuse to stand up for what is right. It is to refuse to enforce the standard which God's word has given us. It is to refuse to meet the standard.
- B. The Bible is replete with examples which teach us the sin-fulness of compromise.
 1. King Saul is an example. (1 Sam. 15.)

2. Jeroboam is notorious for his compromising. (1 Kings 12.)
- C. It is essential for us to realize that compromise has eternal consequences.
 1. If we are satisfied with keeping pace with a standard inferior to the word of God, we will be condemned in the judgment. (Jn. 12:48.)
 2. If we are satisfied with less than the righteousness of God in Christ, we are in danger of condemnation. (Rom. 10:1-4.)

III. Let us notice some prevalent areas in which we are compromising.

- A. God's word has set a high standard for our dress. (2 Tim. 2:9.)
 1. It is to be proper, decent and modest, especially in worship services. (Young ladies should not wear shorts to church.)
 2. Yet, when immodest dress prevails among women of the congregation, no one becomes concerned.
 3. When we fail to demand that people meet God's standard for dress, we are compromising.
- B. God's word has set a high standard for attendance. (Heb. 10:25.)
 1. Many fail to attend all the services that they could. Yet who stands up and says anything about it... who takes a stand for God's standard on this?
 2. Instead, we are silent, and it is as though we have accepted the lie that attendance of all the services is not essential.
 3. When we fail to demand that people meet God's standard for attendance, we are compromising.
- C. God's word has set a high standard for knowledge of the Bible. (2 Tim. 2:15.)
 1. We are biblically illiterate... we don't check out what the preacher says in our Bibles, (cf. Acts 17:11.)
 2. We are unable to show people in the Bible "the reason of the hope that is in us... " (2 Pet. 3:15.)
 3. When we fail to demand that people learn and study the Bible, we are compromising.

- D. God's word has set a high standard for our manner of life. (Rom. 12:2.)
 - 1. We are, however, in many ways just like the world. Many socially drink, curse, love pleasure more than God, worship money and possessions.
 - 2. The world can't tell the difference between us and them — no wonder they refuse to become Christians.
 - 3. When we fail to demand that people not conform to the world, we are compromising.

IV. What must be done?

- A. We must recognize the high standard which God's word has set — we must "make the regiment catch up with the flag!"
- B. We must stand *for* what's right and stand *against* what is wrong. We must demand conformity to God's standard and refuse to tolerate compromise.
- C. We must do as Jehoida the priest did in 2 Kings 11.
 - 1. He crowned the rightful heir to the throne king and fought against the ones who opposed him.
 - 2. We must declare God's word supreme — the standard, the rule, and we must oppose those who fail to meet the standard.
 - 3. We cannot tolerate such attitudes as:
 - a. "I don't see anything wrong with it... " even though God's word has something against it to say.
 - b. "Everyone else is doing it... " even though the Bible says it is wrong.
 - c. "I know what the Bible says, but... " The Bible says it; that settles it!
 - d. "I don't believe you have to... " It matters not what you believe about it but what the Bible says about it!
- D. Who is to do it?
 - 1. Elders of the church must take a stand and demand conformity to God's standard and then lead the congregation in taking action against those who refuse to conform.
 - 2. Members must demand of themselves no less than the standard set by God's word.

Conclusion

1. Jesus is the captain of our salvation. (Heb. 2:10.) He will not tolerate soldiers who will not try to keep the pace He has set. He will not compromise and neither must we.
2. Frances R. Havergal wrote:
"True-hearted; whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, but thy Grace we will be;
Under the standard exalted and royal.
Strong in thy Strength we will battle for Thee. "
3. Only when we march under God's standard will victory be ours!

The Footsteps Of Jesus

1 Peter 2:21

Introduction

1. Mrs. M. B. Slade wrote these beautiful words:
Sweetly, Lord, have we heard Thee calling, "Come, follow me, "
And we see where Thy footprints falling, lead us to Thee...
Footprints of Jesus, that make the pathway glow,
We will follow the steps of Jesus, where'er they go.
2. No doubt but that she read 1 Pe. 2:21 before she wrote them.
3. "Where'er they go... "These words scare us, don't they? We shun the unknown. Even though we ought not, we walk by sight and not by faith. We are afraid that Jesus might go somewhere we might not want to go!
4. But to the person who believes in and totally trusts Jesus, there is no problem. He says, "I will follow Jesus *where ever* He may go!"
5. Jesus has left us an example that we should follow his steps, "*Where'er they go!*" But where do the steps of Jesus go?

Discussion

- I. **They begin at the waters — the waters of Baptism.** (Matt. 3:13-17.)
 - A. Jesus' first recorded act in his personal ministry. (Cf. Rom. 6:3, 4.)
 - B. The turning point of His life.
 1. After His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. (Jn. 1:32-34.)
 2. After His baptism, He was acknowledged as the Son of God from on high. (No record of this before. Cf. Gal. 3:26, 27 — so we.)
 - C. But why?
 1. In connection with repentance? For remission of sins?

Because of remission of sins? To become a member of a denomination?
No!

2. Jesus said it was to "fulfill all righteousness. "
 - a. What is righteousness? (Psa. 119:172.)
 - b. Jesus was totally and perfectly obedient. (Phil. 2:8.)
 - c. Jesus was baptized because it was God's will that He be baptized.
- D. We must be baptized. Why? Because it is right... it is God's will.
 1. Children sometimes don't fully understand why they must obey their parents. They may not want to obey. But they must because it is *right!* (Eph. 6:1—3.)
 2. If there were no other reasons for being baptized, it would be enough that *God said be baptized!* (Heb. 5:8, 9.)

II. They lead us through the wilderness of temptation.

- A. Describe the temptation of Jesus.
- B. Why was Jesus tempted?
 1. To become like us in every respect. (Heb. 2:17.)
 2. To enable Him to help people who are tempted. (Heb. 2:18.) *Succur* in Greek means "to run at a cry or call for help. "
 3. To enable Him to be empathetic. (Heb. 4:15, 16.)
 4. To learn obedience. (Heb. 5:8, 9.)
- C. But why must we be tempted? Temptation is a common and universal problem.
 1. It is a fact of life. (1 Cor. 10:13; Jas. 1:14.)
 2. All men face the same types of temptations which Jesus faced, the same "points. "
 - a. Lust of the flesh.
 - b. Lust of the eyes. (1 Jn. 2:15, 16.)
 - c. Vainglory of life.
- D. But, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus through the wilderness of temptation is to follow on to *victory*.
 1. He was victorious through love for and loyalty to the word of God. So will we be.
 2. God furnished the way of escape for Him and will for us. (1 Cor. 10:13.)

III. We must follow Jesus' footsteps to the place of worship.

- A. Jesus was in the habit of regular attendance at worship. It was his custom. (Lk. 4:16.)
 - 1. Implied: "every Sabbath. " Cf. "on the Sabbath day" with "on the first day of the week. " (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2.)
 - 2. According to A. Edersheim (Life and Times, i. 436, 437.) "To neglect attendance on its services would not only involve personal guilt, but bring punishment upon the whole district. "
 - 3. Many have a different "custom" (Heb. 10:25 - that of *neglecting* the services.)
- B. Certainly Jesus was of the same mind as the psalmist. Psalms 122:1. He went out of desire, joy, and anticipation, rather than drudgery.
 - 1. The church or assembly of God is the house of God. (1 Tim. 3:15.)
 - 2. When the church comes together, the Lord is there. (Matt. 18:20.)
 - 3. We should be possessors of the joy and desire to attend every service.
- C. If Jesus lived in your city, where would He be on Sunday at 10: 00 and 6: 00 or Wednesday at 7: 00? Can some of you who neglect the services conscientiously sing, "Where 'er they go?"

IV. We must follow the steps of Jesus through the fields of service.

- A. Jesus' life may be summarized in one word... *service**. (Acts 10:38.)
 - 1. He taught service, emphasizing that he who would be great must serve... He even washed the disciples' feet to demonstrate it.
 - 2. He not only taught but did. (Acts 1:1.)
- B. His primary concern was saving the souls of the lost. (Lk. 19:10;)
- C. It is with this same work that we must be concerned. (1 Cor. 15:58) — the work which the Lord did: serving and saving.

V. We must follow Jesus' footsteps through the garden of despair, suffering, and finally, death.

- A. Jesus' grief and suffering were great. (Summarize.)
- B. To follow Jesus and be really committed to Him means to be prepared for suffering. (Matt. 16:13-19.)
- C. At the end of the road of suffering, however, there is the glory of God.
 - 1. So it was for Jesus. (Heb. 12:1-4.)
 - 2. So for us. (Rom 5:3-5.)
- D. And meanwhile, Jesus goes with us. (Heb. 13:5.)

Sweetening The Bitter Waters

Ex. 15:22-25

Introduction

1. The story of Ruth, 1:19-21.
2. Have you ever felt that life has dealt very bitterly with you? In the lives of all of us, there have been things so bitter that we wondered saying, "I cannot bear the loads of life. I cannot drink the bitter cup poured for me. "
3. Read Ex. 15:22-25a.
4. Friends, God is able to make the bitter waters of life sweet for all who will trust Him and obey Him. (vv. 25b-26.)
 - a. That tree which God showed Moses represents to us the cross of Jesus, upon which the Savior shed his blood for your sins and mine.
 - b. That tree represents all that God has done and is doing to provide life and provide life more abundantly.
5. Let us look at some of the bitter waters which God makes sweet in and through Christ.

Discussion

I. God has made sweet the bitter waters of the guilt of sin.

- A. Without Christ, sinners are doomed to an eternity in hell - spiritual death. (Rom. 6:23.) Now that is bitter water!
- B. Every responsible, accountable person who has ever lived has, because of his sins, come to the bitter waters of guilt. (Rom. 3:23.)
- C. Under the law, the bitter waters became even more bitter, as God showed sin to be exceedingly sinful. (Rom. 7:7— 13.)
 1. There were sacrifices, bloody sacrifices, which in themselves could never cleanse the conscience, nor take away sins.
 2. There was made every year a remembering of all sins.

- D. But God has made sweet the bitter waters of the guilt and consequences of sin!
1. All sinners deserved to die for their sins, but Christ took our place. (Heb. 2:9.)
 2. He died for our sins... to atone them. (1 Cor. 15:1 -4.)
 3. Our response of faith and obedience removes the condemnation of sin from us. (Jn. 3:16; Mark 16:16; Rom. 8:1.)

II. God has made sweet the bitter waters of temptation.

- A. Temptation is an unpleasant experience. The devil tries to get us to give in to the desires within us and though we fight, we often lose. (James 1:14, 15.)
- B. The nature of our adversary the devil makes life miserable -- *he is always out to get us.* (1 Pet. 5:8.)
- C. But God has made sweet the bitter waters of temptation.
1. He sent Jesus to show people how to resist the devil -how to deal with temptation: by trust in God and knowledge of His word. (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:16; 1 Jn. 3:8.)
 2. He provides ways of escape for us. (1 Cor. 10:13.)
 3. As a result of what God and Christ have done for us, the bitter failure of temptation is turned into the sweet success of triumph.

III. God has made sweet the bitter waters of fear and worry.

- A. We want everything to go right and we want to be sure that it will. We want everything we need and desire.
1. But there are so many factors and forces working to keep these from being so.
 2. We know that things *can* go wrong, so we live in fear and worry that they *will* go wrong.
 3. A life filled with worry and fear is a miserable life, an unpleasant life. Majority of people in mental institutions and hospitals are there on account of worry.
- B. Yet, God has made sweet the bitter waters of worry and fear. 1. He has taught us how useless it is to worry.

- a. He has shown us what life is all about — more than food and clothing, etc. (Matt. 6:25.)
- b. He has shown us how to live one day at a time. (Matt. 6:34.)
- 2. He has shown us how wonderful it is to trust in Him who will provide and work all things for our good. (Matt. 6:26-33; Rom. 8:28.)
- 3. Through His power and promises, He has given us a spirit or disposition *of power*, rather than fear or timidity. (2 Tim. 1:7.)
- C. As a result of what God has done, the bitter waters of worry, fear, and anxiety have been changed into the sweet waters of peace and security.

IV. God has made sweet the bitter waters of death and the grave.

- A. Mankind is naturally afraid of death. (Heb. 2:15.)
 - 1. Apart from God's word, man can only speculate about what lies beyond the grave, if anything. I pity men who don't study God's word!
 - 2. Man has seen what death does -- it takes people from the land of the living.
 - 3. It is obvious from scripture and common sense that all people are subject to death. (Heb. 9:17.)
 - 4. Death is no doubt the bitterest water man must drink.
- B. But God has made sweet that bitter water of death.
 - 1. He has shown that there is life after death - that man is immortal. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of the living.
 - 2. He has taught us about the resurrection from the dead. (Jn. 5:28, 29.)
 - 3. He has demonstrated the reality of resurrection.
 - a) In those he raised: Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, etc.
 - b) In his own resurrection — the firstfruits of them that slept.
 - 4. He has promised to destroy both death and him who has the power of death. (1 Cor. 15:24-26; Heb. 2:14.)
- C. As a result of what God has done, death is no longer a *conquering* enemy but a *conquered* foe. (1 Cor. 15:54-57; Revelation 14:13; Phil. 1:23.) We now can sing:

I am longing for the coming of the snow-white angel band,
That shall bear my weary spirit to the sinless summerland;
As I tread the narrow pathway through this thorny vale I dream
Of the joys that ever brighten where the pearly waters gleam.

I am waiting for the signal that shall speak my full release
And present my welcome passport to the realms of perfect peace;
Yes, and when the weary sandals all the dusty way have trod,
I shall sing among the angels by the golden throne of God.

I am longing to be going yet my Father's kind command
Bids me tarry mid the shadows of the misty, lower land;
When my pilgrimage is ended I shall stem the turbid flood,
And recline upon the bosom of the spotless Son of God.

— J. W. Welsh

Conclusion

1. In view of all these things, there should be no doubt that God is the great healer... the Great Physician!
2. But God is only the healer of the true Israel... the children of God in Christ.
 - a. Note that the waters of Marah were only made sweet for the Israelites. Today, the waters of Marah are still the most bitter of the region.
 - b. The bitter waters are only made sweet for the children of God.
3. Think about your predication if you are not a Christian and a faithful one. You are come to the bitter waters of life as thirsty as can be, but you cannot drink the water... it's too bitter. By not being a Christian, you cannot have the waters sweetened by forgiveness of sin, power over the devil, blessed assurance, or promise of life eternal.
4. Only God can sweeten the bitter waters of life. Won't you come to Him?

Traveling Without Jesus

Luke 2:41-52

Introduction

1. Many are taking vacations this time of year... make preparations before they go... check to make sure they have everything.
2. This life is a journey... a journey to an endless and vast eternity. All are making this journey. (Heb. 9:27.)
 - a. As with all journeys, this one requires preparation. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.
 - b. Sadly, many are taking this journey without preparation... They refuse to obey the gospel and thus prepare to meet God.
 - c. People like this are comparable to Jesus' parents... they are traveling without Jesus. (Read Luke 2:41—52.)
3. Let us talk for a few minutes about the subject of "Traveling Without Jesus. "

Discussion

- I. **It is possible to be traveling without Jesus and not realize it!** (Vv. 43, 44.)
 - A. Things are not always as they seem. (Prov. 14:12; Jas. 1:26.)
 - B. Jesus' parents had taken it for granted that Jesus was with them. They may have taken someone else's word for it. They assumed He was with them and failed to check out the facts.
 - C. It is entirely possible for us to think that the Lord is with us, when in fact He is not. Illus. Josh, his soldiers defeated at Ai. (Josh. 7.)
 - D. Many on the day of judgment will have completed their journey to eternity thinking that Jesus has been with them when He wasn't. (Matt. 7:21-23.)

1. We must make our calling and election sure. (2 Pet. 1:10.)
2. We cannot afford to assume that Jesus is with us... merely take it for granted that He is with us... take someone else's word for it! Must check out the facts in the word of God.
3. 2 Cor. 13:5.

II. It is possible to look for Jesus in the wrong places. (Vv. 44, 45.)

- A. Jesus' parents found Him at what seems to be the last place they would have looked.
 1. Did not find Him among friends and relatives, the most likely.
 2. Even after returning to Jerusalem, took three days to come to the temple to look!
 3. They were astonished when they found Him!
- B. The Lord is often found in the most unlikely places.
 1. The Lord was in the last place Elijah looked. (1 Kings 19:9-14.)
 2. The wisdom of the Lord is foolishness to men. (1 Cor. 1:18-25.) Illus. Naaman. 2 Kings 5.
 3. Man could never have come up with God's plan even if they searched for ten thousand years. (1 Cor. 2:6—10.)
- C. Is it so strange, then, that Jesus is often found in some of the last places men would look for Him?
 1. E. g., baptism. (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12.)
 2. In the Father's house... the church. (1 Tim. 3:15.) Men look for Jesus but have no use for His church.
 3. These are a few reasons why men will travel without Jesus... because they refuse to look for Him in these... these are the last places they would think of looking.
- D. If men refuse to look for Jesus, they will eventually arrive at the end of their journey to eternity having traveled without Him. (Cf. Isa. 55:6.)

III. It is possible to be traveling without Jesus because of a failure to turn around and go back for Him... v. 45.

- A. If you are traveling on a trip and discover that you are lost;

you missed a turn-off, you must *turn around* and go back to the turn-off.

1. Jesus' parents had to *turn around* and go back to where they departed from Him.
 2. If you are not a Christian, and a faithful one, you are traveling away from God and without Jesus. (Eph. 2:12.) You are like the prodigal of Luke 15.
- B. In order for a lost person to travel with Jesus, he must *turn around, change, be converted*. (Matt. 18:1—3; Acts 3:19.) The process of conversion involves four changes:
1. Faith — a turning of the heart back to God, from unbelief to belief.
 2. Repentance — a turning of the affections and desires from the love of sin to its hatred and desire to avoid it.
 3. Confession — turning of the tongue from a denying of Christ to a confessing of faith in Him.
 4. Baptism — a changing of the location, from outside Christ to inside Christ.
- C. When the process of conversion is set in motion, the person turns back to God. Eph. 2:13.
1. He continues to be converted. (2 Cor. 3:18.)
 2. He walks with Jesus, walks as He walked, maintains a relationship with Jesus. (1 Jn. 1:6, 7; 2:6.)

Conclusion

1. All of us are engaged in a journey to eternity! We are either traveling with Jesus or without Him!
2. What about your journey:
 - a. Traveling without Jesus in the wrong places?
 - b. Looking for Jesus in the wrong places?
 - c. In need of turning around and returning to the place where you departed from Him?
3. Just as with a vacation trip, the time to prepare... the time to make sure you have everything is before you go on the journey!
4. Have you made adequate preparation? Are you willing to I make that?

Have You Found Your Gift?

Rom. 12:1-8

I. "Having gifts... "

- A. What does Paul mean by gifts?
 - 1. Uses *charisma* (from which comes charismatic). From *charts* — grace. Refers to a divinely conferred endowment from God's grace.
 - 2. Three lists. (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4.)
 - 3. Two types: miraculous and non-miraculous... Non-miraculous continue today, while the miraculous have ceased. (1 Cor. 13:8.)
- B. We should be concerned about the gifts which God continues to give today.
 - 1. They include [prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and compassion. (We will elaborate later.)
 - 2. These are important for us to consider because of the purpose for which they are given. (Eph. 4:11 — 15.)

II. "Having gifts that differ... "

- A. There are some principles which we must grasp about gifts if we are to use them acceptably:
 - 1. As all the different organs of the human body have a place and are vital, *each gift is important*] (v. 4; cf. 1 Cor. 12:14-16.)
 - 2. As one organ is no more important than the rest, so one gift is no more important than the others. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:17-21.)
 - a. Illus. "Who Flies the Kite?"
Who flies the kite?
"I," said the boy, "It is my joy;
I fly the kit. "
Who flies the kite?

"I," said the wind; "it is my whim,
 I fly the kite."
 Who flies the kite?
 "I," said the string, "I am the thing
 That flies the kite. "
 Who flies the kite?
 "I, " said the tail, "I make it sail;
 I fly the kite."
 Who flies the kite?
 All are wrong; all are right
 All fly the kite.

- b. Therefore, no person ought to be conceited on account of his gift.
 (v. 3.)
- 3. As each organ of the body is connected to the others, the gifts are interconnected, and they supplement each other, (v. 5. Cf. Eph. 4:16.)
- B. These principles call for harmony, unity, fellowship, and one accord!
 - 1. We must recognize more and more the need of *pooling* our gifts and resources for the building of the body and saving of the lost.
 - 2. Illus. Note the working together of a gasoline engine... a large orchestra? This is how we ought to pool our gifts.

III. "Having gifts that differ... Let us use them!"

- A. Another way of saying, "We must be good stewards of God's grace. (1 Pet. 4:10.) Notice some principles of stewardship which apply to gifts of God:
 - 1. We must use them or lose them!
 - a. Illus. Muscles of the body; memory work; food in the refrigerator, etc.
 - b. Parable of the talents: The man who did not use the money entrusted to him lost it!
 - 2. The more you give, the more you get!
 - a. Parable of the talents: The money from the wicked and the slothful servant was given to the one who used what he had.
 - b. Luke 6:38. This applies to our gifts, too.

3. God will hold us responsible for our faithfulness as stewards of the gifts of his grace. (1 Cor. 4:2.)
- B. Are you being a good steward of God's gifts; Are you using them?
1. What about the ability to *teach the truth* (as in the gifts of prophecy — Greek: "one who speaks for another" — and teaching)?
 - a. Elders must have this ability. (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9.)
 - b. Yet, it is not limited to elders and preachers. (Acts 5:42; 8:4; Matt. 28:19-20.)
 2. What about the gift of *service* — the work of ministering to people in need, providing relief and aid, etc? Am I a possessor of this gift? Am I using it to the fullest?
 3. What about *exhortation*? Listen to synonyms which suggest all that is involved: to call for, invite to come, to warn, to persuade, to beseech, entreat, implore, animate, encourage, comfort, console, cheer! Are we doing it? (Heb. 3:13.)
 4. What about the gift of *contributing*?
 - a. All temporal things we have God has given us. (Jas. 1:17.)
 - b. The ability to make money is God-given.
 - c. Our ability to give "differs according to the grace given unto us... " (v. 6) but "if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has. " (2 Cor. 8:12.)
 - d. BUT, the question is, *Are we liberal in our giving?*
 5. What about the gift of giving aid or as NIV — *leadership*! Leadership is indeed a gift! In fact in English *charisma* means the ability of leadership! My, how the church needs leaders to use their leadership ability!
 6. What of *doing acts of mercy*! This refers to the fine art of showing compassion. Do we use this wonderful gift for the cause of Jesus?
- C. Is it really important to find and use our gifts to the fullest? Consider: *Using our gifts* is how we *present our bodies* as living sacrifices! (Rom. 12:1—2.)
1. God gives gifts unto his people for them to use them.
 2. God gives men the great gift of the privilege of devoting their lives to Him... Won't you do that?... Then you can use all the gifts He gives to His name's honor and glory!

The Leprosy Of Sin

Matthew 8:1-4

Purpose: To get folks to see the filthiness of sin and develop proper attitudes toward sin.

Introduction

1. Very important way the Bible teaches — type.
 - a. Mel. a type of Christ.
 - b. Noah's salvation a type of ours.
2. We want to study what the Bible says today about a type of sin-leprosy.
3. Text: Matt. 8:1-4... try to see deeper application - see from the *leprosy* of sin a spiritual leper-suffering.

Discussion

I. Leprosy is a type of sin or it typifies sin.

- A. Isa. 1:4—6: Israel's sinfulness described in terms of leprosy. B. Lev. 13: Moses' directions for diagnosis of leprosy... they help us understand the nature of sin.
 1. Deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3): Sin a heart problem. (Jas. 1:14, 15.)
 2. Spreads, v. 7.
 - a. Sin a progressive thing. Isa. 30:1; Hos. 13:1, 2; II Tim. 3:13.
 - b. Spreads like leaver (I Cor. 5:6.)
 3. Defiles and isolates, vv. 45, 46.
 - a. Cf. (Lk 17:11, 12) - ten lepers stood at a distance.
 - b. Sin spots, stains, defiles. (Jas. 1:27; Jude 22, 23; Rev. 3:4; Psa. 51:1-3.)
 - c. One living in sin can truly say "I'm unclean"... He is isolated from God (cf. Isa. 59; 1, 2.)
 4. Is fit only for the fire (Vv. 52, 57; cf. Rev. 20:15; Rev. 21:8.)

II. The way leprosy (as well as sin) works.

- A. "Leprosy" — comprises up exaggerated images of stubby fingers, ulcerated wounds, missing legs, distorted facial features.
 - 1. Hansen's disease - primarily acts as an anesthetic — numbs the pain cells of the hands, feet, nose, ears, eyes.
 - 2. Infection from bruises, cuts, and burns and joint injuries (untreated because no pain) result in decay and destruction.
- B. This is the way sin is.
 - 1. Eccl. 8:11— there is not always "pain cells" to warn us.
 - 2. Heb. 11 -25 - sin has pleasure.
 - 3. The conscious may be seared and the heart hardened by sin so that we are past feeling.
 - 4. Men ignore the warnings of God. (Rom. 2:4, 5; Gal. 6:7, 8.)

III. Dealing with Leprosy.

- A. Of course Lev. 14 describes the ceremonial cleansing of a leper healed (cf. Matt. 8:1 -4 -- what Jesus commanded.)
- B. Yet, how did people in Bible times deal with leprosy.
 - 1. Of course the Law taught concerning it. (Lev. 13:45, 46.)
 - 2. The Rabbis had their harsh, inhumane teachings and practices to avoid leprosy.
 - a. No one to salute leper.
 - b. If put as much as his head in — place unclean.
 - c. No less distance than 4 cubits from leper.
 - d. If wind came from leper's direction — 100 cubits, minimum distance.
 - e. Rabbi Meir would not eat an egg purchased in a street where there was a leper.
 - f. Another Rabbi said he always threw stones at them to keep them off.
 - 3. We learn a lesson on Compassion, but also a lesson of sin.
- C. Though the Rabbis were wrong to be so cruel, harsh and inhumane to lepers, yet the Bible says we ought to practice the same avoidance when it comes to sin. (Jesus touched one, Matt. 8.)
 - 1. 1 These. 5:22; II Cor. 6:17.)

2. I hope our compassion of leprosy and sin, will encourage you to *hate* sin!

Conclusion

1. Dr. Thompson in **Land and the Book** in which he describes his journeys East says of leprosy, "this disease leisurely eats up its victims in one long remorseless meal. "
2. While there is little hope for some victims of Hansen's disease or leprosy, there is remedy for the leprosy of sin. (Rev. 7:14; Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16.)
 - a. If you are not a Christian or an unfaithful Christian you can truthfully say, "I'm unclean" "I'm unclean. "
 - b. Yet, there is cleansing for you... "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's vein, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains."
 - c. Won't you be cleansed today?