

# SERMONS FROM PSALMS

by  
J. LLOYD MOYER

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J. Lloyd Moyer

Dedicated To  
My Wife  
Pauline

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## About The Author \_\_\_\_\_

J. Lloyd Moyer was born in Slidell, Texas, April 29, 1915. He began preaching the gospel of the Son of God in Childress, Texas, in 1936 at the age of 21. He has been ably and faithfully proclaiming the gospel message since that time and has worked with congregations in Texas, Idaho, and California. He has held over 300 gospel meetings, participated in 32 public debates, and baptized over 5,000 people. He baptized both of his well known preaching brothers; Otis H. Moyer (presently of San Jose, California,) and Forrest D. Moyer (presently of Sunnyvale, California.) In every congregation where he has labored, he has conducted extensive training classes and many men are now preaching the gospel as a result of his work along this line. Though presently in ill health due to several very severe heart attacks, he has authored a new three year graded Bible class series "Some Things You Should Know." He has also produced the popular and unique "Biblical Slide Rule For Personal Workers." Articles without number have appeared by this faithful gospel preacher in various bulletins and brotherhood papers over the years. In this book, SERMONS FROM PSALMS, will be found some very excellent material representing the fruitage of many years of study and experience. In addition to being valuable and profitable reading, the material is readily adaptable to a number of uses and would make a fine sermon series (on a wonderful portion of God's word often "by-passed,") or, due to the completeness of the outlines, would make excellent radio and television material. But most important of all, you will find this book to be "true to The Book" for, as will be quickly seen, the author firmly believes in speaking "as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11,) and indeed the Psalmist said: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." (Psalms 119:1,2.)

Kenneth A. Sterling, Napa, California  
November, 1961



## THE BLESSED MAN

(Psalms 1:1-6)

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither: and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1)

This is the complete first chapter of Psalms. I call your attention to a few of the outstanding things revealed therein. By doing so we shall come to appreciate who "the blessed man" is. The text begins "Blessed is the man." There is a man who is blessed of God. This man is happy and "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (verse 3.) Surely such a man would be content. Since man seeks happiness and contentment in this life and in the life which is to follow, and the text points out that certain things produce these, we hasten to ascertain just what these things are.

"The man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." Walk is used to suggest way of life. . . the way a person lives. To illustrate: (Eph. 4:1): "I. . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called;" (Eph. 5:2): "and walk in love. . .;" (I Thess. 4:1): ". . . as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk. . ." These and many other passages show that "walk" is many times used to suggest live. Therefore, "Blessed is the man that walketh (lives) not in (according to) the counsel of the ungodly."

Entirely too many people today are living their lives according to the advice and counsel of ungodly men. Many of the professors in the institutions of higher education, and in some high schools, are ungodly people. Yet they are the ones who give counsel as to how we ought to live.

It is next to impossible for a Christian to go through one of these atheistic universities or schools and maintain the faith he had when he started. Look, if you will, at the preachers who have completely departed from the faith because of their attending one of these schools. The modernism and materialism found in these schools finds its way into the heart of the Christian during the years and courses required to receive a degree. I am persuaded that most of these Christians do not realize that they have imbibed any of the spirit of their teachers. These people have become the elders, deacons, preachers and teachers in the

church. Is it any wonder that modernism and materialism have swept the church away from her moorings the last few years? No wonder these arch enemies of the cause of Christ are found in so-called "Christian colleges" when teachers are required to hold degrees from these infidelic institutions. However, even those coming out of "our" schools are not entirely free from materialism and modernism. I attribute most of the problems of the church in this age to this fact. There are too many in the church in this age to this fact. There are too many in the church who are walking "in the counsel of the ungodly."

"Ungodly" suggest those who have no respect for God or his Word. They will not have God in their life. They will not regard the authority of God's Word. Therefore, they throw off all restraints in individual and congregational action. They ignore what God has said and do what they desire. To disregard the authority of God's Word is modernism,, and following the fleshly or material desires is materialism. This is exactly what has brought on the issue of "Institutionalism" in the church. Actually, the "issue" is not "Institutionalism," it is "Modernism" and "Materialism," or the result of brethren walking in the counsel of the ungodly. Any time one "walketh in the counsel of the ungodly," he cannot be "blessed" by God. (Matt. 15:9) "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." To disregard the authority of God's word and follow the reasoning of man, makes void the worship and service of both the individual and the congregation.

"Nor standeth in the way of sinners." This does not mean to get in front of sinners, so as to keep them out of the church, but rather to occupy the ground that sinners occupy, or to stand where the sinners stand. God will not, yea cannot, bless the man who stands where sinners stand. "The way of the transgressor is hard." Here is an example: There are brethren today who will readily condemn as sinners those who support, out of the church treasury, human societies to preach the gospel yet stand exactly where they stand in that they support, out of the church treasury, human societies to do the work of benevolence. They stand in the way of sinners.

Many will oppose those who go beyond the word of God and use mechanical instruments of music, yet will endorse and fellowship those who go beyond the word of God and make one church a sponsoring church by turning finances and oversight and direction over to that one church for a work to which all are equally related and responsible. They stand in the way of sinners.

Most brethren wouldn't think of having a dinner in the " church dining room" and charging a certain amount for each plate in order to raise money to carry on the work of the church. Yet, they think nothing of social and recreational activities to at-



tract people to the church services so they can be led to become members of the church and, of course, contribute money to carry on the work of the church. The first is simply a "short-cut" to accomplish the same end as the last, and both are the rankest sort of materialism.

"Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." This suggests that one has reached the place where the "scornful" are found. He is now sitting in *the* seat of the scornful. He now scorns that which is religious. He scoffs at the idea of a spiritual life. He ridicules those who would be faithful to God.

These three statements picture the progress of sin in the life of an individual or congregation. First, note the term "walketh." Here is action. . .doing. . .but it is action based upon the wrong counsel, or false doctrine. This always leads to one stopping to stand and look upon the way of sinners. Because of the counsel of the ungodly, many have been led to occupy the ground of sinners. When this happens, it is not long until they "sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Anytime an individual or a congregation stands where the sinner stands, they will scoff at the person or congregation who insists on remaining faithful to God's word. They become scornful when approached in an effort to teach them the truth or point out the error of their way. "Walketh," "standeth," "sitteth." Yes, this pictures the progress of sin. Please be reminded that the person who does any of these can not be blessed of God.

But here is the man who is happy or "blessed." "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

The person who "delights" in the law of the Lord will seek and study the word of the Lord. (Jas. 1:25) "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

This person derives a great pleasure from a study of the Law of the Lord. (II Tim. 2:15) "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." "In his law doth he meditate day and night." The "Blessed man" does not study God's word occasionally but constantly - "day and night." Note the term "Meditate." Too many read the word of the Lord, but never meditate on it. Meditate suggests the idea of "pondering," to think on, to mull over and over in your mind. An apt illustration of meditation is an old cow chewing her "cud." She is assimilating, or getting some good from that which she has already gathered. So, when we meditate, we are assimilating or getting some good from that which we have already "picked up."

To meditate one must concentrate the mind on a matter. The reason many people do not remember what they read from the

Bible is that they never concentrate or meditate on that which they read. Here is an example of what I mean: You may glance at your watch and are satisfied, but should I ask you the time of day, in all probability you would have to look at your watch again. Why? You did not concentrate when you looked the first time. This is exactly how many read the Bible. Just glance over the pages enough to be momentarily satisfied but do not meditate enough for it to make an impression on the mind.

The man who will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, but whose delight is in the Law of the Lord and in it doth he meditate day and night, shall be. . ." . . like a tree planted by rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither."

The tree planted by rivers of water has the source of life. So is the man of our text. He draws strength and life from the Lord. He enjoys "living water." The tree by waters brings forth fruit in season. There is nothing so useless to the fruit-grower as a tree which does not bring forth fruit. It occupies ground which could be used to support a fruit-bearing tree. Effort expended on the fruitless tree is wasted effort. Common sense would teach us that the fruitless tree should be dug up and cast away; that the ground, water and effort should be utilized in caring for a tree which brings forth fruit. There are many in the church who could be classified as non-fruit-bearing. We are members of the church in order that "we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom 7:4.) Jesus teaches that "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:" (Jno. 15:2.) We may well conclude that any person who does not bear fruit unto God is not "blessed" of God. The man who is "blessed" is like a tree that brings forth fruit. . . "his leaf also shall not wither." The tree provides shelter and shade to both animal and fowl. How wonderful it is to find the shade of a tree on a hot summer day I But how disappointing to find a tree with no foliage; its leaves have withered and it provides no comforting shade.

The "Blessed" man of our text is like a tree whose leaf does not wither. What a comfort some people are to us. They shelter us from evil. Their life is as refreshing as the shade of a tree in the desert. Each of us should live so that we lead people from sin and bring happiness and joy to those we meet,

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." This does not mean that the ungodly will not appear in the judgment, because the scriptures teach that all, both saint and sinner will be judged. (Heb. 9:27.) "And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." (Acts 17:31) "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. . ." Yes, the ungodly will be judged but he will not "stand" approved in the

judgment. The sinner does not "stand" approved in the congregation of the righteous. Anytime a sinner does stand approved (in full fellowship) in a congregation, you may rest assured that that congregation is not a congregation of the righteous. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly....." (II Thess. 3:6.) "The way of the ungodly shall perish." Paul teaches in II Thess. 1:7-9 that Jesus shall take vengeance on those who "obey not the gospel" and that they shall be banished from the presence and glory of God. But "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14)

His commandments are that you Believe (Jno. 8:24;) Repent (Acts 17:30;) and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38;) and the Lord will add you to the church (Acts 2:41, 47) which is Christ's Body (Eph. 1:22-23;) and Christ is the Savior of the Body (Eph. 5:23.) May I urge you to obey your Lord that you may be a "blessed" person in this life and in that life which is to follow.

## THE NATURE OF MAN

(Psalms 8:4)

The Psalmist here asks, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" A serious study of this subject is sadly needed in our day. Without a proper answer to the question concerning the nature of man, our concept of Christianity cannot be correct. I believe that a failure on the part of mankind to understand the nature of man is the basis of just about all religious error.

There are two extremes in the thinking of theologians concerning this matter. One is to spiritualize everything, denying that anything is matter or material. Man just thinks it is so. This is Christian Science (?) doctrine. The other extreme is to materialize everything; that man is wholly mortal. This denies the spiritual nature of man. Carried to its logical conclusion, this doctrine makes God just a glorified man. This is the basis of Mormonism. It is materialism. It is a false way.

Determine the nature of God and we will determine the nature of man, and be in a position to properly evaluate Christianity and accept its functions.

### The Materialistic View Of God

"As man is, God once was: and as God is, man shall be . . ." "God has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man." These two statements serve as a basis of the Mormon religion. And in reality all materialists must accept this concept. If man is "wholly mortal," and at the same time made "in the image of God" it follows that God would have to be "wholly mortal." But let us examine some of the passages which are used to substantiate this theory. (Gen. 1:26): "And God said, Let us make man in our own image." (Acts 17:29): "We are the offspring of God." While in the flesh Jesus said: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." From these and similar passages the materialist will conclude that God is in form exactly like man. He will use the following passages to prove his conclusion: (Gen. 32:30): "Jacob said, I have seen God face to face." (Ex. 24:10): "And they saw the God of Israel." (Ex. 33:23): "And God said, and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." (Isa. 59:1): "The Lord's hand is not shortened, neither his ear heavy. . ."

It is argued that man can see God. But man cannot see a spirit. That God has a face, hands, ear, back parts, etc., the materialist argues is surely evident, and further, since man is made in the image of God and man is material, therefore God is material as surely as is man.

I call your attention to some passages which prove that God is not flesh and bones: (Jno. 4:24): "God is a Spirit." (Lk. 24:39): "A Spirit hath not flesh and bones." Therefore, God hath not flesh and bones. (Heb. 12:9;) God is the "Father of spirits." (Jno. 3:6): That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."

The spiritual man is the part of man that was created in "the image of God." The Materialists will ask what about these passages which say they saw God and he has a face, hands, and ears? It will avail nothing to quote such passages as I Jno. 4:12: "No man hath seen God at any time," or I Tim. 1:17 which shows that he is the "invisible God." They will want to know why these "contradictions" appear in the Bible.

To answer these objections and teach the truth on the nature of God we must show that God uses what is called anthropomorphisms. This simply means attributing to divinity the characteristics of humanity. Paul states this in Rom. 1:18-22. Here Paul shows that God "manifested" himself, or made himself known by the things that are made. God simply used visible things in approaching man. God adapted himself to man's ability to comprehend. Paul says that man took these materialistic manifestations of God and made God like unto them. He plainly says that this is idolatry. Paul thus indicts the Mormons as idolatrous people. They have made God like unto man.

I have often wondered why the Mormons take only the material attributes that please them. Why do they ignore such statements as "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wing shalt thou trust" (Psa. 91:4?) Since they insist that when the scriptures say that God has a face, hand, and ear that it means that God has these; why does it not likewise mean that he has feathers and wings when the scriptures so state?

God could not possess a physical body and be everywhere. Yet the Bible teaches that God is present everywhere (Psa. 139: 7-10.) Notice Jer. 23:24: "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" Let us avoid becoming idolatrous people. May we never attempt to make God in man's image.

Someone might ask: "what does God look like?" I freely admit that I do not know what God looks like. And furthermore, I am not too much concerned about the matter. I read that, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I Jno. 3:2.) Not as we are now, but as he is.) This proves that God or Christ is not now as man is because if it were so then it would have appeared what we should be. But since it has not appeared what we shall be and we shall be like him as he is, it follows clear as day that he is not like that which appears (form like unto man.) Also Paul says, "It is sown a natural (material) body, it is raised a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:44.) Since we are to be raised a spiritual body and shall appear as he is it is crys-

tal clear that he is a spiritual being. God has a spiritual body.

### Man is the Offspring of God

Since this is true and God is a Spirit, it follows that His offspring must be spiritual. There is a part of man that is Spirit. This is the part of man that was created in the "image of God." In order to avoid this the materialists have argued that "spirit" is "breath" of man. Let us see. There is a rule of grammar which allows the use of the definition of a word instead of the word itself in any given sentence and the sentence will still make good sense. (II Cor. 7:1): ". . . let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and breath." (I guess we should gargle with "Listerine" or buy "Clorets" ,)But again, Jno. 13:21: "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in breath." (Do you suppose Jesus had Asthma?) Let us try once more; I Peter 3:1-4: ". . . even the ornament of a meek and quiet breath. . ." (Do you suppose this means that the Christian wife should not snore?) I think this takes care of their "breath" argument.

### The Spirit or Inner Man and the Material or Outer Man

Paul very plainly sets this forth in II Cor. 4:16; 5:1-9: ". . . Though the outer man perish, the inner man is renewed. . ." (Rom. 7:22): "For I delight in the law of God after the inner man."(Eph. 3:16): "To be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man." Paul mentions "departing from the flesh" (Phil. 1:21-24.) Peter talks about the "hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible." (I Peter 3:4.) This is rendered "immortality" in Rom 2:7. Thus the spirit of man, or the inner man is immortal. It is the "offspring of God." God is the Father of Spirits." Since God is immortal so must his offspring be immortal. Speaking of those who lived before the flood, God said: "I will destroy them" (Gen. 6:13.) Peter says, "The world that then was, being overflowed with water perished." But Peter also says that they are still in prison (I Peter 3:19.) How could God have destroyed them and they perished and yet be in prison? It cannot be explained if man is "wholly mortal." But it is easy when we realize that man is both physical and spiritual. The body and the spirit. God did destroy the physical bodies of those people but their spirits are reserved in prison. There are many passages which show that the spirit of man lives on after death (Lk. 20:27,28; I Thess. 5:10; II Cor. 12:1; Rev. 6:9.)

God is interested in the salvation of the soul. (Matt. 16:26): "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" May we all strive to save our souls. (Jas. 1:21): ". . . receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (I Peter 1:22): "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth. . ." We must receive the Word and obey the truth if we are to save our soul. God help us to

cease to be materialistic and think more of the physical man than we do of the spiritual man. From the trend of many churches I fear that they have become materialistic because of money spent for facilities to care for the physical man. I said in the beginning of this article that without proper understanding of the nature of man and God, one could not have a true concept of Christianity, and I fear that many of our brethren do not have a proper understanding of God and therefore do not understand the mission of the church.

## "THE LAW OF THE LORD"

(Psalms 19:7)

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psalms 19:7.)

This does not have reference to God's natural laws. The law under consideration here is the law which restores or converts the soul. The soul is not physical or material and therefore, the law could not be a physical or material law. "The law of the Lord" which is "perfect, converting the soul" is a spiritual law. A law which pertains to the spiritual man. It was given for the purpose of "converting" or restoring the soul. It seems to me that to use the law of the Lord for any other purpose would be to pervert the purpose of the law.

I realize that the law of the Lord touches on many subjects, and where the scriptures deal with any subject the truth is always stated. However, the law of the Lord was not given as a treatise on the science and arts. It was given to restore the soul.

The law of the Lord is revealed in God's word. All anyone knows about the law of the Lord is what he has learned from the word of God. Actually the term "law of the Lord" is the "doctrine of the Lord." Hence, the doctrine or teaching of the Lord is the law of the Lord. The doctrine of Christ is perfect. It can and will accomplish what it was designed to do; convert the soul. There is nothing else in all the world that can do this. Opinions, theories, and ideas of man cannot restore the soul. Exercise, recreation and social activities cannot convert the soul. Joint-participation in eating a material meal cannot convert the soul. When the law of the Lord is used to teach that these things are soul-saving agents, the law of the Lord is perverted. Where the law of the Lord is preached in its simplicity, people will be converted and spirituality will dominate their lives. The application of a spiritual law cannot make a materialist, nor can the application of physical laws make one spiritual. Both the world and the church need to learn this lesson. The materialistic world tries to make the spiritual law of the Lord apply to their activities and in the church (spiritual) some are endeavoring to employ physical, materialistic laws to authorize their activities. This has allowed many practices to creep into the church which are wholly designed to nurture the physical man. "Church kitchens," "social centers," "recreational programs," "mountain camps," are all the result of exalting the material or physical man. These are used to draw people. Now, don't deny that they are used for this purpose because we all know that they are so used. Brother J.D. Thomas, in his book "We Be Brethren," pages 2-5-213 argues that this is exactly the use



these things serve. In many churches far more emphasis is being placed on these things than on the preaching of the gospel of Christ. No wonder churches are being filled with un-converted people. These things cannot convert the soul. Only the law of the Lord can do that.

#### The Law of the Lord needs to be Preached

Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15.) "preach the word. . ." (II Tim. 4:2.) Both individuals and churches need to be expending every effort possible to preach the truth to a lost and dying world. If as much time, effort, and money were expended in preaching the gospel as is expended in promoting institutions and schemes of various sorts, many more souls would be converted. Remember, only the law of the Lord can convert the soul. If these institutions and schemes claim to be preaching the gospel then you have human institutions doing the work of the church. "But whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deeds." (James 1:25.) The law of the Lord is that which every child of God ought to hold up for the world to see, hear, and obey.

#### The Law of the Lord Should Be Defended

Paul said: ". . .I am set for the defense of the gospel." (Phil. 1:17.) There are entirely too many members of the Lord's church today who will not defend the gospel and criticize and condemn those who do defend it. This has produced a sickly, lukewarm membership. Jude exhorted brethren to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3.) His exhortation is much needed in the church today. I read recently that a debate had to be held in a city auditorium in a city in Texas where the church of Christ has about sixty-five congregations, because there was no church building available. That is a disgrace to the cause of Christ. I would be ashamed to live in a city where there was a number of churches of Christ and not one of them would open their building for the defence of the gospel. I am persuaded that anything that one will not defend does not mean much to that one. We talk about the church ceasing to be a militant force; not only is it not a militant force but it is not even on the defensive. Whenever a church or an individual practices something that they will not defend it is quite evident that they realize that the practice cannot be scripturally defended.

#### The Law of the Lord Must Be Obeyed

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul." (James 1:21.) "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that

obey him" (Heb. 5:9.) "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17-18) The law of the Lord must be preached and obeyed if the souls is to be converted. (I Peter 1:22) "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. . ." Only by heeding the laws of nature can one truly enjoy the blessings of nature. And only by obedience to the law of the Lord can one enjoy the remission of sins and all the blessings which are to be found in Christ.

### An Example of People Obeying The Law of The Lord

God has been gracious unto mankind. He gives the law (rule) of salvation but he does not stop there. He then shows how the rule works by giving us an example. The example is found in Acts the second chapter. However, before we notice the example I wish to point out that God said that the law, or His word, should "go forth from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3.) Please remember that it is the law of the Lord that restores the soul. Man transgressed God's law. Man was alienated from God. Man was sinful. The only way man could be restored unto full fellowship with God was to receive remission of his past sins. Jesus said: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47.)

Now to Acts two. Here we find everything according to prophecy. The right time and the right place - Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit came and the apostles preached repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ for the first time in the city of Jerusalem. The people were convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the son of God. They wanted to know what to do. They were told to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38.) As many as received this teaching were baptized. And they that were baptized "continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers" (verse 42.) Yes, the law of the Lord did go forth from Jerusalem and here is the example of people obeying the law of the Lord. Verse 47 says that they were saved. How? Simple! They obeyed the law of the Lord and their soul was restored. They were converted. They had remission of sins. They became children of God.

This is exactly what we ask people to do in this day and age. Believe in Jesus Christ, repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and you will be saved. Continue in the teaching of Christ and heaven will be your eternal home.

## "THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD IS SURE"

(Psalms 19:7)

". . . the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalms 19:7.)

Though this is a short statement, volumes could be written on its contents and implications. One of the proofs of inspiration of the scriptures is the brevity thereof. No other book reveals so much in so few words.

The statement of our text is a truth that the world needs to learn more than any other lesson. "The testimony of the Lord is sure." In an age where the word of God is questioned on every hand surely this lesson is timely. In by gone years seldom did we hear anyone question anything the Bible revealed. However, it is not uncommon or unusual now to hear someone ask: "How do I know that a thing is true simply because it is recorded in the Bible?" A proper investigation of our text will, I believe, help those who wonder if the Bible or scripture is true and really the word of God.

### Past Testimony of the Lord

Let us look at the testimony of the Lord in the past. We contend that the "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21.) The men who wrote the scripture did not claim that they wrote by their own wisdom but rather that they were guided by the Holy Spirit. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. . ." (I Cor. 2:13.) Now let us test some of the testimony which was given hundreds of years ago and see if it was sure. If one piece of testimony given by the word of the Lord could be proven wrong it would impeach all the rest. However, every bit of the testimony given by the Lord has been proven to be sure and accurate.

First - The testimonies of the Lord have proven to have been scientifically true before modern science was discovered. For example Genesis 1:10 states: "And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good." This was written by Moses about fifteen hundred years before Christ. At the time of the writing man did not know that all the waters of earth were connected and lay in one bed. Yea, man did not even know that there was more than one sea. Yet this statement mentions seas (plural) and the gathering together of the waters. These two scientific facts were not known until hundreds of years after this was written. This proves that MAN did not by his own wisdom write this and that this testimony of the Lord is SURE.

Second - Until relatively recent times man thought the earth was flat. Yet the testimony of the Lord was, "It is he that sitteth

upon the circle of the earth. . ." (Isa. 40:22.) This was hundreds of years before it was discovered that the earth was round and had a "circle" to it.

Third - (Job 26:7) "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." At the time this was written man did not know that there was an empty place in the north. That is a modern discovery. Neither did man know that the earth rotated in space. Again the testimony of the Lord proved to be sure and scientifically true though given thousands of years before the facts were known to man.

Fourth - Only in this century did man learn that the blood of all men is the same. Yet the testimony of the Lord was, two thousand years ago, "and hath made of one blood all the nations for to dwell on all the face of the earth." (Acts 17:26.)

None of the men who wrote these things knew about these things. It had to be inspired by the Lord. And in every case the testimony of the Lord was sure. We could multiply these examples.

I call your attention to the prophecies of the Old Testament. These were written hundreds of years before the fulfillment came to pass. Every one of them was sure. They all came to pass exactly as prophesied. The prophecies of Jesus -of his birth, of his life, of his death. All were sure. Things happened exactly as the prophecies said they would. Not one failed.

### Present Testimony of the Lord

Since every statement of the Lord in the past proved sure and steadfast, why would anyone dare question any statement of the Lord unto us in this age? The accuracy of the prophets did not just happen that way. It was not just an accident that they all proved right. No! No! That could not be. Do you think you could take a man, give him a pistol, blind-fold him, spin him around a few times and let him fire a hundred shots at a target and that every one of those shots would find the "bulls-eye?" I dare say that it would be an accident if ONE did. Yet hundreds of prophetic shots were fired into the future and every one of them found the target. The only explanation is that God inspired those who wrote. It is the word of God.

With this evidence one would be most foolish to reject the scriptures as the inspired word of the Lord. Also, since all the testimony has proven sure, one would be foolish to say that anything the Lord has said is not sure. The testimony of the Lord is that we obey. (Matt. 7:21) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father in Heaven." "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Lk. 6:46.) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . ." (Mk. 16:16.) Do you believe it? Remember, the testimony of the Lord is sure. You must believe it. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission

of sins. . ." (Acts 2:38.) This is the testimony of the Lord. Just why do you think that this is not true when everything else that the Lord has said has proven true?

I plead with all to give heed to all that the Lord has spoken and render complete obedience thereunto. Because the Lord will come again in flaming fire taking vengeance on all that know not God, and obey not the gospel (II Thess. 1:7-9.) But "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14.)

## "WHO CAN UNDERSTAND HIS ERRORS?"

(Psalms 19:12-14)

"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

Every lesson in God's word is directed to man for his Deneffit. But the lesson we wish to study at this time is especially one of a personal nature. Unless we take it personally and make the application to our own life it will be of no benefit at all.

Note the question, "Who can understand his errors?" Just what did the writer mean? Why raise a question like this one? I believe the proper answer to this question will give us an insight to Christianity which is sorely needed in this day and age. We are much more willing to advise others concerning their sins and errors than we are to correct our own errors. Why? Because we are not willing to accept the fact that we are in error or that we sin. If someone points out an error in our life, we immediately begin to try to justify ourselves for the deed. And there are so many good reasons, or should I say excuses, why we should have acted in such and such a manner. Yes, we need to fact up to our errors. Recognize that we are in error. A failure to do this will make it impossible to ever do anything about our mistakes and sins. We are prone to go mote hunting when we should go beam hunting. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brothers eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then should thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5.)

It is entirely possible for one to be deceived about himself. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3.) Thus, we must be honest with ourselves. We need to take inventory of our lives to see if we are acceptable unto God. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; Prove your own selves. . ." (II Cor. 13:5.) Did you ever really examine yourself? When you have said some cutting thing to a loved one or mistreated someone ask yourself, "why do I do and say such thing?" We need to analyze our actions with a view to correcting whatever is wrong. When someone points out a wrong in our life, God help us to be big enough to accept the correction.

I believe that this is what the writer had in mind when he said, "cleanse thou me from secret faults." We have faults which others see but which are hidden to us. Too many people never give any thought or time to self-improvement. Our attitude

usually is: "my friends will overlook my faults and I don't really care about what my enemies think." This attitude only can lead to our accumulating more enemies and less friends. If we make an honest effort to understand our errors by self-examination we will, in all probability, discover that we have some secret sin.

Another way for us to determine if we are guilty of secret sins is to learn what is sin and what is not sin. This can be accomplished only by a diligent study of the word of God. Only that which is contrary to the word of God is sin.

Without this self-examination we may fall into the most dreadful state possible for mankind. That of presumptuousness. Notice the next statement of our text, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins." I realize that it is most difficult to determine just exactly what "presumptuous sin" is. However, I shall try to define it, even at the risk of being misunderstood. To presume is to "take for granted, to infer, to venture without permission or beyond what is justifiable, (to presume upon one's good nature). . ." It seems to be that presumptuous sin would be simply any sin committed having already determined that it was a sin and deciding that you would do it any way and saying to yourself all the while that God will forgive you later; or thinking that I will go ahead and do this wrong and ask God to forgive me later. After all God is a God of love. . . he will surely forgive me. This is presuming upon God's good nature. And further, this kind of thinking would allow anything in the world that one wanted to do. It would make a person a menace to society. Not only so, but this kind of life for any period of time would bring the person under the dominion of sin. Their life would be filled with sin and corruption. Therefore, "let them (presumptuous sins) not have dominion over me." It is the person who sins presumptuously and wilfully that becomes an addict to sin. It seems that they are obsessed by sin. They will be guilty of many, many, sins. Hence, "then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Or as it is in the original, "many transgressions."

The person who persists in presumptuous sins will become so obsessed by sin that he will do anything and be constantly engaged in evil. Therefore, God will not tolerate "presumptuous sin" in an individual. You may ask why will God tolerate some sins and not tolerate this one or this kind of sin? Let me illustrate. There are some things that I can tolerate in my children that are not exactly the thing they ought to do, yet these things are not dangerous to the child or to their developing into a Proper person. On the other hand there are some things that are dangerous to the child and to his or her developing into the right kind of a person and therefore, I cannot tolerate these things at all. I may allow my baby to play with some object on the coffee-table while I will punish her immediately when she

tries to play with the lamp cord at the plug-in in the wall. Why allow one and not the other? Simply because one may well destroy the child. Exactly so with presumptuous sin. It will destroy the child of God. Hence, God will not tolerate it at all. Never be guilty of saying, "I will continue sinning now and later when I'm too old to enjoy sin I'll obey God." I do not know at what point God ceases to tolerate presumptuous sins and therefore I advise one to never be guilty of such. It is surely certain that there is a point where there is no return.

There is a drastic difference between a person sinning in a moment of weakness or circumstances leading to sin and a person being guilty of presumptuous sins. Do not think that God approves any kind of sinning, for He does not. However, the person who yields to the desires of the flesh in weakness does not sin wilfully. It is because of this difference that God will not tolerate presumptuous sins.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight. . ." This should be the attitude of every son and daughter of Adam. If our thinking and words are acceptable unto God Almighty, usually our deeds are also acceptable. Let us examine this statement and see if there is something in it for us all.

"Let the words of my mouth" be acceptable. One's words usually tell just what kind of a person one really is. After the apostle Peter denied his Lord it was said: "Thy speech betrayeth thee." Our speech betrays us today. Yes, your words indicate to all who hear just what kind of person you are. We should strive to make our words acceptable. You have heard the expression: "I say just what I think." In most cases where this statement is made the person making it does not think at all before he speaks. Some have said: "You just as well speak it as think it." This is not true.(Prov. 29:11) "A fool uttereth all his mind. . ." We must learn to "keep our mouth shut." James says: ". . .if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and is able also to bridle the whole body.." (James 3:2.) To be a mature Christian one must have reached the point in life where he can bridle the tongue and not offend in word. Every child of God ought to read the third chapter of James at least once a week. Here the Holy Spirit shows that by putting the bit in the horses mouth we can guide the horse. Also that the helm, though a small thing, can guide the whole ship. He says: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things, Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity (lawlessness) so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." (James 3:5-6.) He continues in verse seven to show that man can tame all kinds of beasts and fowls, but verse 8: "But the tongue can no man tame . ." Now, if we had a wild beast that



was not tamed we would surely keep that beast caged or chained. The word of God says that the tongue cannot be tamed. Therefore, we must keep it bridled at all times. It will cause a world of trouble. In fact, our tongue will get us into more trouble than we and several others can get us out of. (Jas. 1:26) "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Regardless of what a man may do in service to God, if he does not bridle his tongue, his religion is vain, empty, worthless, void, and of no avail whatever. This ought to set before us the seriousness of controlling our tongues. It is not uncommon to hear some member of the church "blow their top" or "flip their lid" and say things unbecoming a Christian. This demonstrates the fact that that person is an immature child of God, and that their religion is vain. This teaches that we simply cannot afford to lose our temper. Our temper is something we all have and must not lose. We must have control of our temper at all times . Once we lose it we say things that we ought not say and render our religion vain. Maybe you think I am repeating this too often but I think it would be impossible to do so. This lesson needs to be impressed upon our mind so that we will never forget it for a moment. I do not mean to leave the impression that we are not to have a temper. I would not give a "dime a dozen" for people who have no temper. But I would not accept a hundred as a gift, who cannot control their tempers. Don't say that I do not know anything about curbing a temper. I could get as mad as two big men when I was younger than I am now. It was the most difficult thing I ever did - that is - to control my temper. It can be done, yea, it must be done if we expect to go to heaven.

Now let us notice the last part of our text ". . . and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight. . ." We must determine what is meant by the heart. Jesus said: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? (Mk. 2:8.) Again Jesus said: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:15.) Solomon, speaking of man, said: "As he thinketh in his heart so is he.." (Prov. 23:7.) From these and many other passages we learn that the "heart" is that part of man with which he thinks, reasons, and understands . These are all activities of the intellect. Therefore, the meditations of my heart" is speaking of the mind.

The word "meditations" means "to turn or revolve anything in the mind." Hence, whatever we turn over in our mind must be acceptable unto God. Would you want your thoughts to be laid bare before God and all mankind? You say "certainly not." Wei, they are bare before God. We must exercise mental discipline.

This is next to impossible when we feed our minds continually on the dirty, rotten, filthy things most of the time. The things we see, hear and read will determine what we turn over in our mind. So we should be "choosie" about what we see, hear and read. The literature we read is a pretty good index to our thinking. We wonder why there is so much evil in the world. If we would but stop and think for a moment we would know why there are so many crimes being committed now-a-days. Our young people feed their minds constantly on such things in picture shows, on television and in magazines and books. The material on the newsstands today has to be hauled by trucks because they are not allowed to go through the mails. The reason; they are too rotten. Do we censor our reading and the material our children read? This is the first step in mental discipline. The apostle Paul said: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds): Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5.) Here we learn that the word of God will bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. We need, therefore, to study the word of the Lord every day. Paul admonished the Philippians to think on those things which were pure, lovely, true, just, kind, honest, and of good report (Phil. 4:8.) If we will but discipline our mind, control our thinking and bring it into conformity to the will of Christ, we will have much less trouble with our words and actions. Therefore, we see from this study that one must first curb or control his thinking. Secondly, one must bridle his tongue lest he offend in word. Then he will begin to understand his own errors or sins. Only when one recognizes his own errors and sins will he try to do anything about them. Otherwise he will become a presumptuous person. He will be guilty of the great (many) transgression.

May I plead with you that you examine your thinking, words and actions in the light of what the word of the Lord teaches. When you learn that the word of God tells you to believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, I implore you to believe it. (Jno. 8:24.) Because "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6.) When you see that God demands that you repent or perish, (Lk. 13:5;) please turn from your evil ways. Then, as you read in Acts 2:38, that you must be baptized "for the remission of sins," be big enough to submit to His command (cf Acts 10:48.) You will then be a child of God, (Gal. 3:26,27,) in Christ Jesus where forgiveness and redemption is found, (Col. 1:13,14.) Having obeyed the commandments of God you will have the right to go into that city of God after this life is over (Rev. 22:14.) Will you neglect and be lost or will you obey and be saved?

## "MARK YE WELL HER BULWARKS" (1)

(Psalms 48:12-13)

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following."

Here the writer has under consideration literal Zion, or Jerusalem. Zion represented, to the people of God, that which was Holy and sacred. It was the very center, heart, and seat of Judaism. The Jew had to go there to worship. Now, what was it that gave unto Zion her strength? The people were to "mark" her bulwarks. Just what does this mean? The word "bulwark" could be defined as "fortress," "stronghold," or "safeguard." They were to know and mark well her bulwarks, i.e., that which produced the strength of Zion. The Jew knew that it was obedience to God's law that fortified Zion against her foes. It was not enough for them to mark her bulwarks but they were to "tell it to the generation following." However, Israel failed to "mark well her bulwarks" and, of course, did not "tell it to the generation following." They mixed with other peoples until their actions became idolatrous and their speech Ashdodish. They became so corrupt that God allowed them to be taken into captivity and finally to be rejected as His people.

We do no violence to Holy Writ by making an application of this principle to God's people today. The church is spiritual Zion. (Heb. 12:22-23) "But ye are come unto Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven. . ." The church is that which is holy and sacred to God's people today. She is the greatest of all institutions. Every member must "mark well her bulwarks." But to do this one must first know her strongholds and safeguards. This demands a study of God's word. (II Tim. 2:15) "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Spiritual nobility is based upon a constant and thorough study of the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11) "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." But again, (Isa. 5:13) "Therefore, my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge." Every time God's people have failed to study diligently God's will, they have gone into apostasy. Hence, we must conclude that study is one of the bulwarks of the church today. Let all mark it well and tell it to the generation following. We cannot emphasize too much the need of Bible study. Our pleas should be "To the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20.)

## New Testament Scriptures our Standard of Authority

God has always demanded that His people be governed and guided by His word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6.) The church must be guided by the word of God today or she will be guided by the doctrines of men. (Matt. 15:9) "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Any church which uses the ideas of men as authority for her course of action thereby renders her worship vain.

This should be a solemn warning to members of the church. Be sure the activities of the congregation where you attend are authorized in the New Testament scriptures, because if they are not, your worship becomes vain--empty--void--worthless and to no avail. In spite of this there are some so-called gospel preachers and some would-be elders who claim there is no pattern in the New Testament scriptures. However, the Bible teaches otherwise. (Heb. 8:5) " . . . See that thou make all things according to the pattern.." Why would inspiration reveal such a statement if there is no pattern?? The fact is, that there is a divine pattern: the New Testament itself is our pattern. (II Tim. 3:16-17) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If this passage teaches anything at all it teaches that the scripture completely furnishes us unto every good work. Who will deny it? Only those who desire to do something not authorized in God's word and in a way not revealed therein. (II Jno. 9-11) "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Language could not be plainer in setting forth our guide in things religious. If we desire to have God with us in our activities, we must confine our actions to that which is authorized in the doctrine of Christ. But if we go beyond that which is authorized, we have neither God nor Christ; and we make it impossible for the faithful to fellowship us in our endeavors. The New Testament as our only standard of authority is a bulwark of the church. All must "mark" it well and "tell it to the generation following." I would not, for all the money on God's footstool, be in the shoes of those who tell the following generation that they can do things not revealed or authorized in the New Testament. (Deut. 18:20.) "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak... even that prophet shall die."

When Israel ignored or disregarded God's word, they went into sin and captivity. So it is with God's people today. Two major apostasies in the history of the church are the direct result of ignoring and disregarding God's word. (II Thess. 2:2-12)

Paul here says that there will be a "falling away" (apostasy) and he says that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." It was this "mystery of iniquity" that was to bring about or produce the "man of sin," "the son of perdition." What was the "mystery of iniquity?" The word "iniquity" means "without law, lawless." The word "mystery" means hidden or covered, not seen. Therefore, Paul says that brethren at that time were doing things which were not authorized in God's will (without law from God) and they were keeping it hidden from the masses of the people. We are now in the midst of another major apostasy (1958,) and it has come about exactly the same way the other two did. It is the result of ignoring and disregarding the word of God.

### "Tell it to the Generation Following"

We must tell the following generation that the New Testament is our divine pattern. It is a lamentable fact that there are those who know this to be true but steadfastly refuse to preach or teach that there is a divine pattern. Why? I fear that they are yielding to pressure brought to bear by those who have digressed from God's word.

Preachers are told that they will ruin their influence if they join the "antis," or they will be branded as "church-splitters," or "troublemakers" etc., etc. Paul said the time would come when some would not endure sound doctrine. (II Tim. 4:2-4) "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." This description has always depicted those in apostasy, the people not wanting to hear God's word on certain matters and the teachers willing to scratch or tickle their ears. It was so back in Isaiah's day. (Isa. 30:9-10) "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." They did not want to be disturbed in their wicked ways and asked the preachers to preach "smooth" things, or things that did not pertain to their evil doing. As usual there were some teachers who yielded. (Isa. 56:10-11) "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, for his quarter." Those whom God depended upon to warn His people failed Him. God likened them to "dumb dogs." A dumb dog is one that cannot bark. A watch dog that "loves to slumber" and will not bark is of no value. The thief comes and steals the goods and the people are not warned. So today old Satan and his

emissaries creep into the churches and spread false doctrine and many preachers and teachers fail to warn the people. Why? Because the people do not wish to be disturbed in their digressive ways. Paul one time said: "am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16.) Paul also said he did not seek to please men (Gal. 1:10) " . . .for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." I fear there are many preachers and teachers today who are not the servants of Christ because of their endeavors to please men. We must remember I Peter 4:11: "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God.." (Titus 2:1) "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." These passages not only emphasize that we must "tell the generation following," but that in telling them we should use—

#### Scriptural Speech

Peter was told once that "Thy speech betrayeth thee." Truly our speech betrayeth us today. If a man "speaks as the oracles of God," he cannot help but warn of apostasy. (Jude 3,4) "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yes, we must contend for the faith. "The Faith" is that which is revealed or taught in the New Testament scriptures. "Contend" carries with it the idea of striving. We must strive to maintain the purity and simplicity of the faith. (Acts 20:28-30) "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Just a few such elderships in the church have in the last few years, drawn away probably a million disciples from the word of the Lord. The sad part of it all is that a preacher is not allowed to raise a voice of protest without an immediate campaign of lies and slander against him so as to nullify any influence he might have. Yes, the people want "smooth" things today. They do not wish to be disturbed in their wilful ways.

Peter said: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction,

and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (II Pet. 2:1-2.) Do we have any false teachers in the church today? If not then Peter was mistaken about the matter. If so, then we need to "speak as the oracles of God" in warning against them and their evil practices . Those churches which forbid such warnings will not be held guiltless in the day of judgment. Scriptural speech and warnings against error serve as safe-guards and strongholds for the purity of the church. "Mark them well" and "tell it to **the** generation following."

### Christ, The Head of The Church

This is another great bulwark or safeguard. (Eph. 1:22) And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." (Eph. 5:23) "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Col. 1:18) "And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church. . ."As head of the church, Christ has all authority, (cf Matt. 28:18.) There is no human head of the church of Christ. No man is Pope, or President; first, because the church of Christ has no such offices and secondly, because Christ is head over all things to the church. We see that this is a mighty bulwark when we realize that "as the head goes, so goes the body." This is true with the physical body. The head directs the body. It is equally true religiously. The religious body of people must go as the head of that body directs. A good example of this is the doctrine of the "bodily assumption of Mary." Every faithful Catholic had to accept this doctrine when it came from the head of that body. Members of various denominations have had to change their faith because the heads of these denominations decreed certain things.

If the church of Christ had a human head, all Satan would have to do would be to corrupt the head and he would then have **the** whole church. But since Satan cannot reach the head of the church, Jesus Christ, he must employ other means to win the people. Yes, Christ being the head of the church is a mighty bulwark of the church. "Mark it well." Members of the physical body receive directions from the head of the body. So it is with members of the church, the spiritual body. They receive their directions from the head, Jesus Christ. This is a safeguard in that Christ cannot make a mistake in giving directions, whereas a human head could, and would. Let us be aware of the fact that Christ is "head over all things to the church," not just over some things. We must accept his directions in all things. Anytime a member of the physical body acts without authority or direction from the head, there is a palsied condition and the body cannot function properly. The same is true with the church if a practice is not authorized in the scriptures by Christ, the head of the church, we are thus forbidden to engage in that

practice. Here is an example - The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is not authorized in the New Testament; therefore to use them is sinful. To use them in worship would be acting without direction from the head.

Another factor in this matter of Christ being the head of the church is that there are no political maneuvers on the part of members trying to become the head. This has caused no little trouble in the religious bodies of the world; even murder is said to have been committed to gain control.

Christ, as the head of the church, dictates the terms of entrance into the church. (Mk. 16:16) . . . "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . ." (Acts 2:38) ". . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . ." From these passages we learn that one must believe, repent, and be baptized in order to be saved or have remissions of sins. (Acts 2:47) ". . . and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." When one completes his obedience to the gospel, i.e., believes that Christ is the son of God, truly repents and is baptized for the remission of sins, the Lord adds that person to the church. He will not add anyone who has not complied with His directions. If man exercised the right to vote on who should be added to the church, there would be many mistakes. But Christ makes no mistakes. Again we see that Christ being the head of the church is a safeguard or bulwark. We plead with all to come in simple obedience to the word of God and become a member of the church of the Lord and let Him direct you in life and finally take you home with Him to glory.



## "MARK YE WELL HER BULWARKS" (2)

(Psalms 48:13)

"Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." (Psalms 48:13)

In our first lesson on this subject, we learned that even though the writer had under consideration literal Zion, Jerusalem, We violate no rule of Interpretation by applying the principle involved in a spiritual way. We also learned that the church is spiritual Zion today (Heb. 12:22-23.) As Israel was commanded to mark well the bulwarks of Zion, even so should we mark well the bulwarks of the church. Further, we found that we must tell it to the generation following.

We noted that some of the bulwarks of the church are as follows:

1. The New Testament scriptures are our standard of authority in things religious.
2. Purity of speech or scriptural speech; speaking as the oracles of God.
3. Warning of error and evil.
4. Study of God's word.
5. Telling the generation following.
6. Christ as the head of the church.

Now we continue with some other bulwarks that need to be marked and told to those following.

### Purity of Life

God demands of those who are members of the church that they lead pure lives. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2.) Our life should be a "living and active" sacrifice. Our lives should be such that each one of us would be walking proof of what the acceptable will of God is. (Titus 2:14) "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Some think that God's people should act like "freaks" in order to be a "peculiar" people. Not so! The peculiarity of God's people is that they are "zealous of good works." Can it be said of you that you are peculiar in this respect? We must be actively engaged in service to Christ if we are to be pleasing to Him. Of course, we must refrain from those things which are evil. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (I Thess. 5:22.) But to just avoid practicing that which is sinful is not enough. We have

heard people say, "I don't do anything wrong." In fact, it can be said of them that they do nothing at all. This is the most graceful way I know to go to hell; just do nothing. (Matt. 25: 14-30.)

But how is purity of life and active service to Christ a bulwark to the church? Here is the idea--people see Christianity at work; they see a sample of the product. I have heard salesmen say that it is easy to sell a product if you can show it to people. It is much easier to "sell" people on Christianity if we are able to show them what it is. On the other hand, it is most difficult to get people to obey the gospel when they see indifference and sin in the lives of members of the church. Members of the church. Members of the church should let their "lights" shine, that others seeing their good works will glorify the Father.

### The One Church

Here is another great bulwark. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23.) Note: "the church which is his body." How many bodies does Christ have? (Eph. 4:4) "There is one body." (I Cor. 12:20) "But now are they many members, yet but one body, it follows clear as day that there is only one church. Christ gave himself for the church (Eph. 5:25.) not churches. The Lord said: ". . . upon this rock I will build my church," not churches (Matt. 16:18.) Yes, the Lord has only one church. We need to mark this well and tell it to the following generation. If our children are led to believe that the Lord has many churches and that one is as good as another, their faith will be weak, and the church will be in danger of another apostasy. They are likely to leave the true church for a false one because the standard is not as rigid in denominationalism as it is in the church of Christ. Therefore, indoctrinating young people to be faithful members of that one true church in order to please God is a great fortress and stronghold for the cause of Christ . Sometimes the objection is made that if we preach and teach that there is only one true church, we will so prejudice people that they will never listen to us any more. To disprove such reasoning we have but to look to the Catholic church, which has for hundreds of years taught that there is but one true church and that she is it. That teaching has not hindered her growth. But suppose that it would prejudice people against us; it is still God's truth. Are we going to avoid preaching God's truth because of what men may think or do? I know so called preachers who are guilty of exactly that.

### Congregational Independence

This is one of the greatest of the bulwarks of the church.

Just what is meant by the term "congregational independence?" Simply this: each congregation is a separate and complete functional unit within itself. There are no ecclesiastical ties which bind congregations together in any way whatsoever. Each congregation is completely autonomous or self-governing. God has so ordained congregational independence that if every congregation on earth were destroyed except one, the function of that one would not be affected at all. There is no authority in the New Testament scriptures for one congregation exercising any control or oversight over any other congregation. (Acts 14:23) "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." Thus we see that each church had its own elders. Now what were these elders to do? (Acts 20:28) "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. . ." Which flock did the Holy Ghost intend elders to oversee? (I Pet. 5:1,2) "The elders which are among you I exhort, . . . feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. . ." From these passages we learn that elders are to take the oversight only of "the flock of God which is among you. The elders of a church have no authority to oversee any part of another congregation or its work. Any move or work which tends to tie two or more churches together is a violation of New Testament teaching. Someone is probably ready to ask if congregations cannot cooperate in the Lord's work? Why certainly they can. In fact, when each congregation operates in God's ordained way, then all are co-operating. But when the decision of one congregation cannot be made without consulting with, and getting the consent of another church, the work is being done in an un-scriptural way.

The only functional unit found in the New Testament is the "local church" or congregation. The church universal has no functional unit. Any arrangement which provides a way for the church universal to be activated through a single agency is a flagrant violation of congregational independence and of God's word. The "sponsoring church" set up is an arrangement whereby one church assumes the oversight and control of a work to which other churches sustain an equal relationship and responsibility; then, the other congregations turn funds over to this one congregation (single agency,) for the accomplishing of the work. This method is especially prominent in preaching the gospel over radio and television and in foreign fields and also in the field of benevolence. Regardless of the organization, whether a congregation or some human society, when a way is provided for all churches to do their work through one single agency, the arrangement is sinful. Someone asks was not Jerusalem such an agency when other churches sent funds to her for care of the needy?" No, because Jerusalem did a work which was peculiarly

her own work. No other church sustained the same relationship and responsibility to the poor saints in Jerusalem as did the church in Jerusalem. Surely churches may assist a sister church to care for her own poor saints; but churches cannot, scripturally, send funds to a sister church and send their needy wards to her and let her do their work. If you, dear reader, think they can, I ask that you find an example of it or authority for it in the New Testament scriptures and send it to me.

Some may say that all churches do not act through any single congregation or human society and therefore, they are not wrong in their "sponsoring work." May I point out that all churches did not act through the United Christian Missionary Society? Was it wrong? It never forced churches to co-operate through it. Churches voluntarily participated and churches could withdraw their support at any time they desired. No, the Missionary Society did not dominate the churches any more than do "sponsoring churches" today. In fact, I doubt that there was as much pressure brought to bear on the non-participating churches and preachers by the Missionary Society, as is brought to bear by the sponsoring churches and their ardent supporters today.

The fact that when congregational independence was violated, by the "sponsoring church" arrangement, it split the churches of Christ from one end of the land to the other is evidence enough that the issue should be studied and the truth taught. The "sponsoring church" arrangement cannot exist without a breaking down of-----

### Congregational Autonomy

You may say that this is the same as the previous point, discussed. Surely they go together, but a study of congregational autonomy will help us to understand why the "sponsoring church" arrangement violates congregational independence. Autonomy means "self-government," the right to govern itself. By the same passages used in point three we established this point.

So long as each church remains separate from all others and governs itself, there is little chance of a general apostasy. But when one or a few elderships make plans and then high pressures every church and preacher to accept their decisions and arrangements, (and those who oppose them are branded as "anti," "trouble-makers," "church-dividers," "unsound and unsafe teachers," "hobby-riders" etc. etc.) there is great danger of a major apostasy because the government has been taken from the local churches and placed in one or a few centralized agencies. These agencies, whether congregations, papers, colleges, or human benevolent societies, will gradually begin to vie for power and control. We see this political maneu-

vering in action today.

### The Mission of The Church

Here, too, is a mighty bulwark. By "mission" we mean that which the church, as such, is to accomplish. The work for which the church is responsible and in which it engages in as a church. We do not refer to work or works in which members of the church engage as individuals. Members of the church may, and do, engage in many things in which the church does not, and cannot, scripturally engage. As far as I know, the scriptures reveal only three fields of work in which the church may engage.

1. Preaching the gospel is a work for which the church is responsible and in which the church engages, (Matt. 28:19,20.) Paul tells us that the church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15; I Cor. 9:1-14; Phil. 4:14-18.)

2. Edification of its members is a work of the church (Eph. 4:12.)

3. Benevolence is another field of work in which the church functions. (I Tim. 5:16) "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it (the church) may relieve them that are widows indeed." (I Cor. 16:1,2) "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. . ." (Rom. 15:26) "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." We read that the church in cared for the widows who were in need (Acts 6:1-6.) You will note that the church was responsible for and gave assistance only to "poor saints." For years, I have asked for the scripture which authorizes the church, as such, to give material assistance to any other than the poor saints. No one has given the passage.

Now;let us summarize. The church may engage in preaching the gospel, edifying it's own members, and rendering material assistance to needy saints. Anytime a church engages in any other field of endeavor, that church violates God's law. It "goes beyond the teaching of Christ" (II Jno. 9.) God will not be with the church.

The primary work of the church is spiritual in nature. In cases of emergencies the church assists the needy saints, but when the emergencies are over the church ceases to render material aid. Thus we see that the only regular, constant and permanent work of the church is a spiritual work. However, materialism has so invaded the thinking of members of the church that many are making the church a materialistic institution which is to be responsible for providing things of a temporal nature for it's members, and in some instances., even for the community and the world. As a result of such

thinking we see the church in many places engaged in a program of work which is almost wholly materialistic. Thousands of dollars of the Lord's money have been (and are) being spent for "church kitchens," "social halls," "dining rooms," "recreation buildings," "youth centers," "gymnasiums," athletic equipment of all kinds, "church-sponsored youth camps," etc . etc. Churches are sending money out of their treasuries to human societies known as "Bible Camps." These "corporations" are for the purpose, so state their Articles of Corporation and By-Laws, of teaching and training youth in Christian principles and living. This is a missionary society pure and simple. Yet churches are contributing to such institutions . It is later than you think. Churches are operating "farms," "dairies," "motels," and "hobby-shops." Churches open their buildings and play-ground facilities on Saturdays to the children of the community and serve soft drinks and ice cream to them. This, we are told, is a mighty drawing power for the church. I have labored under the impression that the apostle Paul was inspired when he said that the gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16.) It is this materialistic attitude that has led the church to become like the denominations in almost every respect.

We read and hear of the "Catholic Hour" and "The Lutheran Hour" on radio and television. The churches of Christ have the "herald of Truth" and "Message of the Master for the Millions." There is a group of Catholics organized and known as the "Knights of Columbus." Their purpose is to advertise and present Catholic doctrine to the world. The churches of Christ have the same thing in the group of men organized and known as the "Gospel Press." There are denominational "orphanages," and many "orphan homes" are being built and supported by churches of Christ. The same could be said about "Old Folks Homes." The churches of Christ are being encouraged and beginning to operate "parochial schools," and there is a move now to have the churches build and operate a "church of Christ Hospital." The denominations have their conventions where policies are decided. The churches of Christ cannot yet have their conventions, but they can let a "Christian College" have an "annual lectureship" which just about determines what the churches and preachers can and cannot do. I realize that the colleges would immediately deny that such is true, but just let a preacher become vocal in his opposition to the college or that program which hatched out of the lectureship and see if he is on any of the college programs or if he is called for meetings for any of the large churches which support the lectureships. Only those preachers who will get behind any and all programs are called to appear on programs and given space in the various papers. Thus the colleges and papers , (some of them,) are forming alliances which are most power-

full influences in the church. In fact, they just about control the churches in their areas. Many of the church of Christ preachers now wear sectarian titles in a religious way. There are churches of Christ which now sport a "Junior Church," which has services at the same time the "adult" church meets. Of course the "Junior Church" has a "Youth Minister" to preach.

The denominations have their young people's organizations. The churches of Christ have their "Statewide Youth Rally," "Young People's Meetings," etc. etc. The sectarian bodies have long since appealed to the carnal nature of man by the use of mechanical instruments in worship and by having celebrities appear on their programs. A recent rash of meetings sponsored by the church of Christ featuring Olympic stars, movie stars, and international golf players, etc. has broken out all over the country. All of these things are the results of misguided zeal and false pride. Many have become so obsessed with pride that they will "mimic" the denominations in just about every thing imaginable. In fact, it is difficult today to find anything practiced by the denominations that is not being practiced by some of the churches of Christ. You ask, "how is this possible?" The answer is simple. It is because some failed to "mark" well her bulwarks and therefore did not tell it to the generation following. The church of our Lord lies in ruins all over the country. The "weeping prophet" once asked Israel, "Is it nothing to you that God's way has been desecrated?" I ask members of the church of Christ, "Is it nothing to you that the mission of the church has been perverted from a spiritual work to a materialistic, carnal show of false pride? How can you sit idly by and do nothing in protest?" The churches in many places have already taken their place in the community as a sister denomination. These are beyond redemption. We must go into such communities and establish the church all over again. I plead with you, gentle reader, arise and lift your voice in protest against the wave of sensual worldliness which is sweeping the church of our Lord into denominational oblivion.

God help us to "Mark well her bulwarks and tell it to the generation following?"

## PREREQUISITES OF A PERSONAL WORKER

(Psalms 51:10-13)

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

Christianity is a personal matter. No one can serve God for me. Every service performed is a personal work. However, personal work with which we wish to deal in this lesson has to do with soul winning—that is—personally going out and talking to people about Christ and His plan of salvation. This is the prime mission of God's people, i.e., to "teach transgressors of God's ways.

To effectively accomplish any work, one must be properly prepared. So it is with the personal worker. There are some prerequisites required of the effective soul winner and a study of our text will, I believe, reveal what is required of one before he can effectively "teach transgressors of Thy ways."

### "Create in Me a Clean Heart"

Let us analyze this statement. May we first determine what is meant by the word "heart?" Many think that the physical heart is under consideration when this word appears in God's plan of redemption. The "heart" must be changed, true; but may I say that neither God nor man wants the physical heart changed. It does exactly what is expected and desired of it. But there is a "heart" that is changed in conversion. What is it? The answer is found in determining what the "heart" does.

Speaking of man, Solomon said, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7.)

Jesus said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed ; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal them." (Matt. 13:15.) "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." (Acts 2:37.) "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8.) "Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1.) "For with the heart man believeth. . ." (Rom. 10:10.) The "heart" that is to be changed is that part of man with which he thinks, understands, reasons , desires, and believes. These are all actions of the intellect, the mind. Therefore, David, in our text, wanted a clean (pure) mind. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."



(Matt. 5:8.)

Those with dirty, evil minds cannot effectively teach transgressors of God's way. Hence, "create" in me a clean heart. God is to "create" this clean heart. But how does God do this? Is it by the "direct operation of the Holy Spirit?" Is it by a miracle? No, God "purifies the heart by faith." (Acts 15:9) "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

But "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17.) This "faith" purifies our hearts and thus we are led to "obey." Paul expresses it on this wise, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." (Gal. 5:6.) Now we see why James said, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only" (James 2:24.) When our faith "works," it causes us to repent and to be baptized. (Acts 2:38) "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

We are baptized "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27.) Therefore, Paul could say, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10.)

When one hears God's word, believes, repents, and is baptized, he is God's creation, a "new creature." David petitioned God to create "in me" a clean heart. Not in someone else. It seems that people are prone to want someone else to be righteous, but never think that they themselves, might need to correct something in their own lives. This is, in many instances, a fatal mistake. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5.) "Take heed unto yourselves.." (Acts 20:28.) To be an effective personal worker, one must discipline his own life.

### The Psalmist Next Asks for a "Right Spirit"

The apostle Paul exhorted brethren to control their thinking. (II Cor. 10:3-5) "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

We must have the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5.) The only way we have the mind of Christ is to be governed and guided by the word of God, which is the "weapon of our warfare." It will bring our thinking in captivity to the obedience of Christ.

### "Cast Me Not Away From Thy Presence"

David realized that God must be with him. God must be with

us in our work today if we hope to succeed. How can we be assured of God's presence with us? The answer is found in II John 9: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (Jas. 4:8.) " . . . And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37.) Thus, we learn that we may be sure that God and Christ are with us if we come to, or draw nigh to them by "abiding in the doctrine of Christ." But "whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (II John 9.)

Therefore, ". . . and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of (by His authority) the Lord Jesus." (Col. 3:17.) For an individual or congregation to engage in a practice not authorized by Christ, they must forego the presence of God . What a terrible price to pay.

### "Restore unto me the Joy of Thy Salvation"

We usually engage in those things from which we derive joy. One does not have to "twist our arm" much to get us to do that which we enjoy. But it may take quite a bit of coaxing to get us to do that which gives us no joy. Possibly this is why it is so difficult to get some church members to be faithful. They get no joy out of serving the Lord. Some people have just enough religion to be miserable. Their conscience hurts them if they don't serve the Lord, and they get no joy out of it if they do serve Him. (Phil. 4:4) "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." This command is more emphasized than any other. Never do we read, "Repent, and again I say, repent." Nor is it so of any command except "Rejoice." If people rejoice in the salvation of God, they will be faithful. The elders and preacher will not have to beg them to serve the Lord. If we can get people to "rejoice" in the Lord and in doing His will, the major problem of the church will have been solved. Without this joy no one can be an effective personal worker.

### "Then will I Teach Transgressors Thy Ways"

Only the person who is a "new creature" in Christ, having obeyed from the heart the gospel of Christ, and who abides in the doctrine of Christ, allowing the Word of God to govern and guide his thinking, and rejoices in service to God will teach transgressors of God's way.

"Go teach" is the command of our Lord (Matt. 28:19.) The need of our developing into teachers is set forth in Heb. 5:8-14. The church was brought into existence through the medium of teaching, and the purity and stability of the church depends upon teaching.

Be sure to notice the text states, ". . . teach transgressors of thy ways." We must not teach our ways or opinions, nor the opinions, nor the ideas and theories of men (Matt. 15:9.) The

curse of the religious world, yea even the church in many places, is the teaching of the opinions and doctrines of men. (II Tim. 4:2) "Preach the Word."

When a faithful servant of the Lord teaches God's Word to transgressors sinners will be converted. (James 5:20) "Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

## "OH THAT I HAD WINGS LIKE A DOVE"

(Psalms 55:6-7)

"And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." (Psalms 55:6-7)

There is no way of our knowing the setting of the statement of our text. However, no violence to scripture is done should we picture in our mind a possible setting. You can visualize David pacing to and fro in the garden of the palace. He is weighted down with the cares of life and the responsibilities of a kingdom; his hands locked behind his stooped back, his head bowed, and on his face is the anxious look of one perplexed by problems and difficulties which seem insurmountable. He watches a dove rise from its perch and slowly fade from view in the blue haze of the Judean hills. Then he sighs, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest."

Yes, David wanted to "get away from it all" for awhile. Did this desire mark David as a weakling or a coward? I think not. Many strong and forceful people have felt exactly as did David.

This man had proven his valour on the field of battle. It took courage to meet Goliath. He was a great statesman and musician; he had accomplished great things for God's people. He was king. Why would such a one express the desire to run away? There are many things which could have caused him to utter the statement of our text. I mention a few.

1. David wanted to get away from cares, responsibilities and duties. In addition to the normal cares and duties of life he was responsible for a kingdom. It is impossible for the subjects to understand the tremendous responsibilities of the king or ruler of a nation, but we may be certain they are many. I'm sure all who hold responsible positions would like to get away from the weight of duties sometimes. Our vacations are indications that all feel the same as David. But as David did not have the wings of a dove, and could not fly away and be at rest, neither can we shirk our duties and responsibilities. The difference between the faithful Christian and the unfaithful is surrender to this universal desire to turn from duties, cares and responsibilities.

2. David could have wanted to get away from ingratitude. For many years he fought the battles of God's people. He slowly but surely conquered the enemies, and possessed the land which had been promised to Abraham. Then, just as he could relax and enjoy a much deserved rest from war, there arose rebellion against him. Those for whom he had fought now

turned against **him**. They showed no gratitude for all that he had done for them. Oh, how true to life

I have known of men who have served for years in a congregation as elders. They fought the battles and led the congregation to heights of success. Through their efforts the congregation grew spiritually and in numbers until it could move from "the wrong side of the tracts" into a beautiful, well located building. And about that time a group decides **the** congregation needs "some new blood" or younger men to serve as elders, and a campaign is launched to remove the "old elders" and get new ones .

I have known of more than one gospel preacher going to a small struggling church and working almost day and night, sacrificing many of the necessities for his family because the church could not adequately support him. After some years of labour the church is built up in the community; a large membership; new building; preacher's home; plenty of money to support the preacher. Then some decide they need a change of preachers. "Oh, Brother Blank was all right as long as we were small, but now that we are "uptown" and occupy a place of prominence in the community, we need a more "polished" preacher, one with "a degree" from one of "our schools;" after all we must compete with the "sects;" we need a "younger man" who will "draw the young people," etc. So they "put the skids under" Brother Blank.

I have known preachers who have been supported well; a good salary, house and utilities, plus a two week vacation. Members give him "grocery showers," birthday gifts, etc. But something happens. The only industry in the community closes down; a drought in a farm community; a strike; or a number of members move away, so that the church finds itself in financial difficulties. Instead of staying and helping, even though it might mean working at some secular job for awhile, the preacher "accepts" "the work" at some more financially secure place because he finds the "opportunity for a greater work."

There are many ways preachers have shown ingratitude to the congregations where they have labored.

Every member of the church should be grateful for work done by other members. Ingratitude is one of the most un-Christlike things in this world, and has caused much trouble and heartache in the church. It has caused many, not only to express the desire to "fly away," but to actually turn from their duties and responsibilities as children of God. Yes, our ingratitude may cause someone to be lost as surely as any other evil influence we might wield.

3. It could have been that David wanted to avoid causing the death of a wayward and rebellious son.

The rebellion against David was being led by David's own

son, Absalom. Asking, it was David's duty to put down this rebellion. But he knew his army would cut down his beloved, but sinful son, Absalom, in the battle. Oh, how he desired to avoid giving the order which meant sure death to his child. What a terrible position to be in. David found himself face to face with a situation to which he did not feel equal.

Many times in life, duty places before us most distasteful tasks. Yea, even sometimes what we feel is an impossible situation. It is times like these that we would sigh, with David , "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest."

It would be well to note that much of David's anguish was cause by rebellious Absalom. It is with regret and sorrow that I look back on the anguish and heartaches I caused my parents . A word to young people would not be amiss. Please consider the effect of your deeds upon your mother and father. After all, they sacrificed for us. They cared for us when we were helpless. The love we have for mother and father should serve as a restraint from evil. By stopping and considering before you do that which would pain your parents, you will spare yourself years of regret.

Now, a word to parents. I'm sure David realized that he was not guiltless so far as Absalom was concerned. He could have exercised stricter discipline. He could have set a better example before Absalom. So parents should take heed lest, in rearing their children, they prepare a bed of anguish and sorrow in which they will have to lie.

Do you set a proper example before your children? Can your children say that their parents never missed services of the church? Do they see you put the Lord's service first, or do they see you put business, pleasure, comfort and money first? I have known parents who never took their children to Bible class, then wondered why they were not interested in the church when they became teen-agers.

Other parents criticize the preacher, elders, teachers and the church in general, before their children for years and then blame the preachers, elders, teachers and the church when their "little Johnnie and Sue" turn away from the church. This leads to another thing which may have caused David to want to "fly away."

4. Memories haunted him. As David thought of Absalom leading the rebellion, I'm sure he was reminded of what the prophet had said unto him long ago; that the "sword shall not depart from thine house." Because of David's sins it was decreed that he should have to fight all his life. He took another man's wife and then arranged for that man to be killed in battle. Now David is reaping what he sowed. Actually it was his fault that his own son should rise up in rebellion. What terrible heartaches his memory must have caused. Surely he would

have liked to run away from memories of his sins.

There are multiplied thousands today living a horrible life of sorrow and remorse because of sins committed in youth.

May I plead with you not to fall victim to that adage of Satan that "one must sow his wildcats." Remember, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7.) Just one moment of folly may result in a lifetime of remorse and regret. Yes, sins are forgiven when one obeys the gospel, but the natural consequences of sin follow. For example, adultery may be forgiven, but those guilty may have to spend a lifetime watching their bastard child suffer because of their misdeed. Oh, what they would give if the deed had never been done.

My plea to young people is - live a clean, pure life, and then there will be no sleepless nights in agony of regret and remorse in years ahead.

It is possible, as David began to call to memory deeds of the past, that he brought back to mind the happy days of youth when he guarded his father's herds. What a thrill life was as a bare-foot boy herding sheep. Not a care; no unpleasant memories then to haunt him. Oh, how I would like to go back. "Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness."

Allowing that you could have the wish granted to "fly away," where would you go? There is no place where you could get away from yourself. You would always know that you avoided your responsibility. There would be the accusing voice, "You cannot be depended upon." "You are not dependable." No, it is impossible to run away from memory. We cannot "fly away" from ourselves. Jonah thought he could run away and found that he could not. Neither can we. There is only one thing we can do and be at peace with ourselves and with God. That is to face up to our responsibilities and discharge our duties to the best of our abilities, regardless of the consequences.

Yes, some things are very difficult. Duty sometimes demands of us that which we feel is impossible. But let us remember that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13); and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13.) Only then can we say at the end of life's way: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. . ." (II Tim. 4:7-8.)

## "A DOOR -KEEPER IN THE HOUSE OF MY GOD"

(Psalms 84:10)

". . . I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

I am told that a literal translation of this passage is: "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold. . ." Either translation reveals a wonderful lesson for us. The statement demands at least five characteristics of the person who makes it:

### (1.) It demands knowledge:

First one must have knowledge of what the house of God is. How would one know that he would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God if he did not know what the house of God is? The only way we can find the answer is by reading what the Holy Spirit has revealed in the scriptures. (Isa. 2:2-3) "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. . ." This passage mentions that the house of God shall be established in the last days. But it does not tell us what that house is. We must turn to another scripture for the answer. The Holy Spirit reveals the answer in I Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God. . ." Now we know what the house of God is. It is the church. The church is that body of people who have been called out of the world into the service of God. All who have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ as the son of God, repented of their sins, and been buried with Christ in the waters of baptism for the remission of their sins, are members of the church of Christ. They must live a godly life in Christ Jesus; they must suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12) "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore, being a member of the church carries with it certain responsibilities. One must deny himself and take up his cross daily to follow Jesus. To live in the house of God is to live a life of humble service to God.

(2.) The statement demands knowledge of the meaning of the term "tents of wickedness:"

There are houses of wickedness today. These houses offer every kind of entertainment the flesh could desire. The "tents of wickedness" in olden times were about what the houses of ill repute are in our day. They offered all that would satisfy the fleshly desires. One could think of just any desire that is carnal and it could be satisfied in the "tents of wickedness." It seems that mankind in general thinks that the answer to life"



problems is the satisfying of the fleshly desire. Think of the field of entertainment; it is the largest field of business in the world today. More money is spent in this field than in any other. Think of the contracts for television actors alone; some run as high as eleven million dollars. Why? These people are paid to entertain, to make people laugh. It is staggering when we begin to visualize all the money that is spent on entertainment. I do not believe all entertainment is evil, but I am trying to point out the fact that man is pre-eminently interested in satisfying the lust of the flesh; therefore he would rather "dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Solomon gave himself over to the gratification of the desires of the flesh in order that he might determine " . . . what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under heaven all the days of their life" (Eccl. 2:3.) He gave himself over to wine, women, pleasure, wealth and every kind of folly, but proclaimed that all was "vanity and vexation of spirit." Here is his conclusion; "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13.) Although the "tents of wickedness" offer all that the flesh could desire, the wise man of old days said that was not the answer. Yes, there is pleasure in sin, but it is a fleeting pleasure, God help us not to sell our souls for a moment of pleasure.

### (3.) It demands discernment or good judgment:

People are so foolish. Especially when it comes to the salvation of their souls. They may exercise fairly good judgment in business matters and yet act very foolishly in relation to their soul. Think how many times you have heard the statement, "I see no wrong in that." Relatively few people see the difference between good and evil. Possibly the reason is that we do not wish to see evil in things we do. Regardless of the reason, it is unwise for us to ignore the presence of evil. (Heb. 11:24-26) "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." Moses made a wise choice. Why? Because he had the ability to discern right and wrong. He could see that the pleasures of sin were for a short time only. He weighed the reward of each. He lived, not just for the present, but for the future as well. He could have had about everything the heart could desire by continuing as Pharaoh's grandson. But he refused, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God.

Another statement in Hebrews points out the need of discernment. (Heb. 5:12-14:) "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be

the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." From this passage we learn that some people do not have their senses exercised so as to discern good from evil. A person of this type is a "babe." Surely such a one could not make the statement of our text because he would be almost certain to choose the "tents of wickedness" rather than the house of God. Thus we see the need of warning against that which is evil. Many people do not desire this attitude in a preacher. And many preachers are to tickle the ears of such members. But the faithful gospel preacher will be anxious to point out what is evil and warn people against such. This course will incur the wrath and displeasure of some members. Let the preacher warn against the evil of "dancing" and some members will immediately think of some reason why there should be a change of preachers. If a preacher is in love with worldly security, he had better avoid warning against covetousness. Our preaching should be of such nature that it will enable people to make a wise choice in engaging in that which is right rather than in that which is evil.

(4.) Our text demands a positive choice:

Please recall that Moses not only refused to be called Pharaoh's daughter's son, but he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. It is not enough just to avoid that which is evil, but we must be actively engaged in that which is right. We hear many say, "I would not do this or that," and it is wonderful that people will not do that which is evil. But many times these fine people will not do that which is right either. Jesus gave an example of this very thing in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. He told of the house-holder giving talents to his servants and then taking his journey. The five and two talent men doubled their talents, while the one talent man did nothing. He did not steal, he did not commit murder, he simply did nothing. Yet he was cast out as a wicked servant. We should make a positive choice. I fear the reason so many eventually go back into the world after obeying the gospel is that they did not make up their minds to become actively engaged in the service of the Lord. They just made up their minds to refrain from evil; thus they were left with an empty void in their lives. Unless we fill that emptiness with service to God, these persons are almost sure to go back into sin. Therefore, in addition to preaching on the things that a child of God should not do, we should preach on the things that a child of God can do. About the first thing I recall is my mother and father saying: "Don't; stop; quit; you can't do that." Then I went to school and the first thing that I heard was a teacher

saying: "Now you can't do this and you can't do that." I attended church services and the preacher began to tell us what we could not do. I began to wonder if there was anything that we could do. Many members of the church have the idea that Christianity is simply refraining from that which is wrong. Christianity is refraining from evil, but it is more than this. It is actively participating in that which is right. If we can get people to make a positive choice - choosing to really serve the Lord, there will be fewer souls lost.

(5.) Humility:

The statement, "I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," demands that the person making it be humble. The "high and mighty" look down on the humble "door-keeper." They think no more of the door-keeper than they do of the mat in front of the door. It is a position of low esteem. Most people want to do something big. And unless they can do something big, they will do nothing at all. This is illustrated in the story of Naaman, the leper. He was sent to Samaria to be healed. He was told to "Go and wash in Jordan seven times. . ." Naaman was angry and went away. One of his servants asked, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" (II Kings 5:13.) Naaman had to humble himself and do what the prophet commanded.

Many say, "If I were a preacher or an elder I would do thus and so," or "If I had a million dollars I would do great things for the Lord." We would do with much exactly what we do with the little that we possess. The man with one talent is just as important as the man with five talents, providing he works with what he has. If I do the best I can, I will be blessed of God as surely as the man with great talent. The soul of the person who sweeps the building is just as precious to the Lord as the soul of the mightiest preacher in the land. We must be willing to use what we have in the service of the Lord. Jesus said: ". . . every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 18:14.) Again, Jesus said: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 23:11.) Men usually reverse this order. They think that the greatest is the one who is served. The apostle Peter stated it this way: ". . . Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Pet. 5:5.) Pride has caused untold misery in this old world. I am reminded of a passage in the Old Testament that fits in right here; Micah 6:8: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." It is impossible to walk with God without being humble; because God "resisteth the proud" but he "giveth grace to the humble."

The humble man realizes his dependence upon God and is thankful for all that God has done for him. This makes him a better servant. The humble are not maneuvering for places of prominence in the church. They never seek to "lord it over" others. In honor they prefer one another. I am persuaded that if a congregation were composed of truly humble people, it would be impossible to divide the congregation. Each member would be thinking of the welfare of the other. None would be seeking his own good, but rather the good of his brethren. All would depend upon God for directions and guidance in everything that they practiced. They would be a happy people because of their trust in the Lord. Truly, "I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

In conclusion I plead with you to render obedience to the gospel of Christ and be added to the church by the Lord. Turn your back upon the "tents of wickedness" by repenting of your sins. Choose to become actively engaged in the service of the Lord. Confess your faith in Christ as the Son of God. Be buried with Him in the waters of baptism for the remission of your sins. You will then be a child of God, having been born into His family. You will be in "the House of God," which is the "church of the living God." Serve faithfully and humbly in whatever capacity you can, and God will abundantly bless you in this life and in the life which is to follow.

## A SPEEDY REVOLUTION

(Psalms 119:59-60)

"I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies . I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

One of the beauties of the Bible is its brevity. This is also a sign of inspiration - it's ability to say so much in such few words. The more we study a passage, the more radiant becomes its truth. Man never masters the depth of God's Word. After studying a passage for years, suddenly truths come forth from it that you had never seen in it before. Many sermons have been preached and volumes have been written on very brief passages of scripture. Let us take a closer look at our text, and our lives will be enriched by its great truths.

### "I thought on my ways"

Notice, the Psalmist said, "I" thought. Too few people do their own thinking. The "few" have always ruled the "many." Why? Because the "few" do the thinking. We see this manifested in the church. The masses are blindly following a few preachers. Many brethren never go to the Bible and study for themselves; they find it simpler to take what someone else says about it.

Spiritual nobility is predicated upon our studying and thinking for ourselves. (Acts 17:11): "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

I attribute much of the current apostasy to a failure of brethren to do their own studying and thinking.

We are told that 80 percent of the people never really think; that 5% really do think; 10% think they think, and the other 50% had rather die than think. I do not know whether this be true or not, but I am sure that too few of us do our own thinking.

David said, "I thought." It is true we must think, but we must be sure that our thinking is in harmony with God's will . Cain thought just anything would be all right in service to God. He pitted his thoughts against God's thoughts. This seems to be a natural proclivity of mankind. We need to learn that God's thoughts differ from ours. (Isa. 55:8-9): "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." To further illustrate this truth let us consider some who thought service to God would be accepted on what they thought rather than what God thought.

Naaman, captain of the host of the King of Syria, is a good example. He was a leper. He was told that a prophet in Israel could heal him. Finally, when the prophet told Naaman to ". . . go and wash in Jordan seven times" (II Kings 5:10,) ". . . Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought. He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God" (II Kings 5:11.)

Naaman made a mold for God to fit in, and when God did not do as Naaman thought, he became angry. But Naaman had to change his thoughts to harmonize with God's way.

Notice these examples also:

(Jonah 1) Jonah thought he could run away to hide from God.

(Matt. 17:4) Peter thought it would be fine to build three tabernacles.

(Acts 26:9) Paul said "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

(Jer. 10:23): "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

(Prov. 16:25): "There is away that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

From these and other passages which might be given it is evident that our thoughts must be guided by other than man's intellect. Paul affirms that God's word will "pull down strongholds, casting down imagination, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (II Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:17.) Yes, our thoughts must be controlled if we are to be acceptable to God. Paul says: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8.)

We must exercise mental discipline; turn our thoughts away from the vulgar, vain and evil things, and think on the good, pure, kind, gentle and lovely things.

It seems odd that the mind of man would rather feed on the rotten than the wholesome. This is evidenced in every newspaper in the land. How many articles do you see in the papers to the multiplied thousands of good deeds done by fine upstanding teen-agers? Not many. But you see every mis-deed and evil thing done by the minority group of teen-agers. That which is evil is news. Not so with the good, pure and wholesome.

Even among members of the Lord's church we see this attitude manifested. How many times has some member called

you on the telephone and related some good deed done by some other member? Now recall how many times some brother or sister has called you to tell, (in confidence of course,) about some sin Or sins committed by some other brother or sister . Such things ought not so to be!

Notice again our text, "I thought on my ways." we all need to give more thought to our own ways. Sometimes people are so busy thinking about the ways of others that they have no time to think on their own ways. (Matt. 7:3-5): "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Again, Paul said: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; Prove your own selves." (II Cor. 13:5.)

God help us to do as did David; think on our own ways.

But again, "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. "David "turned." Some are too stubborn to turn. Some refuse to be bothered. We see this in the political world. Many never read and study the political issues involved . They let their emotions and ignorance guide their voting. So it is with many members of the church. The reason they do not turn to the testimony of God's word is that they refuse to be informed about religious issues before the church, and let their emotions and ignorance lead them on down the road to complete apostasy. If we will think on our ways, we will see wherein we fall short and realize the need of turning.

However, we cannot turn to the ideas, theories, and dogmas of men. We have already learned that man cannot direct his own footsteps. Therefore, David said, ". . .and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

Where do we find the testimony of God? Jesus answers in John 5:39: "Search the scriptures.. . .for they are they which testify of me." The scriptures reveal the mind of God to man . (Rom. 16:25-26): "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets. . . ."

To turn to "thy testimonies" means that we must turn to the scriptures." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and alight unto my path," (Psalms 119:105;) and "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Psalms 119:130.)

As we look at our text again, we hear David say, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

All need to be impressed with the need to make "haste" and

"delay not" to obey God. We need to live every day as though it were our last day on earth, because it might be.

Time waits for no one. May we "redeem the time!" Friend, brother, sister; make use of the time you have to obey your Lord. Do not delay, but make "haste." Many times I have had people say, "I intend to obey the Gospel, but I'm not ready yet." When this happens I always think of a father telling a child to do something, and the child replies, "I will obey you when I get good and ready." It is a most foolish and dangerous thing to delay your service to God.

James said: "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (Jas. 4:13-14)

"Now is the acceptable time" to "keep thy commandments." However, before one can "keep thy commandments" he must know what the commands of God are. This demands learning of the Father (John 6:44-45.)

There are three things necessary in complete obedience; that is three things which one must know. First, we must know what God commands. Second, we must know why we are to do what is commanded. One might actually do what God commands, yet not obey God. An example is taking the Lord's supper. One might actually take the bread and fruit of the vine, yet not know why he was taking it and thus nullify the service insofar as his obeying God. The same is true with baptism. If one does not know why he is baptized, he cannot obey God in baptism. Third, we must know "how." Sometimes the "how" of doing a thing is left to the discretion of man; yet when the "how" is revealed we are bound to do it the way God demands. For example; baptism. What is the "how?" Is it sprinkling;? pouring;? or immersion? Romans 6:3,4, and Colossians 2:12 show that the "how" is a burial or immersion. To use any other way would invalidate the act. Let us always apply these three: the what, the why, and the how, to everything we do in service to God. Remember, sometimes God does not reveal the why or the how; but when they are revealed they become as important obedience as the "what."

Now, in conclusion, I beg of you think on your ways; turn your feet unto the testimony of God. Believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, (John 8:24;) repent of your sins, (Acts 17:30;) and confess Christ, (Acts 8:37,38; Rom. 10:10.) Then be baptized (buried) in water (Acts 10:47,) in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19,) for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38,) and thus put on Christ and be baptized into Him (Gal. 3:27.) You will then be a "new creature" (II Cor. 5:17.) This will have completed the "revolution." God help all to make it "a speedy revolution."



## I HATE EVERY FALSE WAY" (1)

(Psalms 119:104)

The teaching that one can be saved outside the church of our Lord is a false doctrine. It dishonors God, denies Christ, Contradicts the scriptures, and damns the souls of all who accept the theory.

It is according to God's eternal purpose that the church make known the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10,11.) Man is to glorify God in the church (Eph. 3:21,) Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28.) These and many other passages point up the value of the church of Christ. Man needs a greater appreciation of and love for the church. If we can show the world that it is impossible for one to be saved outside the church then the world will have the respect for the church that God expects.

### The church is the family of God

Paul shows that we are His "house" (Heb. 3:6.) Speaking of those who were in the one body, the church, (Eph. 1:22,23,) Paul states that they are "of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19.) The church is the house of God (I Tim. 3:15.) The term "house" suggests the family. (Heb. 11:7): "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house. . ." But Noah saved his family. His house was his family. God's house is God's family . Now, to say that one can be saved outside the church is equal to saying that one can be saved without being in God's family . But Paul affirms that ". . .if children, then heirs, heirs of God. . ." (Rom. 8:17.) Only those who are children of God are heirs. If you say, as the denominationalist does, that one may be saved and not be a member of the church you are guilty of accusing God of having children outside his family. Who is ready to accept this conclusion? Surely those who so affirm do not realize what they do. All of God's children are in God's family which is the church. Therefore, only those in the church are heirs of God.

### The church comprises the saved

The "Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47.) If there are any who are saved and not added to the church we would have to conclude that the Lord has overlooked someone or that inspiration just made a mistake by saying the Lord added daily to the church those who are saved .

### Acceptable service in the house of God

Paul argues that for one to offer acceptable service he must be in the house and must have purged himself of certain things (II Tim. 2:20, 21.) Peter says that we are a "spiritual house. . . to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5.) Now, if one can be saved outside the house (church) of God, he can be saved without offering acceptable service. Only those in the spiritual house can offer acceptable service to God. But to be It that house is to be in the church.

## "I HATE EVERY FALSE WAY" (2)

(Psalms 119:104)

### "Salvation outside the church"

We continue to give arguments refuting the idea that one can be saved outside the church.

### Cannot be saved without the blood

We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (I Peter 1:18,19.) Paul affirms that we are justified by the blood (Rom. 5:9.) But Paul also affirms that Christ purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28,) and that he gave himself for the church (Eph. 5:25.) We cannot separate salvation and the blood. Neither can we separate the blood and the church because the blood has been invested in the church. Therefore, we cannot separate the church and salvation. If we are to receive any benefit from the blood we must get it from the church in which the blood is invested. Here is an example: Suppose that I purchase a suit of clothes and I pay one hundred dollars for it. If I am to get any benefit from the one hundred dollars I must get it from the suit because the hundred dollars has been invested in the suit. Hence, since Christ's blood has been invested in the church, to receive the benefits from the blood we must receive it in the church.

### Must be in the church to bear fruit

Jesus teaches clearly that one must be in him to bear fruit (John 15:1-7.) But to be in Christ is to be in His spiritual body which is the church (Eph. 1:22,23.) As a branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, "no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (verse 4, John chapter 15.) But if no fruit, the branch is cast forth and burned . . . So is the man (verse 6.)

It may be argued that many people are bearing fruit (good works,) who are not members of the church of Christ. That is true, but the fruit (good works) is not acceptable unto God. There is an example of this principle in the life of Sarah, wife of Abraham. God had promised that through the seed of Abraham He would bless all nations. But Sarah had no children. She decided that she would help God accomplish his purpose. She told Abraham to go in unto her handmaiden. He did and she conceived and bare a son. Abraham's family was increased. He did have seed. But it was not according to God's plan. God rejected the whole thing.

Jesus pictures the judgment in Matthew 7:21-23. He points out that many will plead their cause in that day by reminding

him of the good work that they did. But Jesus tells them to "depart." Why? Because they were "workers of iniquity.." "Iniquity" means "lawlessness; without law." They simply did these things without authority from God. God does not want just anybody representing him. Only certain kinds of people are fit to represent God. They are those who have purged themselves of the works of the flesh (II Tim. 2:20,21.) They are God's own children; those in the family or house of God. Paul expressed it this way: ". . .that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4.) When we obey the gospel we are married to Christ. But the church is the bride of Christ. So we come back to the fact that we are the church, bride, house, or family of God. Salvation is inseparably connected with the church. What ". . .God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

## VAIN LABOR

(Psalms 127:1)

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. . ."

Our text sets forth in plain language the fact that labor can be in vain. This is a lesson that both the world and the church need to learn. We are impressed when we look about us at the tremendous amount of religious energy being expended. We see large congregations of people. These did not just happen; they were built by much labor, expended by many people. We see beautiful buildings which are also the result of religious labor. We see people dedicating their lives to religious causes and sacrificing much in their religious service. No one would say that these people do not labor in their religion . . . They are zealously engaged in doing what they think is right. Now the question is, are they laboring in vain? Is all this labor for nought? Before we attempt to answer, let us read a passage of scripture. (Rom. 10:1-3): "Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Here we find some people who worshipped the true God. They were zealous in their labor. They were honest and sincere people. But they were lost! Their labor was in vain. These Jews were the most religious people of their day. So we have religious labor expended in vain.

But let us examine another passage of scripture. (Matt. 7:21-23): "Not every one 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, Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." How is it possible for people who teach in his name, and in his name cast out devils , and in his name do many wonderful works, to be workers of iniquity? Well, here is the explanation. The word iniquity describes "One without law, whether ignorant of it or violating it." It means lawlessness. Therefore, anyone doing anything without law from God is a "worker of iniquity." Regardless of how good the work may be, if there is no authority in God's law for that particular work or the way in which it is being done, those engaged in it are workers of iniquity. Their labor will be in vain. The word "vain" suggests worthless, void,

empty, to no avail. To me it is a terrible thought that people; honest; zealous, and sincere people, will be blest even though they have spent their lives in religious labors. For this reason I have devoted much of my preaching and teaching to warn against religious error.

### Ignorance makes religious labor vain

In the material realm we readily recognize "this principle . A person ignorant concerning a piece of machinery is likely to destroy himself and others. He is extremely dangerous. Oh, he may be honest and sincere, but that does not alter the fact that he is dangerous. Just suppose that you become violently ill; would you call your best friend to minister unto you? Or would you call a doctor? I'm fairly certain that you would call the person who had a knowledge of medicine. Regardless of how honest and sincere your friend might be, you still would not expect him to be able to cure your illness. Here is another example: Should you need an airplane pilot, you would certainly call someone who had been trained to fly a plane. You surely would not argue that it makes no difference, just so he is a good man; honest and sincere.

Ignorance in the spiritual realm has caused no little grief and has done a great harm to the cause of Christ. God said: "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge. . ." (Isa. 5:13.) Ignorance on the part of God's people today will lead them into captivity into sin. Jesus said: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29.) And again, (Acts 3:17): "And now brethren I wot (know) that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Those who crucified Christ were religious people; their ignorance was responsible for the deed.

The apostle Paul had to deal with this very idea when he went into Athens (Acts 17:16-30.) Note especially verse 23: ". . .whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Then in verse 30 he said: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.." At one time God may have overlooked such ignorance, but not now. Since ignorance will not serve as a passport into heaven, we must do all in our power to eliminate error. David once said: ". . .Therefore, I hate every false way." (Psalms 119:104.) So do I. Why? Because a false way is not the truth; I hate every false way because it will damn the souls of all who believe and obey its precepts.

### Labor in man-built churches is vain labor

Our text states: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Just what is meant by the term "house?" The Holy Spirit gives us the answer in I Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave

thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." From this we learn that the house is the church. Therefore, except the Lord build the church, they labor in vain that build it. Now, how many churches did the Lord build? (Matt. 16:18): "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.. . ." Note: "church" in the singular; one. (Acts 20:28): "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Notice again, "the" church. How many did Jesus purchase? One. Paul spoke on this wise: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23.) The church is the body. Question: How many bodies does Christ have? One. "There is one body.." (Eph. 4:4.) (I Cor. 12:13): "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (I Cor. 12:20): "But now are they many members, yet but one body." Remember, Paul says that the body is the church and that the church is the body. But there is but one body; therefore there is but one church. Some will agree with all this but will say: "Which church is the one true church today?" This is a proper question and one that ought to be answered.

There are certain marks of identification or characteristics which must be recognized and accepted if we are to identify either a man or an institution. Suppose I ask you to meet a certain man at a certain place; you would in all probability ask: "Who is he," or "what is the man's name?" Now suppose I should reply, "Oh, there is nothing in a name, one name is as good as another." You would question my sanity. Yet this is exactly what happens when people endeavor to identify the church. Some "so-called" preacher tells them that there is nothing in a name, that one name is as good as another. It is no wonder that so many people are confused as to which is the right church. In properly identifying a person his name, age, height, weight, and birthplace are all taken into consideration. The same principle applies to the church that the Lord built. We must consider all marks of identification if we are to be sure that we are members of the true church. It's birthplace was Jerusalem. It's age dates from AD. 33; the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. It's members were called Christians, and various congregations were called churches of Christ (Acts 2; 11:26; Rom. 16:16.) Any church whose members are called anything other than "Christians" is not the church the Lord built. And on you go with the marks of identification as they are listed in the New Testament. When you find a church that measures up to all the marks, then you have found the church that the Lord built. Until you find such a church I advise you to not become a member of any church, for our text warns against any house (church) except the

one the Lord built.

### Doctrines of men make our worship vain

Jesus said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9.) It seems that it would be impossible to misunderstand this statement. Those who use the commandments of men for doctrine, which includes ideas, theories, creeds etc., render their religious labor and worship vain. Thus we understand why there are so many warnings in the New Testament against the doctrines (teachings) of men. None of us want our labors to be in vain; therefore, we shall notice some of the doctrines of men which are prominent in the world of religion today in order that we may avoid them.

One: The doctrine of sprinkling water on the head and calling it baptism is without a doubt a doctrine of man. You cannot read of such in the New Testament. The scholarship of the world agrees that during the days of the apostles baptism was administered by immersion only. The Bible teaches that baptism is a "burial." (Rom. 6:3,4): ". . . Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death. . ." (Col. 2:12): "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Yes, one is "buried" and raised in baptism. We read in the eighth chapter of Acts of an inspired man, Philip, baptizing another man. The record says: ". . . And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:38-39.) Is this a picture of the way baptism is administered in the church of which you are a member? I have heard it argued that Philip took the eunuch into the water and then dipped some water in his hand and sprinkled it on the eunuch's head. Of course, that is not true. I ask, why would Philip have gotten the eunuch wet on both ends and left him dry in the middle? Paul says: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22.) Thus we learn that in baptism we go down into the water, and we are buried and are raised and thus having our bodies washed," we come "up out of" the water. Any church that practices anything other than this revealed plan is teaching for doctrine the commandments of men; thereby it's worship and labor is vain.

Two: There are millions of people who are zealously working in churches which teach that man is saved by "faith only." In fact, their creed states that the doctrine of salvation by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort. I say that it is neither wholesome nor comforting, be-



cause it is just exactly opposite to what the scriptures teach. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only" (James 2:24.) It has always been a mystery to me how a body of religious people who claim to believe in and follow the Bible could hold to the doctrine of "faith only" after reading James 2:24. Since the Bible teaches that we are not saved by faith only, the doctrine must come from men; therefore all who use it are using "for doctrine the commandments of men," and their worship and labor is in vain.

Three: The doctrine of Total Depravity is another doctrine that renders men's labor vain. This doctrine teaches that man is born into this world totally depraved, which means that he is "wholly inclined to evil;" that he bears the guilt of Adam's sin and is therefore "under just condemnation to eternal ruin without defense or excuse." This doctrine holds that man remains in this condition until God in his own good time operates on man's heart by the Holy Spirit and takes away the Adamic sin. This is a most repulsive doctrine. It makes one guilty of the sins of his parents. Regardless of how good, honest, and upright one may be, he is still condemned to a devil's hell because of what his ancestors did. Who can believe it? The Bible teaches that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. (Ezek. 18:20): "The soul that sinneth, it shall die, the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Isaiah states it like this: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you. . ." (Isa. 59:2.) The Apostle Paul speaks on this wise: "And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. 1:21.) From these and other passages we learn that we do not bear the iniquities of any one else, that it is our own sins and iniquities that separate us from God. We see that we were alienated from God by wicked works. Until a person reaches the age where he becomes an enemy of God in his own mind, he is as pure as God made him. Jesus said: " . . .Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3.) Now, if little children are totally depraved and wholly inclined to evil as the doctrine teaches, then Jesus teaches that man must be converted and become totally depraved and wholly inclined to evil before he can enter the kingdom of heaven. What rubbish!

Four: Closely connected with the doctrine of total depravity is the doctrine of the "direct operation of the Holy Spirit." This doctrine of man holds that since all are "totally depraved" and "cannot think a good thought or do a good deed" until God takes away the Adamic nature by the Holy Spirit, God converts man by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.

It teaches that there is nothing that man can do about his salvation. God must first operate on his heart. Such an idea places all the responsibility on God. If any man goes to hell it will be, according to this doctrine, God's fault. It also makes God a respecter of persons. If God sent the Holy Spirit on One man, he would be obligated to send the Holy Spirit on all men or he would be a respecter of persons. But the Bible teaches that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35; Rom. 2:11.) There is not a case on record where God ever sent the Holy Spirit upon any man to save that man from his sins. The Bible teaches that man must "come" to Jesus (Matt. 11:28.) "Come unto me" is the plea of Jesus. Why would Jesus say such a thing if it were impossible for man to come unto him? If the doctrine of the "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" were true, Jesus would have pleaded with God to send the Spirit to men rather than pleading with men to come unto him. This doctrine causes people to fail to obey the gospel of Christ because they are taught that they can't obey until God operates on them. It is a soul damning doctrine. Man makes his own choice and God will certainly hold man responsible for not obeying His commands (Matt. 7:21-23; Lk. 6:46; Heb. 5:8,9; II Thess. 1:7-9.)

Five: Another doctrine which was introduced by the devil and propagated by man is the doctrine of "the impossibility of apostasy." So that all may know what we have in mind, we notice the expression "Once saved, always saved," or "a child of God cannot fall from grace." Old Satan preached this doctrine to Mother Eve. He told her that she would not surely die. It seems foolish to me for a man to preach that one cannot "fall from grace" when the Bible so plainly teaches that one can. (Gal. 5:4): "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." This passage could not be plainer. Those who justify their religious practices by the law have already fallen from grace. Why are they fallen from the favor of God? Because they ignore the law of God that he has in operation today and go back to an old law of God which has long since been abolished. I could illustrate this way. Suppose that you ignore the law which is in effect in the State of California and go back over a hundred years to justify your actions by the law that governed the State then. You would immediately find that you had fallen out of favor with the present administration. It is exactly so with the law of God. We must recognize the law which is in operation now. If we fail to do so, we are "fallen from grace." Then notice the many warnings against falling. Why are these written if man cannot fall from grace? (cf I Cor. 10:12; II Peter 1:10.)

The doctrines we have mentioned are ridiculous and absurd. The idea that we are guilty for a crime which we did not commit, or that Jesus tantalizes man with the invitation to "come unto him" when man cannot come or that God condemns man

for not obeying Him when it is impossible for man to obey is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. If after God saves man there is nothing that man can do that will cause him to be lost, he could get drunk, and die drunk, yet the doctrine of "impossibility of apostasy" would have him going right onto heaven. That there are many honest, sincere and zealous people who believe these doctrines, we freely admit. But they are laboring in vain.

Sixth: We are told that "baptism is not essential to salvation." Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16.) Peter said: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (I Peter 3:21.) Again, ". . .and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. . ." (Acts 10:48.) And on the day of Pentecost: ". . .Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . ." (Acts 2:38.) With these passages before us, how is it possible to say that baptism is not essential? Yes, one must believe that Jesus is the son of God; repent; confess Jesus Christ and be baptized for the remission of sins. Then the Lord adds that one to the church (Acts 2:41, 47.) I plead with you to do his will before it is too late. Then avoid the doctrines of men, that your labor may not be in vain.

# UNITY

(Psalms 133)

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

This is the only time the word "unity" appears in the Old Testament. It appears twice in the New Testament. The word means: "oneness, oneness of mind, concord, harmony, agreement, freedom from diversity, freedom from variety, or, together in."

Although the word unity appears only three times in the Bible, the idea is taught throughout the scriptures. "Let there be no strife between me and thee for we be brethren" (Gen. 13: 8.) God wants his people to be united. All of his people should desire unity and put forth every effort possible to bring about and maintain unity. "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3.) "Endeavor" suggests putting forth a great effort. Unity is, therefore, the result of effort expended by God's people. It does not just happen--it is brought about and maintained by our strict adherence to God's law. Wherever and whenever folk fail to follow God's word, there is division--unity cannot prevail.

That we may have a greater appreciation for unity, it might be well for us to define "division." "State of being divided, a marking off or arranging in parts, the separation by difference of opinion or feelings, section--schism." When we consider all the sorrow and pain and anguish caused by division among God's people, we can appreciate the statement of our text. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. . ."

There are many things in life which are pleasant but which are not good for us. There are many things in life which are good for us but which are not pleasant. But unity among brethren is both good and pleasant. Those who have experienced trouble and division in the church can testify as to how awful division is and how good unity is.

For some twenty years I have worked with churches in the capacity of gospel preacher. I now serve as an elder in God's church. There is nothing more pleasant than working with a church, either as a preacher or elder, where unity prevails.

I suppose the beauty and desirability of unity among brethren could not be pictured better than it is in the description given

in our text. "It is like the precious ointment upon the head. . ." We are told that in the hot, dry land of Palestine the sun and heat are terrible; playing havoc with the skin. Those who spent their time out in the heat would put an ointment on their head and it would run down the face, neck, and body, thus preventing sunburn and being very soothing to the skin at the same time. The writer likens unity among brethren to such an experience. Yes, it is most soothing to work where brethren dwell together in unity. Then, he suggests that it is like or "as the dew of Hermon." In such dry, arid land, the vegetation would wilt during the heat of the day, and were it not for the dew of the night all vegetation would die, thereby excluding all animal life from the land. But the dew would revive and give strength to plant life and sustenance to animal life.

Unity among brethren revives and gives strength, growth, and spiritual life to the church. It is a heart-rending experience to see a church wither and wilt, and lose its spiritual life because of division. On the other hand it is a heart warming experience to see brethren working together in unity. No faithful Christian would ever knowingly or wilfully cause division among God's people.

God demands unity of his people. (John 17:20,21): "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Jesus knew that division among those professing to follow him would be a most prolific source of infidelity and therefore prayed that unity might prevail. He prayed, not just for union, but for unity. He wants "oneness of mind, agreement, and harmony."

There is an idea extant today that as long as we do not meet in different buildings we are fulfilling Jesus' prayer for unity. Nothing could be farther from the truth--that is union and not unity. (Amos 3:3): "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Then hear the Spirit through the apostle Paul. I Cor. 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." The people of God must be of the same mind. In many congregations this is not the case. There is division even though a physical breach has not been effected. Some think that those who insist on a physical separation are guilty of causing division. This indicates how little they know about unity and division, or as some would express it, fellowship and dis-fellowship. A congregation may continue to meet in the same building for years and have no fellowship or unity. We shall have more to say on fellowship later in the lesson but now we emphasize the fact that unity, i.e., oneness of mind, is absolutely mandatory. Any congregation that is not "perfectly joined together in the same mind

and in the same judgment" is not pleasing to the heavenly Father. This places the responsibility directly upon those who have the oversight to make every effort possible to bring about oneness of mind. How is this to be done? We shall see before the lesson comes to a close.

Next, we see that division (absence of same mind and judgment,) is condemned. (Matt. 12:25): "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." The church is the kingdom of Christ and the house of God (Col. 1:13.) Therefore, any church which is divided cannot stand. That is why we have such commands as found in Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned: and avoid them." Hear Paul again, II Thess. 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the traditions which he received of us." A divided church does not please God. (I Cor. 3:3): "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (Rom. 8:6): "For to be carnally minded is death. . ." Yes, it is a sin for a congregation to continue in strife and division. There must be a "marking" and we must avoid or withdraw from "every brother that walks disorderly." Therefore, to plead for "unity of the Spirit," one must plead for division. This may sound paradoxical, but we shall see the truth of the statement shortly.

Thus far we have learned how good and how pleasant unity is, and that God demands unity of his people, and that God condemns division. Now, let us raise the question, what or who causes division or destroys unity? The proper answer to this question will be of untold value to God's people in this troubled time.

Unity is homogeneous. "Elements of the same kind blending together in a cohesive manner." This, added to what we have already learned, means that God demands of his people that their minds be blended together in a cohesive manner. There must be that "oneness of mind." But what will produce this fellowship, oneness or unity? The Bible teaches that the word of God alone can accomplish this feat. (II Cor. 10:3-5): "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds): Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Now, if every member of the church allows the word of God to bring his thoughts (mind) into captivity to the obedience of Christ; we have the same element

being blended together in a cohesive manner—same mind and same judgment; agreement, concord, and harmony. (I John 1: 7): "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. . ." (Psalms 119:105, 130) Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "The entrance of thy words giveth light.." Therefore, to walk in the light is to walk or live according to God's word.

If all live or walk as God's word directs we will have that "oneness of mind," fellowship, or unity of the Spirit which God demands. This is the only basis of fellowship in the church. To plead for unity one must plead for all to walk or live in strict obedience to the word of God in all things. The word of God is that which blends the minds together. Wherever and whenever some turn from or disregard the word of God, there is an absence of that "oneness of mind," or unity, and fellowship cannot exist. This is a breaking of fellowship and it causes division. Now what causes division? We have answered a failure to walk, act or live according to God's word. Who causes division? It is quite obvious; those who fail to strictly follow God's word. This is very plainly set forth in II John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Note: whoever fails to abide in (live according to) the word of Christ breaks fellowship with God—he does not have God—no unity with God; he has brought about division. Verses 10-11 forbid the faithful child of God to fellowship those who have failed to "abide in the doctrine of Christ." "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. "Since those who disregard and go beyond the word of God place themselves out of fellowship with God and make it impossible for faithful Christians to be of the "same mind" with them, it is obvious that they are the ones causing division.

Yet there are many today in the church who practice things for which they admit there is no command, approved example, or necessary inference; yea, they tell us there is "no pattern," thereby admitting that they go beyond the word of God. Second John verse 9 tells us that God is not with them and verse 10 and 11 make it impossible for faithful members of the church to continue with them without forfeiting their fellowship with God. This is why there are so many new congregations being started. Those who are forced to withdraw themselves from those who walk disorderly (not according to the word of God,) and meet elsewhere are accused by the digressives of being factionists and church dividers. However, we have learned in this lesson that the opposite is true. Those who fail to follow God's word cause the division. Those who insist on following God's word and withdraw themselves are "endeavoring to keep

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3.) This is what I meant when I said that in pleading for unity we must plead for division. It is impossible to "keep the unity of the spirit," have that "oneness of mind" in a congregation where some insist there is no pattern for the activities of the church in the New Testament. Therefore, those who reverence and respect God's word are forced to withdraw themselves in order to preserve the unity for which Jesus prayed and the apostles plead.

Actually, it is apostasy on the part of some in the church which produces division. It was this division in the church which produced the first general departure and resulted in denominationalism. Thus the many warnings against departures from the word of God (Acts 20:28-30; II Peter 2:1-2; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Thess. 2:3-7; II Tim. 2:16-18.) Now we see why those who have the oversight of congregations should do all in their power to preserve and promote the "unity of the Spirit," that is, the unity produced by the Spirit. The Spirit gave the word of God and that is what produces unity, oneness of mind, or fellowship. (I John 1:3): "That which we (apostles) have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Thus we see that the Spirit inspired the apostles to declare what they had seen and heard in order that fellowship be acquired. If we expect fellowship to prevail we must preach, teach, and practice only that which is taught in the scriptures. Where the fellowship has already been broken, the only way to restore it is for those who teach and practice things not authorized in the scriptures to forsake their evil ways and return to a "thus saith the Lord" for all they do; then unity and fellowship will prevail again. Our plea has ever been to lay aside all human creeds, theories and dogmas of men and take our stand on the sure foundation of God's word. If all brethren would do this we could have fellowship once again, and thus united we could march triumphantly against the forces of Satan.

Will you not confess your faith in Christ as the Son of God; repent or make up your mind that you will turn away from every thing that is wrong, and be baptized into Christ where you can enjoy forgiveness of sins?