

The Way Home

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PREFACE

These lessons have been published to help restore the erring. They may be used in connection with cottage Bible studies with the filmstrip, *THE WAY HOME* or separately.

Several have estimated that approximately fifty percent of those baptized become inactive. Hence, it is obvious that more teaching is needed. We need teaching to prevent this loss. We need teaching to recover those who have erred.

Material has been "borrowed" from many sources. While the author is responsible for the arrangement of these lessons, he acknowledges his indebtedness to many books and individuals who have influenced him.

Use this material. It is written with a prayer that it will help lead the lost sheep back to the fold.

Robert W. Goodman

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THE WAY HOME

Luke 15:11-24

INTRODUCTION

1. We cannot adequately describe this parable. It is like trying to measure the sunrise with the span of our fingers. It has been described as "The most divinely tender and most humanly touching story ever told on our earth."
2. It is familiar. Yet it is as fresh as spring.
3. Why does it have such universal appeal? All can say, "I have been there" or "That's me." It tells how God is lost and found. It tells of the Father in heaven. It gives hope.
4. This parable was given to silence foes. (15:1,2)

I. DEPARTURE - Why did he leave the father's house?

- A. *It was not that he wilfully intended to wreck his life.*
 1. He did not intend to wind up in the pig pen.
 2. No one intends to waste his life and be worth nothing to the church.
- B. *It was not in order to grieve others.*
 1. There is no indication that he was filled with spite and wanted to hurt his kindly father.
 2. No one who goes into sin intends to grieve others, yet they do. (Eph. 4:30) Church.
- C. *He left because of self-will.*
 1. He longed for freedom without restraint. Home was boring.
 2. This self-will made him blind to loss and pain.
 3. This self-will is at the heart of all sin.
 - a. Eve. b. Ahab-vineyard. c. Ananias and Sapph.
 - d. Liquor traffic. e. Seducers. f. This is why some will forfeit their Christian influence, cause church to be blasphemed and the brethren to be discouraged.
- D. *Did the father make a mistake?*
 1. To have done otherwise would not portray God.
 2. God gives us abilities, opportunities and blessings. We are FREE to use these for Him or self. God does not use force to draw or hold us.

II. IN FAR COUNTRY. Describe. Does pleasing self PAY? Note what it cost him:

- A. *Fellowship of his father and joys of home.*
 1. Out of bitter experience he learned, "Be it ever so humble there is no place like home."
 2. When desire to please self more than God, we forfeit His fellowship. (Isa. 59:1,2; James 4:4)
 3. To go from God is to go from the soul's true home. (Psalms 90:1)
- B. *Good name.* (Prov. 22:1; Matt. 5:16; 1 Thess. 5:22)
- C. *Friends.* (Lk. 15:16) We have Jesus. (II Tim. 4:16,17) By sin we forfeit his friendship.
- D. *Peace of mind.* He lost by riotous living. If through self-will we go away we lose . . . (Phil. 4:7)
- E. *Freedom*
 1. The reason he left was to be free.
 2. In seeking freedom he found slavery. "Sent"
 - a. In freedom Sampson found bondage.
 - b. Some to be free, go into sin.

- c. Freedom is in conformity to law. Citizen; Musician; gravity.
3. In Christ we are free; away from Christ — bondage.
- F. *Self-respect.*
1. Son of rich man became a servant. A Jew became a hog feeder
 2. Sin robs us of self-respect. Adam and Eve.
- G. *Joy.*
1. Once life was thrilling and happy.
 2. Have you found in life what you really want?
- H. *It cost him ALL.*
1. Money, clothing, shoes, food, etc. He had done more than spend his money. He had spent his spiritual resources. There was hunger of body and soul.
 2. There was good in this. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity. For the first time he had learned not to rely on self. Now he realized his need of all that he had left,
 3. Some of our troubles are blessings in disguise. "Some will not look up till flat on their backs.
- III. RETURN. What caused him to come back? How was he received?
- A. *He came to himself.*
1. Man is a dual being. Not only has body and soul but a higher and lower self.
 - a. Physically and mentally one may not be himself.
 - b. One may not be his better self.
 - (1) May give in to greed, lust, profanity, carelessness and indifference.
 - (2) "To thine own self be true."
 2. When the prodigal came to himself he was willing to face the facts about himself.
- B. *He made a resolution.*
1. Not that he would turn over a new leaf.
 2. "I will arise and go to my father." 18a
 - a. He resolved to go all the way back.
 - b. He did not plan to slip in father's house, "I have sinned . . ." 18b He does not blame his father, his friends, the devil or anyone.
 - c. Some have been away. They blame others.
 - d. As long as we are flippant about sin, we are beyond the fellowship of God. Sin caused DEATH — Man, Christ, prodigal. (Rom. 6:23)
- C. *He carried it out.* There was no delay or weakening.
- D. *What was the attitude of the father?*
1. Not, "When he saw him he was filled with contempt and shut the door." "Put him on probation."
 2. Had compassion, 20
 3. Did not let him finish his confession. 21
 4. Restored him to the family. (22—24) The prodigal was forgiven. (Ps. 32:1) There was joy in that house.

CONCLUSION

1. Who is a prodigal? One who doesn't realize need of God; one who does not have joy in service of God.
2. God will forgive. He has 2 laws of pardon.

"RESTORE SUCH AN ONE . . ."

Gal. 6:1

INTRODUCTION

1. These words show there was a need of restoring the erring even in New Testament times.
2. Multitudes today are in the condition described: One gospel preacher estimates that 50% of those that he has baptized in meetings are inactive. Many in this condition in every community.
3. What shall we do? In view of God's concern from Genesis to Revelation, we cannot be indifferent.
4. We are to "restore". A metaphor. The word was originally used to describe work of a doctor as he brought the dislocated joint or limb back into place.

I. THE CONDITION OF THE ERRING SHOWS THE NEED

- A. *Overtaken in a fault.*
 1. Not all sin wilfully. Most erring have been overtaken, surprised, caught unaware.
 2. To restore them we must approach them with a realization of this.
- B. *A sheep that has gone astray.* (Isa. 53:6; Lk. 15:30)
 1. The sheep was not necessarily bad, but it was away from the shepherd.
 2. We see how many become lost — they go astray or wander because of interest in other things.
 3. Note the shepherd's concern.
- C. *A disciple who has lost his saltiness.* (Matt. 5:13)
 1. God's children are to have preserving influence. The world did not have enough in the days of Noah; Lot. It was destroyed.
 2. If erring, we have lost our saltiness. No value.
- D. *A disciple whose light has gone out.* (Matt. 5:14—16)
 1. We are to live so as to point men to God. Illus. by lighthouse or beacon.
 2. Sin, neglect or transgression, hides out light.
- E. *Unprepared to go to heaven.*
 1. The foolish virgins had many good traits.
 2. They thought a little preparation would be enough. Are we trying to "get by?"
- F. *Unprofitable.* (Matt. 25:14-30)
 1. The one talent man had man had many good traits:
 2. Why was he called "wicked and slothful?"
- G. *An unfruitful branch.* (John 15:6)
 1. A dead branch is of no value to a living tree. The tree will do better if it is cut off.
 2. If we cease to be active members, the church may not take action, but Jesus will.
- H. *Gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.* (Acts 8:21—23)
 1. Simon was not aware of his true spiritual nature until Peter spoke.
 2. Simon had heart trouble. His heart was on display, greed and material things.
 3. When people go astray, they do so because of divided hearts.
- I. *Erring . . . death.* (James 5:19-20; Rev. 21:8)
- J. *Latter end worse.* (II Pet. 2:20-22)
- K. *Fallen.* (Rev. 2:5; Gal. 5:4)
- L. *Love cold-left first love.* (Matt. 24:12,13; Rev. 2:4)

M. *-Spiritually destitute.* (Rev. 3:17)

II. RESTORATION IS POSSIBLE

- A. *May feel, "It won't do any good."*
1. If we are sold on the gospel, this will not be our attitude.
2. Suppose God had said this after fall of man.
3. Suppose Jesus had said this.
4. Does the rancher talk this way? Policeman?
- B. *God would not have commanded this if it were not possible.*
- C. *Many examples:*
1. David. 2. Jonah. 3. Peter. 4. Mark.
- D. *Some of the most useful in the church have been restored.*
- E. *All of us have been restored.*

in. WHO SHOULD RESTORE THE ERRING?

- A. *Not just elders or preachers.* (James 5:19,20)
- B. *Spiritual.*
1. Those with fruit of spirit. (Gal. 5:22,23)
2. If things need correcting in our lives, we are not ready for this work.
- C. *The meek.*
1. We are not to be harsh, angry, or haughty. We must not delight in "getting them told."
2. This work should be done with love, gentleness, humility, patience and a forgiving spirit.
3. Jesus restored the erring — he was "meek."
- D. *"Considering thyself . . ."*
1. We too must "watch and pray."
2. A consideration of what we have been, are and may be will help us in our approach.
3. This means to consider the golden rule.
- E. *The prepared.*
1. This involves spiritual surgery.
2. We must be prepared in life, heart, attitude, and mind. (II Tim. 2:15; Jas. 1:5)

IV. RESPONSIBILITY OF ONE BEING RESTORED.

- A. *Receive the word.* (James 1:21)
- B. *Obey the word.* (Acts 8:21-24; I John 1:8)
- C. *This is God's second law of pardon.*
1. First law. (Matt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15,16; Luke 24:47; examples in Acts)
2. Does God promise salvation apart from it? (Matt. 7:21)
3. Why should any expect forgiveness without complying with God's second law? (Rev. 22:14)
- D. *After being restored, "do the first works."* (Rev. 21:5) They had drifted from that love they once had. Pray, study, sing, commune, give, visit the sick, serve, etc.

THE SIN THAT BURDENS - UNFAITHFULNESS

Rev. 2:10

INTRODUCTION

1. These words were addressed to a persecuted church. They would expect more. Need this exhortation.
2. Every sin has certain characteristics: The sin of unfaithfulness burdens:
 - a. Home.
 - b. Business,
 - c. Church
 - d. Soul winners
 - e. Treasury.
3. We should hate this sin.

I. UNFAITHFULNESS BURDENS OTHERS

- A. Abraham's life was burdened by Lot. Strife. Lot's capture. (Gen. 14:14) Promised destruction of the city of Sodom. (Gen. 18) Perhaps his downfall.
- B. Moses was burdened by Aaron. (Num. 12:1; Ex. 32)
- C. Joshua and all Israel burdened by Achan. (Joshua 6:18,19; 7)
- D. Samuel was burdened by Saul. Saul did not wait, but offered sacrifices himself. Refused to destroy all the Amalekites. Paradise.
- E. Unfaithful parents burden their children. Ahab and Jezebel a burden to Jehoram. (II Kgs. 3:1,3)
- F. Unfaithful children burden their parents. Absalom. (II Sam. 18:33)
- G. Unfaithful members burden the church.
 1. Elders.
 2. Preacher.
 3. Every member.
 4. Before the world.
- H. Unfaithful preachers burden the world. (I Jn. 4:1) They cause confusion and misunderstanding.
 1. Unfaithfulness burdens GOD, CHRIST, HOLY SPIRIT. Trace this in Old Testament. (Eph. 4:30)

II. UNFAITHFULNESS BURDENS THE WORK OF GOD. The church moves as a car with its brakes on. Ways:

- A. *Money*
 1. Jews used money for everything but house of God. (Haggai 1:4)
 2. Much vital work left undone for want of funds.
 3. Have we learned the truth about giving?
 - a. Many are irregular.
 - b. Many have the "dollar habit."
 4. Achan took for himself what should have gone to God — he was unfaithful.
- B. *Time*. (Eph. 5:16)
 1. Many nominal members are unfaithful in the use of time — even the Lord's day. "Too tired" to go to church, but not to go fishing, visiting, or to put in "overtime" at "time and a half" or "double time."
 2. One who ignores God in the matter of time is not wise. God gives us time. He holds our lives in His hand. They may come to a close at any time. Then, all opportunities are over.
- C. *Talents*. (Matt. 25:14ff)
 1. The work of the Lord is often burdened because talents are not consecrated to the Lord.
 2. A church that is live and growing is a church whose members

use their talents.

D. *Life*

1. Any time members take or advocate social drink, take God's name in vain, participate in modern dance, or neglect their debts, the work of God is burdened. (Rom 2:24)
2. Gal. 2:20.

E. *Prayer*

1. Probably all of us could be more faithful here.
2. Let us pray for this church; for every member; every service; for erring; for lost about us; for those who rule; for the spread of the kingdom.

III. UNFAITHFULNESS BURDENS UNFAITHFUL

- A. *They cannot have real joy.* (Phil. 4:4)
- B. *They do not delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night.* (Ps. 1)
- C. *They are not glad when one asks them to go to worship.* (Psalm 122:1) They had rather make excuses. They will be uncomfortable and irregular.
- D. *Their lives are not rich and dynamic.* (Jn. 10:10)
- E. *They have no real rest.* (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 14:13)
- F. *They do not have the Lord's help with cares.* (I Pet. 5:7)
- G. *They are burdened at the thought of dying.* (Rev. 2:10)

CONCLUSION

1. God loves and rewards the faithful. (Matt. 25:21)
2. Have you been unfaithful to God and the vows that you made when you became a Christian? ... to the Christ who loved you and died for you ... to His church?
3. If I had one more year to live, I would want to be faithful, wouldn't you? Repent, confess, and pray.
4. Sinner, God is faithful. He has promised to save us when we obey the gospel.

DOES RELIGION BORE YOU?

Mal. 1: 13

INTRODUCTION

1. The identity of the writer and the time are unknown. Malachi, my messenger, may have been a proper name or description. It was a time of famine — material and spiritual.
2. The writer with keen insight saw their sins. With courage and by the spirit he unmasked the sins of priests and people. He anticipated their objections and answered them. In great faith he looked to the future. "He is like a late evening which brings a long day to a close, but he is also like a morning dawn which brings with it promise of a new and more glorious day."
3. Malachi was speaking to a difficult group. They did not listen with undivided attention — they were bored with religion.

I. BOREDOM A MAJOR PROBLEM.

A. *In society.*

1. Accounts for so many unhappy people in a prosperous age.
2. This is one reason for "success" of night clubs, dances, taverns, drunkenness.
3. Causes many to live for pleasure or entertainment.
4. Leads to juvenile delinquency.
5. A factor in many divorces.
6. Contributes to early death of many. They have everything to live with, but nothing to live for. Suicides.

B. *In religion.*

1. Malachi charged them with many sins, but this was a basic sin.
 - a. Worship was formal and hypocritical.
 - b. Priests were cynical and worldly.
 - c. Injustice prevailed.
 - d. Divorce and intermarriage with heathen.
 - e. Tithes neglected.
 - f. Distrust of God and His word.
2. This helps explain why many are not Christians and why many are erring. Boredom kills interest and renders Christianity unattractive.

II. WHY ARE PEOPLE BORED WITH RELIGION? Because they have made of it something other than God intended.

A. *Cheap.*

1. They tried to do as little as possible. Sacrifices. Giving. (Matt. 6: 21) Giving an indication of our spiritual temperature.
2. This is one of Satan's devices. Cf. Pharaoh.
3. When we begin to ask how much do I have to give, or attend? WATCH OUT!

B. *Formal.*

1. They had not quit in efforts to please God. Mal. 1: 13; 3: 14; 2: 13, 14-16.
2. They were seeking to make religious forms a substitute for right living. They wanted God to forgive them for sins they would not quit.

C. *Self-pleasing.*

1. They wanted to please God, but the desire to please self was greater.
2. Self-pleasing leads to boredom in child or adult. In religion.

D. *Their religion had ceased to be a blessing to others.*

1. Instead of blessing they were oppressing. (3:5)

2. They had slandered God and turned others away from it by making it ugly and unprofitable. (3: 13,14)
 3. We may say the same things by our lives: We may tell our children and neighbors that religion is all right as long as it doesn't cost anything.
- E. A *human religion*.
1. Theirs had once been a divine religion. It had once given them joy and zeal. Corrupted.
 2. Multitudes, both in and out of the churches of men, are dissatisfied. Is it the fault of Christianity? They have corrupted it. Their religion bores because it is not what God authorized.
- F. A *loveless religion*.
1. They served God, but without love.
 2. Nothing is greater drudgery than service without love. Wife and mother; job.
 3. They had lost sight of God. When one loves God and lives in close fellowship, religion is not boring.

III. THE CURE FOR BOREDOM

- A. Not by accumulation of material things. (Eccl. 2)
- B. Three things:
1. Be interested in others. (Phil. 2:4) Caleb did not quit when he was old. (Josh 14: 10, 12,13;15: 14) Matt. 10: 39.
 2. We must be willing to pay full price. (I Chron. 21: 24, 25; Matt. 16: 24, 25; 6: 33)
 3. Live close to heaven each day. (James 4: 8; I Peter 2: 21; Col. 3: 1,2)

CONCLUSION

1. Do you need to return?
2. Are you tired of sin? (Matt. 11:28-30)

"TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?"

John 6:66-68

INTRODUCTION

1. The teaching of Jesus seemed narrow and hard. Many fair-weather disciples turned back.
2. That was a sad question Jesus asked the twelve. What a cheering answer Peter gave.
3. Man does not stand alone. He cannot live in a vacuum. If we do not faithfully follow Christ, then we are turned aside to something else.
4. People are often critical of Christianity. Often men turn away. What alternatives are there? What do they offer?

I. WHERE DO MEN GO WHEN THEY TURN AWAY FROM JESUS?

- A. *Some go to Moses.* Sabbath-keepers.
 1. There was a time when Moses was to be heard.
 2. What does it mean to turn to Moses? (Gals. 5:4)
 3. If the sabbath is binding, what about the penalties. It was a sign. (Ex. 31:17)
- B. *Multitudes go to John the Baptist for a name.*
 1. What was his divinely given name? (Luke 1:13)
 2. What was his work? (Lk. 1:17; Jn. 1:7; Jn. 3:30; Matt. 16:18.) John was not called a Baptist as a party name, but because of his work.
 3. There is no authority to wear this name. (I Cor. 1:13) If we follow Christ, we should wear his name.
- C. *Many go to David.*
 1. David was a man after God's heart. Contrast to Saul.
 2. David introduced instruments into worship.
 3. Even if we grant that all of this met with God's approval, it proves nothing today. They had many practices then that would be sinful today.
 4. Christ is our authority. (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1,2; Eph. 5:19)
- D. *Myriads turn to doctrines and organizations of men.*
 1. Many inducements: Popular; Convenient; liberal; friends and loved ones; recreational programs; business reasons; good people.
 2. Will such meet our needs? (Matt. 15:8,9,13)
 3. We must be governed by the will of God. (Matt. 7:21) Plan of salvation, name, organization.
- E. *Countless individuals turn to self.*
 1. Man has tried this many times: Eve; before the flood; tower of Babel; during Judges. Rom. 1.
 2. Has man so developed that he is now self-sufficient?
 - a. Has he mastered his emotions, desires, appetites? Alcoholism and immorality.
 - b. Has his power and wisdom been able to stop war, death, crime, corruption and dishonesty?
 3. God has told man repeatedly he cannot pull himself up by his own shoe strings. (Jer. 17:5; 10:23)
- F. *Today men go to science to meet all their needs.*
 1. The Communists boast they don't need God for science will give them all they want.
 2. Many in this land act the same.
 3. Science has done much: Prolonged life increased living standard; lightened our work, etc.
 4. Science alone cannot meet man's needs:
 - a. It has given an efficient life, but it cannot give eternal life.

- b. It has given means of destroying all, but it cannot save one soul.
 - c. It has given conveniences but not character.
 - d. It has given man an elastic conscience, but it cannot deliver him from guilt, greed, lust, pride and hatred.
 - 5. It has answered many questions, but it leaves greater ones unanswered: Origin, duty, and destiny of man.
 - 6. Science is necessary in "subduing the earth", but it was never intended to meet all the needs of man.
 - 7. The world is suffering now under effects of false science by Evolution.
- G. *Multitudes turn aside to money.*
- 1. The rich young ruler. (Matt. 19: 16-22)
 - a. Stress his good qualities. (Mk. 10: 23, 24)
 - b. Where was his trust? His love? His interest?
 - c. Have you even known any to be "too busy" for Christ?
 - 2. Judas. (Matt. 26: 14-16) Did it satisfy? (Matt. 27: 3-5) Things cannot satisfy the soul.
- H. *Millions heed the call of the world.* (II Tim. 4: 10)
- 1. What this includes. (I Jn. 2: 15, 16) Many seek pleasure more than anything else. (II Tim. 3: 4) Roman ruler offered a great reward for some new pleasure. So do we! More spent for pleasure than religion or education.
 - 2. Will this last? (I Jn. 2: 17) A queen who had lived a worldly life said as death approached, "Millions of dollars for an inch of time."
 - 3. Will it meet the needs? (Matt. 16:26)
- II. AFTER EXAMINING THE ALTERNATIVES, SURELY WE CAN SAY WITH PETER, "TO WHOM SHALL WE GO, THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE."
- A. *In Christ we find all that men seek elsewhere:*
- 1. New and perfect law of liberty.
 - 2. A name greater than any.
 - 3. "The sweetest note in Seraph song."
 - 4. The way, truth, and life.
 - 5. First and last.
 - 6. Riches of God.
 - 7. Joy, satisfaction, and peace.
- B. *In Christ we find our all and all.*
- 1. Light.
 - 2. Healing.
 - 3. Water.
 - 4. Food.
 - 5. Friend.
 - 6. Burden bearer.
 - 7. Shepherd.
 - 8. Savior.
 - 9. Advocate
 - 10. Head.
 - 11. Foundation.
 - 12. Victory.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Have you turned back to the world. (II Pet. 2: 20)
- 2. Do you know Jesus? Are you in Him and He in you?
- 3. "Will ye also go away?"

THE DEADLY DANGER OF DRIFTING

Heb. 2:1-3 ASV

INTRODUCTION

1. Many figures illustrate joys, responsibilities, and dangers of the life in Christ. Text illustrates danger by word "drift". Pictures a boat unanchored in bay; tide in its ebb slowly carries it out to sea.
2. Jesus warned. (Lk. 13:24-28) Paul. (I Cor. 10:12)
3. Why is drifting such a deadly danger?
 - a. It is easy. It requires no effort.
 - b. It is difficult to detect at first.
 - c. It is common. Nations. Schools. Papers. People.
 - d. May involve others.
 - e. Results are as deadly as deliberate departure.

I. CHURCHES MAY DRIFT.

- A. New Testament times.
 1. Corinth. Division, immorality, strife, etc.
 2. Galatia. Drifted back to law in about one year.
 3. Ephesus. Drifted from first love despite such teachers as Paul, Timothy, and John.
 4. Laodicea. Drifted from zeal.
- B. History is filled with examples.
 1. Where is the faithful church in Rome? It along with others drifted. Had to be restored.
 2. Where are the seven churches of Asia? They drifted into the Greek Orthodox Church.
 3. Apostasy in nineteenth century.
- C. Let us take warning. Some bad signs:
 1. Instrument in building for weddings.
 2. Church promoted recreation and entertainment.
 3. Increasing worldliness.
 4. Concentration of funds, work and influence in a few larger congregations.
 5. Institutionalized church.

"BRETHREN, WE ARE DRIFTING."

II. INDIVIDUALS MAY DRIFT. What are some of the currents that may cause us to drift?

- A. *Materialistic living.*
 1. Lives filled with thoughts and activities of a material nature.
 2. People about us are living for time and pleasure (II Tim. 3: 4-6; I Tim. 5:6)
 - a. People are obsessed with the idea of being entertained.
 - b. 30 times as much spent on crime, gambling, strong drink, and vice as religion. (Matt. 6:21)
 - c. If closest associates are worldly minded, watch out. (I Cor. 15:33)
 3. Moral atmosphere is such that it is difficult to pray, think soberly, and meditate on elevating thoughts. Christ is crowded out.
 4. Luke 12:16-21; days of Noah.
- B. *Dissatisfaction.*
 1. In program of work.
 2. Sometimes this is about preachers. (Matt. 11:16—19) It may be about elders. Teachers.

- C. *Discouragement.* (Col. 3:21; Num. 21:4)
 - 1. Grudge. May be built up by what others say or do or what we hear. Illus. (Matt. 18:15-17)
 - 2. Strife. Brotherhood. Congregation. (I Cor. 3:3) Abraham. (Gen. 13:5-12)
 - 3. Failure. Some may neglect to lead public prayer or teach a class for may have failed. Remember Israel at Ebenezer. (I Sam. 4 & 7)
 - 4. Seemingly slow progress. Noah.
 - 5. Financial reverses.
- D. *Pride.* (Col. 2:18,19)
 - 1. Because clothing not as good as another's.
 - 2. Some have failed to identify themselves where the church is small in number and meets in frame buildings.
 - 3. Keeps some from changing religion.
- E. *Popularity.* (John 9:22; 12:42,43)
 - 1. Some to be popular with world will drink, dance gamble and curse. Some mothers will say, "I want my daughter to be popular." (James 4:4)
- F. *Neglect.* Text.
 - 1. Many things may lead to neglect:
 - a. Coming of a baby.
 - b. Using Lord's day for personal pleasure.
 - c. Marrying out of the church.
 - d. Sunday work.
 - e. Moving
 - 2. Let us not neglect:
 - a. Private prayers. (Matt. 26:40,41)
 - b. Worship. (Heb. 10:25)
 - c. Study. (I Pet. 2:2)
 - d. To do what we learn from the word. (James 1:23—25) If we fail to act concerning that which the Lord tells us to do in His word, the time will come when it will not convict us. Illus. A man digging graves was asked if his work disturbed him. He replied, "It did at first, but I have been at it so long, it no longer bothers me."
- G. *Procrastination.* (Acts 24:24,25) Were you once more disturbed about your spiritual condition than you are now? Wake up! You are drifting to destruction.

CONCLUSION

- 1. The world has drifted from the plan of salvation.
- 2. God has a second law of pardon for those who have drifted.

FROM SHALLOWS TO DEPTHS

Acts 27:27-29

INTRODUCTION

1. Discuss Paul's conversion. He ever after lived for Christ. He was constantly in peril from Damascus till he was in chains in Jerusalem.
2. Because of his loyalty to Christ, he was a prisoner on his way to Rome.
3. Reflection on this verse and the lesson's it suggests should be profitable.

I. DANGEROUS DIRECTION

- A. The course of this ship warns us of the dangerous direction in our spiritual life.
 1. The life in Christ goes from shallow to depths. It is every on an ascending plane. (Rom. 6:4; I Pet. 2:2; II Cor. 4:16; John 15:8; Phil. 3:12,13)
 2. This dangerous direction is contrary to the right spiritual life.
 - a. The life in Christ is not a "holding its own" affair; it is not maintaining the "status quo"
 - b. It is a life of growth. (Mark 4:23; II Pet. 3:18; Heb. 5:12)
 - c. It is contrary to God's purpose for us to go from depths to shallows, strength to weakness, warmth to coldness, possession to profession.
- B. Some dangers of shallowness:
 1. Shallow faith hinders work and blessings. (Matt. 17:14—20)
 2. Shallow thoughts limit our vision (John 4:35; Eph. 3:20)
Do we really think deeply on the work of the Lord?
 3. Shallow profession gives way in time of stress. (Mk. 4:5,6, 16,17; II Tim. 4:10) Why are there so many spiritual failures today? (II Tim. 3:5; Acts 14:22) Illus. A little boy was asked why he fell out of bed. "I guess I stayed too close to where I got in."
 4. Shallow meditation hinders spiritual growth. Many never think deeply the thoughts of God. (John 12:16; Ps. 1:1,2)
Suppose we fed on food as we feed on the word of God. How much better it would be if we fed on word as bee feeds on the nectar of the flower.

II. DEMAND FOR DEPTH. Luke 5:4

- A. Deeper love. (I Thess. 3:12)
 1. The early church was composed of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, wise and otherwise, yet it was one body because of love.
 2. Love is the tie that binds. (Col. 3:14)
- B. Deeper faith. (II Thess. 1:3)
 1. Does this describe you? (Heb. 10:38; Eph. 6:16; I Jn. 5:4)
 2. Let us go on to deeper faith — one that will overcome doubt, murmuring and apostasy.
- C. Deeper courage to meet forces of evil. (Acts 4:13; I Tim. 6:12)
Forces of error and evil will not throw down their weapons until they are overcome. "Sure I must fight in Jesus' name, increase my courage Lord."
- D. Deeper devotion in prayer. (Phil. 4:6)
 1. Are we not in danger of prayerless lives or of saying a few words with difficulty? Do we have the fidgets while one leads prayer?

2. There should be an overflowing in prayer daily. (Ps. 42: 4; I Thess. 5: 17)
- E. Deeper praise and reverence in worship. (John 4: 24; Heb. 13: 15; Rev. 5: 8)
 1. When we have this we will not make excuses.
 2. We will not be habitually late. Worship will not be a boring experience.
- F. Deeper love in giving. (II Cor. 8: 7) Not for show, bigness, tax advantage, praise of men, but a real love offering.
- G. Deeper passion for lost souls. (Gal. 4: 19; Rom. 10: 1; 9: 1-3)
 1. This must continue as long as 1 soul has not heard of Christ and His truth.
 2. This will cause us to look for ways to teach.
- H. Deeper spirituality in daily living for Christ.
 1. Christianity is not a Sunday suit or a special day affair.
 2. Each day should be a walk with God. We should realize the abiding presence of Christ.
- I. Deeper knowledge. (Col. 1: 10) Just as the mountain challenges the climber, the word ought to challenge us.

III. THE VOYAGE FROM SHALLOWS TO DEPTHS YIELDS RICH REWARDS.

- A. The lives of God's great men show us this.
 1. Enoch. Lived in a sinful, shallow age. (Heb. 11: 5)
 2. Noah. No one else would venture out. (Heb. 11:7)
 3. Abraham.
 4. Moses. He despised the shallowness of riches, pleasure and and fame.
 5. David. He spurned the shallows of the sheepfold and turned his life toward the depths — gave us great Psalms and he was ruler of a mighty empire.
 6. Peter. (Luke 5: 1-11) He became the great fisher of men.
 7. Paul. When Paul got a vision of Christ, he turned from shallow Phariseism to depths of service for Christ. He stormed great cities and proud empires. No suffering could stop him. (II Tim. 4: 6-8)
- B. Turn from shallows to depths and enjoy a life that is rich, abiding, and dynamic.

CONCLUSION.

1. Would you turn from the shallows of denominationalism?
2. What is your prospect when the storm of life is over? Does each day bring you nearer heaven?

"YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH"

Matt. 5:13

INTRODUCTION

1. This is from the sermon on the mount.
2. Jesus had discussed the qualities his subjects must have. Now he mentions their responsibility to the world.
3. Salt was common then as now.
 - a. Condiment or flavoring.
 - b. Antiseptic. (Ezek. 16:4)
 - c. Religious sacrifices were "salted with salt."
 - d. Covenants of salt.
 - e. Preservative.

I. SALT IS A POSITIVE FORCE

- A. Its presence or absence cannot be ignored.
 1. Its presence is usually highly welcomed. See introductory thoughts.
 2. Its presence is sometimes keenly resented. Coffee; ice cream.
- B. Disciples of Christ cannot be ignored.
 1. Jesus was either hated intensely or loved dearly.
 2. The presence of the disciples was either welcomed or resented. Paul.

II. FUNCTIONS OF SALT.

- A. Improves flavor. (Job 6:6)
 1. A king asked his daughters how much they loved him. His youngest replied, "Daddy, I love you like salt." He was displeased. He complained of his food the next morning and asked what was wrong with it. His youngest replied, "It has no salt in it." Then he thanked her for the compliment.
 2. The Lord and His word may not seem palatable to the world. We who have tasted the good word and know that the Lord is gracious are to so live that others will better appreciate the word. Do we attend Bible study?
- B. Arouses thirst.
 1. Little boy was asked to define salt: "Salt makes you thirsty."
 2. Our lives should create thirst for water of life. Jesus' life created in the sincere a desire for better life. Church at Jerusalem. (Acts 2:47;5:13,14)
- C. Preserves. Curing meat.
 1. Christians preserve the world in at least 2 ways:
 - a. Teaching. (Matt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15,16; Acts 8:4; II Cor. 4:7; II Tim. 2:2)
 - b. Influence. (I Pet. 3:1,2; Matt. 24:22)
 2. Salt to preserve must make contact.
 - a. Despite criticism, Jesus associated with the publicans and sinners. He did not sin with them.
 - b. History of early church is that of unbarreling the salt to Jew and Gentile.
 - c. Paul realized that all needed the gospel to be saved. (Rom. 1:14,15; Col. 1:23)
 3. There is a great need for salt in world today.
 - a. Against influence of lasciviousness. Street, beach, advertising, TV, movies, etc.
 - b. Morality. Illegitimate birth rate was 1 in 70 in 1900. In

Houston, Texas in 1960 so far as was known it was more than 1 in 11.

- c. Home. In 50 years divorce rate increased from 1 divorce in 18 marriages to 1 in 4.
 - d. Choking thorns of pleasure. Gambling dens, night clubs, amusement parks, theaters, ball parks and beaches are full while church buildings are half filled.
 - e. Liquor. Consumption continues to grow. More than 3 billion gallons per year. Three times as many liquor establishments as church buildings. 5% of national income spent for liquor; 6 times as much as for religion.
4. What happens when not enough salt? Spoilage.
- a. Days of Noah.
 - b. Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - c. When and if this nation falls, it will fall from lack of righteous people within. (Prov. 14: 34; Ps. 9:17)
Greatest thing can do for nation is live a righteous life.
The disciple who is not salt is endangering welfare of the nation, failing in Lord's work, shaming the church and damning his soul.
5. Salt preserves at the expense of itself.
- a. Jesus had to give himself to preserve. (II Cor. 8: 9; Eph. 5: 25; Lk. 22: 42)
 - b. We must give ourselves too. Time, money, energy.
- D. Salt is essential. The body of man and animals must have it.

III. DANGER OF LOSING SALT.

- A. Salt may lose its power by two ways:
1. Deterioration.
 - a. Illus. Merchant once imported salt for a fee on behalf of his government. He was anxious for a profit so he imported enough to last 20 years. In order to store this he got 25 houses in the mountains. They had earthen floors and the salt began to deteriorate. Soon it was worthless.
 - b. We may "drift" "leave our first love" We may follow Christ afar off.
 2. Exposure.
 - a. Traveler told of valley of salt. He broke off piece of salt from rock. It had the glitter of salt, but not the savour. That which had been exposed had lost its savour.
 - b. Peter. Sons of God in Noah's day. (I Cor. 15: 33; I Thess. 5: 22)
- B. Saltless salt is of no value. Of what value is disciple who has lost his salt?
- D. How can we maintain our saltiness? (Rom. 12: 1, 2)

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS, (Use or Lose)

Matt. 25:28-30

INTRODUCTION

1. The disciples had asked of Jesus' coming and the end of the world.
2. The answer was extended. Jesus pointed out in different ways how they were to live so as to be ready to meet him.
3. Tell the parable.
4. If immediate disciples needed this instruction then certainly we do.

I. DISTRIBUTION. 14,15

- A. Each servant received something.
 1. Not a one was empty handed.
 2. No one need be useless. God gives to each of us some work (Mk. 13:34) and "capital" to do the job. The world will be poorer if we do not use it.
- B. They did not receive equal gifts. Nor do we.
 1. By birth some are physically and mentally more gifted.
 2. There are differences in opportunities for developing our gifts. Some have educated and cultured parents and advantages in best schools. Some are members of congregations with wideawake, aggressive leaders.
 3. Differ in opportunities for using our gifts. Illus. by differences in land farmers have.
- C. The right way to view our gifts.
 1. If gifted, should not glory over less fortunate. (I Cor. 4:7)
 2. If gifts are meager, do not feel inferior.
 3. Not abundance of gifts that gives us honor and praise from the Lord, but the way we use what we have.

II. USE MADE OF THE TALENTS. 16-18.

- A. Two servants go to work immediately, wholeheartedly and perseveringly. They wanted to be worthy of their lord's confidence.
 1. Some feel it is easier for more gifted to work.
 2. More gifted are faced with the temptation of doing less than their best. (Mk. 12:41-44)
 3. Where are the greatest failures in life and in the Church? Not among those of limited ability but among those with vast ability.
- B. The one talent man. "Hid..."
 1. Lacked vision.
 - a. He did not see what he could do with one talent. He did not see that it was needed. Maybe he reasoned, "The master has plenty" or "others can do more."
 - b. How often we minimize our ability and do nothing.
 - c. Not always big things that make the church grow. (Eph. 4:16)
 - d. Jesus emphasized worth of little things.
 2. Lacked faith — "I was afraid." Many fears:
 - a. Might not do as much as others. Pride kept him from using what he had. Some may feel this way about giving. They dream of good would do if they had a million. Rockefeller once made \$4.50 per week. He gave 45c. "There is waiting a work where only your hands can avail: And so if you falter, a chord in the music will fail."
 - b. Risk. Nothing is gained without risk. Many more talents are lost by neglect than use.
 - c. Failure. "I knew thee..." How many never dare lead public

- prayer or take public part in service. Some will not obey the gospel or return to first love because they fear failure.
- d. Work. "Slothful" Many tasks that we know we can and should do, but it is too much trouble. The work for Christ is not in vain. (Cor. 15:58)
- e. His master. Thought master would require more than he was able to do. Many think God's demands are too great. Jeroboam — "too far to Jerusalem" Worship. Christian life. Lacked gratitude. Fenton: "You ungrateful idler." Gratitude should have prompted him to use the talent that had been graciously given.
- Lacked sense of justice. Took master's money, but neither increased it nor planned to do so. He was a consumer, not a producer.

III. RECKONING. 19-

- A. Certainty. (19) Cf. 25:31; II Cor. 5:10)
- B. The test. Not cleverness nor amount of work done, but faithfulness. Have we done our best?
- C. Reward to faithful. 21,23
1. Commendation of Lord. No higher commendation. No praise of man or medal of gold can compare with joyful words, "Well done..." Rev. 2:10.
 2. Gifts increased — "ruler over many."
 3. Joy of the Lord. Lifted up from position of slave to enjoying things of our master. Prodigal son. (Ps. 16:11)
- D. Condemnation of the 1 talent man.
1. Rebuked. "Wicked and slothful." He had not wasted his talent in drunken, riotous, and immoral living. He was not a liar, robber, murderer or gambler. He was INACTIVE, USELESS, and UNFAITHFUL.
 2. Take talent from him. 29.
 - a. May seem impossible and unfair at first.
 - b. A law of life that unless we use and improve what God has given us, we will lose it. We must USE OR LOSE. Illus. Seed; skills; knowledge of foreign language.
 3. "Cast out."
 - a. Who? Servant. Master had claim on his time and service. Can fall.
 - b. Why? UNPROFITABLE. Apply.
 - c. Where? Outer darkness . . . weeping . . . teeth.

SEEING THE UNSEEN

II Cor. 4:17,18

INTRODUCTION

1. There is more to life than meets the eye. Some of the most real and valuable things are unseen: Thought; love; spirit; God's upholding power; sight and sound-radio and TV. (II Kgs. 6:8-17)
2. Man is prone to think too much of seen things and too little of unseen. (Lk. 12:16-21; Mark 13:1,2)
 - a. Seen things are temporal and fleeting. (I John 2:17) "Nothing is permanent but change."
 - b. Seen things do not satisfy. Message of Ecclesiastes; Matt. 6:25.
3. Is it impractical to talk about things that cannot be seen? Consider the atom. When we study a few examples of the power of unseen things, we will see how practical it is.

I. PROMOTE PURITY.

- A. Joseph's temptation. (Gen. 39:6-12)
- B. What produces big change in the life of a child of God? (I Cor. 6:9-2:2,9; I John 3:3)

II. KEEP US FAITHFUL.

- A. Book of Hebrews.
 1. They were tempted to return to Judaism, the religion of their fathers. Its color, pomp, and ritual were "seen." Christianity had no temple of stone, special priests, altars, etc.
 2. The letter was written to strengthen their faith and keep them true. (Heb. 3:12; 4:11) The writer showed that faith does not depend on things seen. (Heb. 11:1—3) Examples:
 - a. Enoch. Heb. 11:5; Gen. 5:24.
 - b. Noah. Heb. 11:7
 - c. Abraham. Heb. 11:8-10.
 - d. Moses. Heb. 11:27.
- B. Here is the answer to many difficult questions.
 1. Why do so many become unfaithful?
 2. Why is it so hard for some to live for Christ?
 3. Why do some have so little joy in serving the Lord?
 4. Why do some appear, so strong spiritually?
 5. Why are some steadfast, unmoveable . . . ?
 6. Why do some find time to work and worship as they do?
 7. Why do some find such great delight in the word of God? Prayer?

III. CONSOLATION IN DEATH

- A. Death of Stephen. (Acts 7:55-56)
 1. Stephen saw things others could not.
 2. Why did God grant him this vision? It may have been because Stephen was the first to die for the faith. God knew others would suffer for righteousness sake. In the past death had been a great foe. This example would strengthen all who would be tried in like manner.
- B. Death of Lazarus. (Luke 16:19-31)
 1. The rich man and his friends would have laughed if they had been told that angels were near. They certainly would have been skeptical if they had received word that angels bore the spirit of Lazarus away to paradise, (v. 22)

2. If God in his love and mercy sent angels to Lazarus, will he not do so for others? (Ps. 23:4)

- C. Balaam once had a view of the unseen in death. "Let me die the death of the righteous..." He lost this vision by unfaithfulness? What is your vision of death?

IV. ENABLE US TO BEAR TRIAL OF LIFE. (II Cor. 4:16-18)

- A. Light affliction. Would we think it light? Some think weather, frailties of body, mocking friends and associates, shortcomings of others to be great affliction. (Cf. 7-10; II : 24-28)
- B. Moment. Last for many years, yet Paul could say, moment.
1. He could see the unseen. (18; 5:1) If Paul had looked only on what he could see, we might never have heard of him.
 2. They were but for a moment in comparison to eternal weight of glory.
- C. Worketh for us . . . Paul coined a phrase to describe the unseen: Exceeding exceedingly; infinitely exceeding; infinite and boundless. "Far beyond any comparison". This is true only of the child of God who submits to the will of God. Not all afflictions thus work.
1. Affliction — glory.
 2. Light — weight.
 3. Moment — eternal.
- D. We need to set our affections more on heavenly things. Then the unpleasant things of earth will not trouble us so.

V. LEAD TO HIGHER SERVICE. (Heb. 12:2)

- A. How could cross be joy to Jesus?
1. The only view that man had was painful and shameful.
 2. There was joy in doing the will of God, in providing the way of salvation, and in accomplishing his mission. (John 1:29)
- B. Ability to see the unseen will lead to higher service.
1. Causes one to turn back on world and obey Christ, (Acts 2:36—38,41) May not see any material good; may see additional trials. Look beyond to unseen: Salvation; pardon; home.
 2. Some cannot see joy in worshipping the Lord. When we see the unseen, it is a refreshing time of fellowship.
 3. Will lead the erring back. (Acts 8:19—24) Do you see the unseen? Do you live in view of it?

PRINCIPLES OF A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Phil. 3:12-14; 4:11-13

INTRODUCTION

1. All want to achieve success: Parents; young people will work hard to prepare for profession; those in business; etc.
2. This is good, but we should desire success in the Christian life above all else. Often the least effort is put forth here.
3. Why are some so successful in the Christian life? It is not an accident. It is not their nature. It is the beautiful product of patience and conscious effort with the grace of God.
4. Each one is responsible for his own life. If we are not spiritually successful, we are to blame.

I. THE THINGS OF THE PAST MUST BE FORGOTTEN. 3:13

In the race of life, Paul realized he could not look back. Detrimental. (Num. 11:5)

- A. Forgot losses. (Phil. 3:7,8)
 1. Prestige. Pharisee. Student of Gamaliel. Paul had a good reputation. (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5)
 2. Money. He could have become a leading "rabbi". He was also a tentmaker.
 3. Friends. Paul had to give up many friends — some were high socially, intellectually and financially. They became his bitter enemies.
 4. Comforts. Gave up home. Suffered almost unbelievable hardships. (II Cor. 11:23ff) Sacrificed much. (II Tim. 4:13)
- B. Forgot his success.
 1. In conversions and establishment of congregations. (I Cor. 1:16; Acts 17:6)
 2. In preaching to kings and governors. He also preached to slaves.
 3. Praise of men. (Acts 14:14-18; I Cor. 1; Gal. 1:10)
- C. Forgot injuries and faults of others. He was forgiving. He did not hold grudges. (II Tim. 4:14,16) Joseph and Manasseh. (Gen. 41:41) Christ—"Forgive them..." Stephen. We need the same spirit.
 1. Some will not forgive and they quit the church.
 2. Some say, "I can't forgive."
 3. Some are like the old colored member. His preacher told him he should never cherish enmity against a neighbor. He urged him just to forget injuries. "O, I does forget it, preacher, but I'se got a powerful bad memory, and I keep forgettin' dat I'se forgot it."

II. PAUL PRESSED ON TOWARD THE MARK. 13,14. As a runner, his mind is not on the past but on the future — the goal ahead. There are two words that need emphasizing: Reaching forth-strong exertion. Mark-goal or objective.

- A. His life ever reals. Damascus; Jerusalem. The stoning at Lystra and his return. (Acts 21:11—13) Is our life anything like that?
- B. To what should we press on?
 1. Greater usefulness. (Phil. 3:12) Prayer; words of cheer to sick and discouraged; visitation; soul winning; greater faithfulness; work.
 2. Better understanding. (Eph. 5:17)
 3. Full growth. (Heb. 6:1; Gal. 5:22,23)
 4. Teaching. (Heb. 5:12-14)
 5. The prize.
 - a. Come at the end.
 - b. Come after preserving labor. Illus. Michael Angelo, the

painter, was said to have worked a week without taking his clothes off. Handel, the musician, practiced on his harpsicord until the keys were worn down like a spoon.

c. The prize is worthy of the greatest effort.

III. WE MUST LEARN THE LESSON OF CONTENTMENT. 4:11

- A. Not self-satisfied or lacking in ambition. We are to be diligent. This means our desires are limited by what we have. We are not disturbed by desire although we do not have every wish gratified. A peaceful state of mind concerning what we have while working for betterment.
- B. In what are we to be content?
 - 1. Food and clothing. (I Tim. 6:8)
 - 2. With what we have. (Heb. 13:5)
 - 3. Our lot. (Phil. 4:11, 12)
 - 4. God's way. (Num. 21:4) Illus. Moving of Ark of Covenant-Uzzah. Salvation. Organization of the church.
- C. This trait is developed by experience. "I have learned..." Contentment is based on principles in mind and not things.
- D. Faith in God's promises will help us be content. (Rom. 8:28)

IV. OUR CONFIDENCE MUST BE PLACED UPON DIVINE STRENGTH. 4:13.

- A. Paul's confidence was not on self or deeds. (Matt. 26:41; Jer. 17:5)
- B. God's faithfulness. (Heb. 10:23)
- C. Gospel. (Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 4:2)
- D. Christ. (Phil. 4:13; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5; II Tim. 1:12; 4:17) When our confidence is in Christ, we won't quit because of imperfections of our brethren.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Restate the principles.
- 2. Do you lack the confidence that is in Christ? In life? At thought of death? (Gal. 3:26,27)
- 3. Return if failed.

ENOCH, THE MAN WHO WALKED WITH GOD

Gen. 5:21-24

INTRODUCTION

1. Who was Enoch? Son of Jared (18-20) Father of Methuselah. (21) Prophet. (Jude 14,15)
2. When did he live? Seventh from Adam—his life and Adam's overlapped about 300 years. His son Methuselah died in the year of the flood.
3. Some strange things about his life:
 - a. Strange so little is said about him in view of his life.
 - b. Strange that he lived a comparatively short time on earth.
 - c. Strange that he lived such an outstanding life in a dark and sinful age. He stands in a class with Noah. (Gen. 6:9) Only two patriarchs said to have walked with God.
4. Two outstanding things in Enoch's life:

I. HE WALKED WITH GOD

- A. Walked has a literal and figurative meaning.
 1. To move along on foot; advanced by steps; to make ones way.
 2. To pursue a course of life; to regulate one's life; to associate with or be a companion with one.
- B. Different ways to walk in relation to God.
 1. After God. (Hosea 11:10) Discipleship. Jesus said, "Follow me."
 2. Before God. (Gen. 17:1) Inspection. This emphasizes God's omniscience and man's responsibility. (Heb. 4:13)
 3. With God. (Gen. 5:24) This suggests fellowship; companionship.
- C. Enoch shows that it is possible walk with God. Many think it is impossible today.
 1. Despite prevalence of sin. (Gen. 6:1—5, 11—13) Lust was the basis of marriage. Many had walked away from God in thought, purpose, worship, and in life. Yet, Enoch walked with God.
 - a. He rose above evil associated.
 - b. He sought no excuse in his sinful nature.
 - c. He overcame difficulties. This is not an easy thing, but it can and must be done. (Matt. 7:13,14)
 2. In prime of busy manhood.
 - a. Some have an idea Christianity is for children, women and old people. They think one cannot be an active Christian and succeed. Enoch denies this. He lived a righteous life.
 - b. In view of times, Enoch was in the prime of life.
 - c. All need the blessings of Christianity. Walking with God will enrich the soul, sooth cares, quiet anxiety. It gives us purpose and a sense of direction. It will never bring regrets.
 3. Over a long period of time. (5:22) 300 years.
 4. In midst of domestic cares. (22)
 - a. With the increase in family responsibilities, many do not walk as closely with the Lord.
 - b. Text suggests Enoch realized a greater responsibility. God doesn't give us children to keep us from serving Him. (Eph. 6:4)
 5. Enoch lived in the darkness of the "Starlight Age." We live in the "Sunlight Age." We have examples, written revelation and promises that he did not have.
- D. How can we walk with God?
 1. There must be agreement. (Amos 3:3)

- a. Unity of purpose. We are to be one with God just as Jesus. (Jn. 17:20,21) If our purpose is to live for self or sin, cannot walk with God.
- b. Unity of action. If we are not active in the work of God, we are not walking with Him.
- c. Taking direction from God. He is wise and infallible. We must walk in harmony with His will. (Deut. 5:33; Jer. 6:16; Phil. 3:16)
- 2. Uprightly. (Prov. 2:7)
- 3. In love. (Eph. 5:2)
- E. Why do many fail to walk with God?
 - 1. Too many business cares. It is right for us to work. (Eph. 4:28; Rom. 12:11; 1 Tim. 5:8) But we can get too busy to walk with God. We must not be too busy to worship God.
 - 2. Too much social life. Social activities mean more to some than the service of God.
 - 3. Worldly and sinful pleasure.
 - a. Some spend so much time and money in activities that may not be wrong, per se, that they are not in agreement with God.
 - b. Others may get so involved socially and in worldly pleasures that they drift into baser sins of flesh.
 - 4. Follow the doctrines of men. (Matt 15:9; II Jn. 9)
- E. Enoch walked by faith. (Heb. 11:5; II Cor. 5:7)
 - 1. To walk by sight is to be displeasing. Cain.
 - 2. To walk by faith is to be pleasing. Abel. (Rom. 10:17; I Jn. 2:3,4)

II. GOD TOOK HIM.

- A. He was not. (Heb. 11:5)
- B. Translated.
 - 1. One in every age. Elijah. Christ.
 - 2. Why?
 - a. Shows possibility and value of a righteous life.
 - b. Showed immortality of man; that body will exist in another state.
 - c. Prepared world to accept truths revealed in the New Testament. (I Thess. 4:17)
 - d. Inspiration says, "He pleased God." This shows that God is pleased with a life of faith and obedience. Every example of God's pleasure at works of man has been for those who obey Him. His displeasure is seen with those who disobey Him. All can please God. It does not take riches, good looks, power, etc.

PETER'S FALL AND RETURN

INTRODUCTION

1. Which of the apostles do you consider to be the greatest? Which do you feel the most like?
 - a. Paul was so great he seems far above us.
 - b. John was so near to the Lord and revealed such great truths, he too towers above us.
 - c. Most of us feel more like Peter. We can learn much from him—impulsive words and deeds, questions, exclamations and confessions. We can learn more from him the night he denied Jesus than at any other time.
2. Lk. 22:54,55; Matt. 26:31-75; Mk. 14:27-54; Lk. 22:31-34, 39-62; Jn. 18:10,11; 15-18, 25-27.

I. STEPS IN THE FALL OF PETER (Use board)

Boasted (Mk. 14: 27-31)

1. Peter was over-confident. (Jer. 17:5; 10:23; Psalm 6:2)
2. What would we have done? (I Cor. 10:12)
3. Our confidence must be in Christ not self. (Jn. 5:23; Phil. 4:13)

B. *Slept.* (Matt. 26:36-46)

1. Relaxed at crucial time. He disregarded the Lord's warning. (40) He had heard other warnings: Matt. 6:13; Matt. 25; Lk. 12:37)
2. God calls us to awaken. (Eph. 5:14; I Thess. 5:6) Why? One asleep is helpless. Will not pray, study, worship, help needy, etc.

C. *Misguided zeal.* (Jn. 18:10,11; Lk. 22:49-51)

1. This was a rash act—12 men with 2 swords. His confidence was in the wrong sword.
2. When Christians must depend on force-abusive speech or actions, fall is near.
3. Many are of this class. (Rom. 10:1—3) Where did the Lord ever tell anyone to join a denomination? Where is the authority to wear a human name? Some say, "I may be wrong, but I'll die and go to hell before I change." "I'd rather go to hell for doing something than nothing."

D. *Followed afar off.*

1. He had followed closely since he left all. Now because of danger, he follows afar off. He did not want it to be known which side he was on. He had not denied Christ, but he was not willing to stand up for Him.
2. Peter did follow Christ. This is more than we can say of some.
3. Here is a great lesson for us. Peter was not an open enemy. What does Christ mean to us?
 - a. Have we become cold and negligent? (Rev. 3:16)
 - b. Have we become lukewarm? Worship a form?
 - c. Dangerous to follow afar off. (Matt. 16:24; I Cor. 11:1)

E. *Sat with enemies.* (Lk. 22:55)

1. Because night was cold and he was anxious to see the end, sat at fire with enemies.
2. Any more strange than company we may keep and the things we may do? (I Cor. 15:33; James 4:4; I Jn. 2:15)
3. If one of the strongest melted like snow in sun when he was in bad company, let us beware.

F. *Denied, cursed, and swore.* (Matt. 26:69—76)

1. Why? This was logical consequence of course he had followed.
2. Christ has warned us. (Matt. 26:41; II Pet. 1:10) We cannot expect to overcome temptation if we run with mocking, drinking, dancing, gambling, cursing and lascivious crowd.

II RETURN OF PETER

- A. *Look from Jesus.* (Lk. 22:61)
1. What a look this must have been: Sadness, reproof, love, entreaty and forgiveness. It awakened and convicted Peter. It pierced him.
 2. The thought Jesus is watching should have a sobering effect on us. (Heb. 4:13)
 3. If Jesus—mocked, beaten, and wounded was concerned about Peter and looked on him to restore him will he not show concern for us?
- B. *Remember words of Jesus.* (Matt. 26:75)
1. This speaks of 2 things:
 - a. Power of memory. Prodigal. Church at Ephesus. (Rev. 2:5) If afar off, remember better life.
 - b. Power of word. Forgetfulness of it will pull us down; remembrance of the word will lift us up. This alone should cause us to study.
- C. *Wept bitterly.* (Lk. 22:62; Cf. II Cor. 7:10)
1. Peter did not weep because caught in sin.
 2. Wept because of his sin. How few weep because their sin has broken the heart of God and crucified Christ. (Ps. 51:3; Matt. 5:4)
- D. *Repented.*
1. Godly sorrow worked this.
 2. Life showed fruit.
- E. *Faithful.*
1. With all his faults, Peter is one of the grandest characters in the Bible. He was the first to enter the tomb. He swam to meet Jesus. His sermon on Pentecost is recorded. He revealed the second law of pardon to Simon. He braved criticism to go to house of Cornelius.
 2. He was not sinless. (Gal. 2:11) He was faithful to death.
- F. *Died for Christ.* (Jn. 21:18,19) All history agrees that he died as a martyr. At one time he may have been weak, but he came back.

CONCLUSION

1. Let us never deny Jesus. If we do, let us be quick to remember Christ's word and return with tear dimmed eyes and broken heart.
2. Sinner friend, if you have hesitated obeying the gospel for fear you couldn't hold out, this example should help you. God will give you strength. You will have the help of God, Christ Holy Spirit, and the church. Peter followed promptly when he was called. Will you?

REPENTANCE, THE DIFFICULT COMMAND

INTRODUCTION

1. What is the most difficult command? Believe? Baptism? Give? (Acts 17:30,31)
2. Repentance has been God's constant call to man. Man has constantly rejected it to his own sorrow.
3. There is great misunderstanding concerning repentance-what, who, what causes, etc.

I. WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

A. Not:

1. Regret. Judas. (Matt. 27:3-5)
2. Reformation. (Matt. 3:7,8; Acts 26:19,20).
3. Fear. (Acts 24:24-27)
4. Sorrow. Many shed tears because of crimes and sins, but do not repent. One must experience godly sorrow, but sorrow itself is not repentance. (II Cor. 7:10)

B. It is:

1. Something between godly sorrow and reformation. It is a change of mind or will. Man is composed of intellect, will, and emotions. It is the will that enables man to decide. It is the seat of all rebellion and sin against God.
2. Illustrated.
 - a. Ninevites. (Matt. 12:41; Jonah 3:10)
 - b. Matt. 21:28,29.
 - c. Prodigal. (Lk. 15:11—24) At first, he was self-willed. Later, he had a change of will.
 - d. Learned preacher talked long on the subject of repentance. The longer he talked the more confusing it became. Finally an eccentric old man jumped up and ran down one aisle saying, "I'm going to hell." Then he turned and ran up another aisle saying. "I'm going to heaven."

II. WHAT ARE THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE?

A. Confession of sin.

1. Israelites when bit. (Num. 21:7)
2. David. (Psalm 51:3,4)
3. Prodigal. (Lk. 15:18,19,21)
4. Many will not humble themselves. (I Jn. 1:9)

B. A change in life.

1. Words of John (Luke 3:8-14)
2. Sometimes some will return to the church to be restored, but there is no change in their lives.

C. Complete obedience.

1. Jonah. (Jonah 2:2-9; 3:1-4)
2. When alien genuinely repents, he will be baptized.
3. When erring truly repents will confess his sins.

D. Restitution.

1. Zaccheus. (Luke 19:1-10)
2. Jailor. (Acts 16:33)
3. This means we will make all right as far as possible.

III. WHO SHOULD REPENT?

- A. Anyone who has wronged another. (Lk. 17:3)
- B. Alien sinner. (Acts 2:36-38; 3:19)
- C. Erring members. (Acts 8:20—22)
- D. Those who have left first love. (Rev. 2:1—5)

- E. Lukewarm church members. (Rev. 3:15—19)
- F. Those who have been neglecting their duty. (James 4:17)
It is hard for some to see this.
- G. All. (Acts 17:30,31)

IV. WHAT PRODUCES REPENTANCE? How is will broken?

- A. "A gift of God." (Acts 11:18; II Tim. 1:25)
 - 1. In one sense a gift; it is also a duty.
 - 2. It is something that man must do. (Acts 2:38)
 - 3. How is it both? Other passages will explain.
- B. Goodness of God. (Rom. 2:4,5)
 - 1. Think of goodness of God. List: (John 3:16; Matt. 11:28-30)
 - 2. Can any responsible person meditate on the goodness of God without being moved to repent?
 - 3. Why do many not repent? They put it off; turn thoughts to other things; look for excuses; close Bible; refuse to attend. This is very course that leads to Hell.
- C. Fear of punishment.
 - 1. Examples.
 - a. Jonah. (3:4)
 - b. John. (Matt. 3:7-12)
 - c. Jesus. (Matt. 11:20-24)
 - d. Paul. (Acts 17:3 0,31)
 - 2. If you have not repented, have you ever calmly and thoughtfully considered the consequences of sin? (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7,8; Matt. 25:41,46)
 - 3. Impenitence caused—
 - a. World to be destroyed in days of Noah.
 - b. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - c. Awful destruction of Jerusalem.
 - d. Repent or perish. (Lk. 13:3,5)
- D. Some think this is not enough. (Lk. 16:27—31)
 - 1. Some today may feel same way.
 - 2. Suppose Lazarus would have been granted privilege of going back and, telling the rich man's brothers that their beloved brother was in hell. Would they have accepted it? People resent even hint that any departed loved one might be lost.

CONCLUSION

- 1. If Jesus rebuked those of Capernaum and said it would be more tolerable in judgment for Sodom, what must he say of those here who will not repent?
- 2. Is it such a burden to repent? Suppose a condemned criminal would tell the judge, "I repent and will try my best not to commit the same crimes again." Then the judge could and would forgive him. Would that be such a burden?
- 3. You can cause great joy if you will repent.

WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?

Ex. 32:25-29

INTRODUCTION

1. Israel, thinking Moses had deserted them, lapsed into sinful idolatry of Egypt. As Moses saw the scene, he was filled with anger.
2. Aaron offered weak and silly excuses. If his excuses had been accepted, no one would be responsible. The murderer could blame the gun or the arsonist the match.
3. Such sin needed punishment. The decisive question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Is one of the great questions of the Bible and life.

I. THERE COMES A TIME WHEN EACH MUST DECIDE. The decision can never be made without cost.

A. Examples.

1. Moses called on Israel to decide. The Levites decided at great cost. It involved severance of fleshly ties (Ex. 32:26—29)
2. Joshua called on Israel to decide at Shechem. (Joshua 24:14,15)
3. Elijah challenged Israel to decide at Mt. Carmel. (I Kings 18:21) Fear and popularity had caused them to serve Baal. Conscience would not let them renounce Jehovah.
4. The rich young ruler. (Matt. 19:16—22) He was called on to decide between Gold and God; Christ and cash, life and death.
5. Pilate. (Matt. 27:1—26) Can we avoid this decision? Can we be neutral? Pilate shows that we cannot.
6. Felix. (Acts 24:24,25) Is it wise to delay this decision? Pilate shows the doom of procrastination.

II. WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?

- A. Not all who think they are. (Matt. 7:21-23; 12:30)
1. Atheists and infidels. (Ps. 14:1; Mk. 16:16b)
 2. Morality alone will not put us on the Lord's side.
 - a. Cornelius. (Acts 10:2; 11:14)
 - b. If morality will save, why did God devise the scheme of redemption?
 - c. If morality will save, why did Christ die?
 - d. A person may reform and live a moral life, but what about his sins past, present, future? No sin can enter heaven. (Rev. 21:27)
 3. Those in human organizations. (Ps. 127:1; Matt. 15:13) What is wrong with churches of men?
 - a. Founded by men instead of Christ. (Matt. 16:18)
 - b. Wear human names instead of divine. (I Cor. 1:10—13)
 - c. Preach man's ways of salvation instead of Christ's. Prayer. Faith only. (Jn. 8:30,31, 44,59; 12:4,24,43; Acts 26:26; James 2:24, etc.
 - d. Worship is regulated by men not God. (Jn. 4:24; Matt. 15:9; II Jn. 9; Eph. 5:19; Acts 20:7; I Cor.16:1,2)
 4. Nominal members. (Jn. 15:6; II Pet. 2:20-22)
 - a. Money—mad. (Matt. 6:24)
 - (1) With many, neither weather, distance, company or anything will keep them from work but they always have some excuse for not being at worship.
 - (2) If I am obsessed with idea of making money regardless of principle or duty, I am not on the Lord's side.
 - b. Worldly members. (Lk. 8:14; James 4:4; I Jn. 2:15-17)

- (1) Two kinds of worldliness: that which is wrong within itself or its association and that which crowds out God.
- (2) Have you loved the world more than God?
- c. Lukewarm members. (Rev. 3:15, 16)
 - (1) We may be satisfied, but the Lord is nauseated with the lukewarm.
 - (2) Many can work up interest for everything but work of the Lord.
- d. Idle members.
 - (1) Such might be offended to be told not on the Lord's side, but it is the truth. (Matt. 25:26, 30) The idle worker is working against his employer.
 - (2) Far too many are doing nothing for the Lord and are making no effort to develop.
- e. Unfaithful members. (Heb. 10:25; Tit. 2:1; Rev. 2:10)
- f. Quitters.
 - (1) In every community there are those who are negligent. They feel they have been mistreated so they quit.
 - (2) Even if mistreated, why quit Christ? Has he mistreated you? Did the whole nation quit because of Benedict Arnold?
 - (3) Anybody can quit. Real spiritual maturity.
- B. We must enter Christ and His church and faithfully serve the Lord to be on His side.
- C. It is time we asked, "Whose side am I on?" Let us take our stand. Illus. When "Yankee" troops marched into southern town, one woman grabbed a poker and ran out of the house. Her friends tried to stop her. They told her that her poker wouldn't do any good. She replied, "At least they'll know whose side I am on."

III. WE ARE TO DECIDE PROMPTLY AND UNHESITATINGLY.

- A. The Lord will not accept excuses.
 - 1. "I would be a member, but my family is something else." Think of the Levites. (Matt. 10:37)
 - 2. "...I don't know which church is right." Don't go through life undecided. Follow the New Testament. (Acts 2:38, 41,47)
 - 3. "The church of Christ is not as popular as some." Baal worship was popular. (Matt. 7:13,14)
 - 4. "I would be faithful but I am so busy" Ruler. Not too busy to die. (Matt. 16:26)
 - 5. "I'll not be anything." Pilate. (Acts 4:27)
 - 6. "I will. . . but not now." Felix. B. Now. II Cor. 6

"WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT...?"

INTRODUCTION

- A. Sometimes we are asked, "How do you account for —
 1. Neglect of the gospel invitation?
 2. Careless in Worship?
 3. Indifference toward study of the Bible?
 4. So few soul winners?
 5. Prevalence of sin?
 6. Lack of enthusiasm in the work?
 7. Unconcern about judgment?
- B. One of the unanswered questions of Jesus answers these questions. (Matt. 16:26,27)

I. AN INTERESTING QUESTION. Note the key words, Profit, gain, loss, exchange.

- A. Some of the disciples were fishermen, they could appreciate such a question.
- B. All of us are familiar with such terms today. Business, farming, investment, education.
- C. It is a tragedy that many are interested only in earthly profits, gains and losses. Earthly values fluctuate. Worth of soul remains unchanged—yesterday, today, forever.

II. THE BIG IF.

- A. No one has ever gained all. Millionaires gain only small portion of wealth of the world. Jesus was offered all. (Matt. 4:8,9)
- B. Few gain all they are seeking.
- C. Jesus used the big "if—if gain the world.
 1. How would you answer? How are you answering?
 2. Jesus doesn't deny profit in what world offers.
 3. He asserts the greater value of the soul.
- D. Yet many sell soul for far less:
 1. Money. Judas.
 2. Sinful pleasure. (Lk. 8:14) Liquor, dope, immorality. (I Tim. 5:6; Heb. 11:25)
 3. Honor. (Jn. 12:42,43)
 4. False doctrine. (Isa. 55:2; Gal. 1:8,9; Matt. 15:9)
 5. Other things. (Mk. 4:19; Matt. 24:37-39) Some are "too busy" making living, keeping yard or house.
 6. Life of ease. It takes real effort to serve God (Matt. 16:24) This is "ease" age. Path of least resistance has become a main highway.

III. VALUE OF SOUL

- A. Origin. (Gen. 2:7)
 1. Man is highest of creation. He has a soul that separates him from the brute creation. He can think, desire, love, will and obey.
 2. The fact that it is invisible makes it no less real. Electricity; atoms, cosmic ray, thoughts, life are invisible.
- B. Likeness. (Acts 17:29; Gen. 1:26) Nothing in the universe as much like God.
- C. Immortality. (Lk. 12:4,5; II Cor. 5:1; Eccl. 12:7)
 1. All things temporal are but shadows and vapors compared with soul. Soul of Adam, etc., are alive and unchanged by time.
 2. Soul will live on forever. "I cannot conceive of immortality." Can you conceive of infinite space?

3. Consider this in profit and loss —70 years of best world can offer or eternal ages of best God can offer?
4. In view of this, why is there not more concern about the soul?

Capabilities

1. The soul has the greatest capabilities—wondrous love, burning desire, high hopes, noble thoughts and ideals.
2. What power to honor, glorify and serve God. (Ps. 25:1; 103:1; Rev. 4:8)
3. It alone is capable of communion with God.

Its purchase price

1. Value things by purchase price.
2. Blood of Christ on calvary. (I Pet. 1:18,19) Can anyone place a value on this? What else can compare with it? What poet can describe it? What author can exhaust its significance?
3. This price was paid by divine appointment (I Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8)
4. This shows value of the church. (Acts 20:28)

Home prepared for the soul. (Jn. 14:1—4; Rev. 21,22)

THINK ON THE WORD "LOSE"

Any loss is bad. What profit if gain all and lose health? If gain fortune but sacrifice life? Loss of soul is far worse.

World not concerned. A survey revealed that 73% of persons questioned believed in Heaven and Hell. When they were asked if they had any fear or expectation of going to hell. Only 5% admitted slightest concern. (Matt. 7:13,14)

A personal loss. You may not be a 5 talent man, but your soul is most valuable soul to you in all the world.

A foolish loss.

1. Lost for things of less value.
2. Possible for it to be saved.
3. Individual alone is responsible.

Not annihilation. (Rev. 14:11)

Fatal.

1. There will be no second chance. (Lk. 16:26)
2. Eternal. (Matt. 25:46)

Double loss.

1. Loss of blessings in this life. Peace. Answered prayer, confidence, happiness.
2. Loss of heaven. (Rev. 21:27)

Lost soul is greatest wreck. Loss of all for which man created and Christ atoned; all God can bestow or man receive. Saved soul greatest accomplishment. Can be accomplished now!

"IS IT I?"

Matt. 26:20-22

INTRODUCTION

1. This soul searching question was asked by the apostles in view of his announcement. It filled them with sorrow for two reasons: He would be betrayed; it would be by one of them. Heretofore Satan had fought from the outside - now from within (Lk. 22:33) The most devilish work has always been done from within.
 - a. Strife. I Cor. 14:33.
 - b. Lethargy. Rev. 3:15.
 - c. Worldliness. James 4:4.
 - d. Apostasy. Acts 20:29, 30.
2. A personal and revealing question. "Is it I?"—11 Might have been easier to deny and ask, "Is it Peter, etc?" Self-distrust; self-examination. (I Cor. 11:28; II Cor. 13:5) After Jesus revealed it was Judas, he too, even though he knew his guilt, asked, "Is it I?"

I. IS IT I, TOO, WHO HAVE BEEN BLESSED?

- A. Judas had received blessings for three years. Not only did he fail to show gratitude, he even betrayed Jesus.
- B. God has blessed us beyond measure. (Jas. 1:17)
 1. His love and grace. (John 3:16; Tit. 2:11)
 2. The enduring and perfect word. (Matt. 24:35; James 1:25)
 3. Forgiveness-full and complete.
 4. Fellowship of Christians with each other and God. (I John 1:7)
 5. Reasonable degree of health of body and soul.
 6. Daily bread. It is said 2/3 of world hungry.
 7. Good land in which we live.
- C. A realization of this will cause us to be grateful and not betray the Lord. (I Thess. 5:17)

II. IS IT I WHO HAVE BETRAYED THE LORD BY SINS OF COMMISSION. (I Jn. 3:4)

- A. Drunkenness? (Eph. 5:18) Dimmed my light by social drink? (Matt. 5:16; Rom. 14:21)
- B. Lasciviousness. (Gal. 5:19) Dress; speech; magazines or books; movies; petting and too much familiarity with one of the opposite sex.
- C. Taking His name in vain? (Ex. 20:7) Nothing casts more of a reflection:
 1. On our lack of respect for God.
 2. Self-control.
 3. Intelligence. Shows we cannot express ourselves with some 400,000 words without being irreverent. What benefit is there to profanity?
 4. Courtesy.
 5. Consistency. (Jas. 3:10,11)
- D. Gossip? (Lev. 19:16; I Tim. 5:13; Gal. 5:15)
 1. Gossip is sin. It is taking the name of man in vain.
 2. Have I encouraged this with gossipy ears?
 3. A way to stop the gossip. Ask him to write what he says about another and sign his name.
- E. Discouragement? (Gal. 6:9)
 1. Think of Noah's slow work-saved only his family.
 2. Think of discouraging things Jesus faced. Paul.
 3. Fable. The devil was selling his tools and going out of

business. One was priced very high. It was discouragement.

- F. Selfish and self-centered? (Phil. 2:4; 3 Jn. 9, 10)
- G. Murmuring and disputing. (Phil. 2:14; Num. 14:26-29; Eph. 4:31, 32)
- H. Shown disrespect to those who are older? (I Pet. 5:5; I Tim. 5:1,2)
- I . Failed to discern the Lord in communion. (I Cor. 11:29)

III. IS IT I WHO AM GUILTY OF SINS OF OMISSION? (Jas. 4:17)

- A. . .Who have refused to attend worship regularly? Have I offered trivial excuses. God and Christ are deserving. (Lk. 22:19; Rev. 19:10; Heb. 10:25)
- B. . .who have neglected to study? (II Tim. 2:15; II Pet. 1:5) Is my knowledge helping my attitude?
- C. . . who have failed to pray? (I Thess. 5:17; I Tim. 2:8) "Oh what peace we often forfeit. . ."
- D... who have been lax in giving as prospered? (I Cor. 16:1,2) Have I overloaded my budget? Given only when present? Failed to give of my increase?
- F. . . who have neglected to bring up my children properly? (Eph. 6:4)
- F. . .who faltered in teaching the gospel to others? (Matt. 28:19,20) Ami afraid? (Rev. 21:8)
- G. .. who have failed to cooperate in building up the church in this community? (II Cor. 6:1)
 1. The church is to be built up by the activity of each member.
 2. Mistakes will be and have been made. Forget the past and press on.
- H. .. who have neglected the great salvation? (Heb. 2:1 —3) He was warning members. It also applies to aliens. "Neglect is the shortest road to hell."

IV. ALL CAN SAY, "LORD, IT IS I."

- A. John, and apostle and strong Christian wrote, If we say we have no sin—I John 1:8)
- B. Paul. (Phil. 3:13,14)
- C. Are you saying, "It is I?" All of us need to say this and continually repent, confess our faults pray.

CHRIST AND THE LOST

INTRODUCTION (A chart of this may be made with colored chalk)

1. One of the favorite chapters is Luke 15. Verses 1 and 2 tell much: His power; love; how sinners found hope. He was "friend. . ."
2. Not all rejoiced. Thought they would silence.
3. Jesus was not stopped nor shamed by criticism. Gave a sermon made up of 3 or 4 parables. Showed God's attitude toward the lost. It should be our attitude.

I. JESUS GIVES A NEW VIEW OF THE SINNER--LOST. Not necessarily mean or wicked.

A. Sheep.

1. Not a bad sheep. Had not fallen to death. Had not willingly run away. No doubt was attached to shepherd.
2. It was *away* from Shepherd and flock.
3. The one away from Christ is lost. (Eph. 2:12; Jn. 6:66 — 68)

B. Coin.

1. Had not become worthless metal; not defaced nor devalued.
2. Separated from owner; out of circulation. It was no longer of service. It was accomplishing nothing for owner. Worthless.
3. Being lost does not mean that we lose our character, renounce our principles and live a corrupt life. May live a respectable life.
4. We are lost if we are not serving Christ. This is the very purpose of man. One talent man. Barren fig tree. Judgment. (Matt. 25)

C. Prodigal son.

1. Easy to see was lost, but why?
2. He was lost because he was a waster. He was away from his father, using the goods given him by his father and producing no good thing. He was a consumer but not a producer.
3. Every person who squanders his abilities, means, body and influence is lost. He receives from the Father but gives nothing in return.

D. Elder brother.

1. This one is often overlooked-by self and others.
2. Not lost in far country-home; not among worldly-father's house; not sensual living — upright; not idle —worked.
3. Lost because of attitude. Served not from love but sense of duty. Had no joy in return. No love for his brother or father. No concern for the lost. His eyes were not filled with tears of compassion, but were cold and critical. He portrayed the Pharisees and Sadducees. They looked down on sinner. They were lost because of self-righteousness.

II. SEE HOW PEOPLE ARE LOST.

A. Sheep.

1. The sheep strayed because of interest in other things. Maybe the grass looked greener somewhere else and he just wandered away.
2. Many become interested in other things, even good things, forget to follow Shepherd. Too absorbed to pray, study, worship and live for God. Allow themselves to drift. (Heb. 2:1ASV)

B. Coin.

1. Lost by carelessness of others.
2. Some are lost through no fault of their own-heathen.
3. Each is responsible for his own life, but the carelessness of

others may contribute to some being lost. Parents. Have you been careless in letting light shine? Keeping unspotted?

- C. Prodigal.
 - 1. Lost because of self-will. Nothing to do at home. He wanted to be free; follow desires. He was not concerned with what he ought to do or what the will of his father was. His desire was, "My will be done." He became a slave.
 - 2. Does self or Christ rule in my life?
- D. Elder brother.
 - 1. He was not a bad man. Moral, worker, obedient.
 - 2. He was lost through pride. He was the most lost. Boasted of his work, his superior life. He never felt need of bowing before the father.
 - 3. Laodicea was in same condition. Do we feel no need of God and His mercy? Do we feel superior?

III. PRACTICAL LESSONS

- A. Sheep.
 - 1. It knew it was lost but it was confused. Needed someone to go after it.
 - 2. Saul in Damascus. (Acts 22:12 — 16) Prayed but not one of conditions. (Jn. 9:31; Mk. 16:15,16; Acts 2:38)
- B. Coin.
 - 1. Lost but not aware of it—was sought by those who knew and cared.
 - 2. Many are lost but do not know it. (Isa. 59:1,2; Rom. 3:23)
- C. Prodigal.
 - 1. Was lost and knew way back—he needed to repent and be restored. Home had to be attractive and he needed to be welcomed.
 - 2. Gal. 6:1; Acts 8:22; I Jn. 1:9; Jas. 5:19,20)
- D. Elder brother— unconcerned. Would not look for nor welcome.

IV. REVIEW CHRIST'S ATTITUDE

- A. Sheep —pity. We need the same concern for the lost. Let us sell Christ with same zeal salesman sell products. (Lk. 14:23)
- B. Coin —diligent search because of value.
 - 1. Jesus knew value of souls. (Lk. 19:10)
 - 2. Let us search—may find many in the house.
- C. Prodigal—love and hope.
- D. All emphasize joy. Picture.
- E. Other passages tell of wrath. (Jn. 8:24; Lk. 13:3; Acts 8:23)

AN ANALYSIS OF BACKSLIDING

Jer. 8:15

INTRODUCTION

1. Backsliding is a Biblical word to describe the erring. It is used some 16 times in the Old Testament— 13 times by Jeremiah. It means "turning back or away." Israel because of her covenant with God was spoken of as married to Jehovah. However, she had not been true.
2. We too are in a covenant relationship with God. (Matt. 28:19) If we turn back we are guilty of backsliding. (Lk. 8:14; Jn. 6:66—68) Examples.
3. We may backslide into religious error, unbelief, immorality or neglect. The Christian is to be ever moving forward. (Heb. 6:1; 12:1) If we cease to grow, we backslide.
4. Backsliding is a spiritual disease. Let us analyze it.

I. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- A. *Lack of joy in the christian life.*
 1. Life in Christ to be filled with joy. (Jn. 15:11; Acts 2:46; 5:41; Heb. 10:34; Phil. 4:4)
 2. Joy part of fruit of spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
- B. *Irregularity and unprofitableness in attending services.*
 1. Do you happen to come one Sunday and miss two or three with no real reason?
 2. Do you feel better after attending? Are you critical of the services and those who participate? The Psalmist said, "I was glad..."
- C. *Divided interest.*
 1. Matt. 6:24; 6:33; 13:22; 22:37.
 2. Do we hunt for excuses? Do we allow trivial things to hinder? Is it easy for work, business, family, friends, pleasures to interfere with service to God?
 3. Let us remember Lot's wife. (Lk. 17:32)
- D. *Not having spirit of love toward brethren.*
 1. Bible says much about this. (Jn. 13:34, 35; I Jn 5:1,2)
 2. How can we determine? (I Cor. 13:4—7)
- E. *Indulgence in sins once abandoned.*
 1. The Israelites often made this mistake.
 2. Simon. (Acts 8:18,19; II Pet. 2:20-22)
 3. How does our life now compare to that before we became a Christian? (II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:4)

II. SOME CAUSES OF BACKSLIDING:

- A. *Wrong associations.*
 1. Solomon. Never was a more promising young man and king. Had noble concept of God from David his father. Prayer. (I Kings 8:11:6-8)
 2. Evil associates will tempt us to forsake assembly; neglect work; engage in questionable and sinful practices.
- B. *Lack of faith.*
 1. Peter. What did Peter need to face trials? (Lk. 22:32) In presence of the Lord and disciples, his faith was strong.
 2. Why were some of the Romans in danger of backsliding? (Rom. 14:1)
 3. We need the faith of the Gentile woman. (Matt. 15:28; Heb. 3:12; Lk. 17:5; Rom. 10:17)
- C. *Inactivity in the Lord's service.*

1. More and more the church is viewed as a worshipping organization. It is a vineyard. We are to work. (Phil. 2:12)
 2. This is one reason many backslide. Illus.
- D. *Love of world.*
1. Demas. (II Tim. 4:10)
 2. I John 2:15,16. Corrupt movies.
- E. *Neglect of duties we know we should do.*
1. Backsliding is usually not a sudden development. One who falls away usually begins to leave off daily Bible reading, praying, attendance. If we neglect once, it is easier to neglect again. (James 4:17)
 2. Neglect will cause many to be lost. Illus. Blunt preacher speaking at funeral. Said deceased was a man of his word. "He said he would come to church if he ever got straightened out. He's straightened out and here he is."
- m. DANGERS OF BACKSLIDING
- A. *Renders us unfit for kingdom.* (Lk. 9:62; Matt. 5:13; 12:30)
 - B. *Loss of spiritual enthusiasm.* (Rev. 2:4)
 - C. *Causes our name to be blotted out.* (Rev. 3:1—5; 20:15; 21:27)
 - D. *Everybody loses:*
 1. The body of Christ loses a member; its function is impaired.
 2. The Lord loses a worker. (II Cor. 6:1)
 3. The family of God loses a brother or sister.
 4. The community loses a Christian influence. (Matt. 5:16; 13:33)
 5. The child loses a righteous example — the best thing parents can give.
 6. Unless he repents, the backslider will lose his soul. (John 15:6)

IV. PREVENTIVES: (This point is optional)

- A. Let God say something to you every day.
- B. Say something to God every day.
- C. Say something for God every day.
- D. Do something for God every day.

V. THE CURE FOR BACKSLIDING.

- A. *Remember from whence fallen.* (Rev. 1:4,5)
- B. *Reflect on guilt and danger.* (Rev. 2:5b)
- C. *Return promptly to God.*
 1. He will receive. (I Jn. 1:9) Prodigal.
 2. Delay is as dangerous to backslider as alien.
 3. Return to all you have left. Prayer, study, work, worship, faith, love, joy. "Grow. . ."

"RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY OF THY SALVATION"

INTRODUCTION

1. Psalm 51 was written after David's sin with Bathsheba. Nearly a year had gone by without any public repentance and confession. The prophet Nathan stood before him and said, "Thou art the man."
2. This Psalm shows his penitence, sorrow and desire to be restored to God. 1-4, 12-13.

I. JOY - The Joy God's Salvation.

- A. God's salvation has always brought joy. Noah. Israel at Red Sea.
- B. The gospel, the glad tidings of salvation, brought joy wherever it was believed and obeyed. (Acts 2:41, 46, 47; 8:39; 16:33-34 Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22; II Cor. 7:4)
- C. What gives such joy?
 1. Pardon
 2. Partnership. (II Cor. 6:1)
 3. Peace. (Phil. 4:6, 7)
 4. Possession. (I Cor. 3:21, 22)
 5. Providence. (Rom. 8:28)
 6. Prospect.

II. RESTORE - Why had he lost the joy?

- A. He had been idle.
 1. David had lived an active life: Shepherd; fighter; king, musician; plans for temple; Psalm writer.
 2. No child of God can be happy if he is inactive.
 - a. Jesus. (Jn. 4:34)
 - b. One idle in kingdom cannot look forward to a glorious reward. "Thou wicked and slothful servant."
- B. This idleness led to indulgence in sin. (II Sam. 11:2-4)
 1. David had been allured and enticed by joys of sin. Did sin satisfy? THIS AGE NEEDS TO LEARN THE LESSON. Instead of giving him joy, it robbed him. (Ps. 51:1-4, 8-11; Jas. 1:14, 15; Rev. 21:8)
 2. Many were once happy in the service of the Lord, but the melody has stopped in their lives. Gone is the joy they knew when first they met the Lord and began to follow him. Why? Sin. Perhaps their sin has been neglect, but it has left them cold and unhappy. If so, they need to confess and pray as David.
- C. By sin he had forfeited his nearness with God. 11.
 1. It is this that has produced much sorrow. Adam and Eve; Isa. 59:1, 2; "My God my God. . ."
 2. Contrary to view of sinful man the righteous find joy in presence of God. (Ps. 16:11; I Pet. 4:13; Lk. 15:10-32; Rev. 21:4)
- D. We may lose joy because of other things:
 1. Lack of depth. (Lk. 8:13)
 2. Things of life choke out word. (Lk. 8:14)
 - a. Cares. People before flood.
 - b. Riches. Rich ruler; rich farmer. I Tim. 6:9, 10.
 - c. Pleasures. (II Tim. 3:4)
 3. When faith gives way to doubt and uncertainty. (Rom. 15:13)
 - a. God doesn't want us to be in doubt about our salvation. (Rom. 8:16; I Jn. 2:3; II Tim. 1:12)
 - c. Doubt about our condition robs us of our joy. "Make your calling and election sure."

III. ME

- A. David was not praying for God to restore unto Israel the joy of their salvation. No doubt Israel needed to pray the same, but David was concerned first about himself. When he was right, he could help others.
- B. Many can see faults of the church: They don't attend, give, work, live, visit, etc.
- C. Let us "Take heed to thyself first." A good prayer is, "Revive thy church beginning with me."

IV. RESULT

- A. "I will teach transgressors thy ways"
 - 1. David knew the need of transgressors. He knew that sin did not satisfy them and they had a hunger for something better.
 - 2. He knew the certainty of God's forgiveness and mercy.
 - 3. Because of the joy of salvation in his own life he would and would teach others. He could teach them that the greatest possession in life was friendship with God.
 - 4. This is the mission of the church — individually and collectively, (Jn. 6:44, 45; I Tim. 3:15; Eph. 3:8-11) If we know the joy of salvation, we will share it. Will it do any good???
- B. "Sinners shall be converted."
 - 1. It did good for Nathan to teach David.
 - 2. David believed it would do good. (Isa. 55:10, 11)
 - 3. It did good on Pentecost. (Acts 2)
 - 4. What is conversion? Turning. 2sides:
 - a. Divine. (Rom. 5:8, 9; I Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 1:5)
 - b. Human. (Matt. 18:3; Acts 3:19; We must believe. (Jn. 8:24) Repent. (Lk. 13:5) Confess (Acts 8:38) Be baptized. (Acts 22:16) Erring (Acts 8:21-23; James 5:19,20) David teaches us erring can be restored.
 - 5. Not all sinners will be converted. (Matt. 13:15; 23:37; John 5:4)
- C. Praise or worship. (14, 15)