A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and light blue tie stands to the left of a flip chart. He is smiling and gesturing with his hands. The flip chart has the title 'Sermons to See and Hear' in large blue letters and the author's name 'Benny B. Bristow' in smaller red letters. The background shows a room with wood paneling and a blue cabinet.

Sermons to See and Hear

Benny B. Bristow

SERMONS TO SEE AND HEAR

*Sermons & Charts
to be used with
overhead projectors*

Benny B. Bristow

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ISBN: 0-89137-624-0



QUALITY PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 1060
ABILENE, TEXAS 79604-1060
(915) 677-6262

Dedication

This book of sermons is affectionately dedicated with love and respect to all our children: Two daughters, Corretta Lynette Lawrence and Alesa Mynette Edgar, who have honored us as parents by their obedience, Christian character, achievements in life, and love for the Lord. One son, Lorin Brooks Bristow, the finest Christian son beyond that which parents could dream. Two grandsons, Mark Anthony and Micah Benton Lawrence who have also brought into our lives love, joy, and happiness.

With much love for all of you.

*Daddy
8/23/90*

Introduction

The sermons in this book are designed to help you more effectively preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. You will find charts to illustrate each sermon, outlines to assist you while delivering the messages, and written sermons to aid you in study and preparation. A variety of subjects have been covered so that a balanced spiritual diet can be obtained through preaching the word. It has been found (through experience) that an audience appreciates a variety of subjects so that they can obtain a well-rounded knowledge of God's word. Therefore, you will find subjects relating to the cross, the church, leadership, moral issues, marriage and the home, doctrines, the word of God, baptism, church growth, prayer, Christ, soul saving, and the value of life. Each sermon is fortified with many scriptures, and has been designed to lead the listeners to the words of life. .

It would be impossible to know how many have influenced this author (through gospel teaching) over the years, but gratitude is expressed to all that contributed through the pulpit, books, and articles from various Christian publications. Even though it would not be possible to name all that have helped, be assured that they are appreciated. When a quote or poem was used, an effort was made to give recognition; however, some of these were unknown. Therefore, whether known or unknown, be assured that their works are passed on to you with sincere gratitude.

Appreciation is also expressed to the various congregations over the years that allowed me to preach these sermons. Their generous acceptance helped me to determine what seemed to be the most effective sermons to be included in this work.

There are so many young men in the church that are beginning their work as a preacher of the gospel. This can be a very difficult time for choosing and preaching sermons, and it is hoped that this book: "*Sermons To See and Hear*," will prove to be a blessing to them. These twenty sermons represent many hours of labor and study over a period of some thirty-five years. Hopefully, you will use these messages, along with your own study and style, to make them even more effective.

The first book of sermons by this author, "*Charts and Sermons for Overhead Projectors*," Quality Publications, has been well received. Thanks to all of you so very much for your confidence and support.

It will be my continual prayer that both of these volumes will have some part in spreading the gospel to a lost and dying world. May God's blessings be upon all that preach the word of God in its purity, and upon those honest hearts that receive the word of God for sincere obedience, is my prayer!

The Author
Benny B. Bristow

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Version of the Bible
The New King James Version
Thomas Nelson publishers
Nashville - Camden - New York

Photo for cover -
Olan Mills
Columbia, S.C. 29221

NO ROOM IN THE INN

Luke 2:7

Because of...

***Love of Riches**

1 TIMOTHY 6:10, 17; ACTS 5:1-10

***Lust of the Flesh**

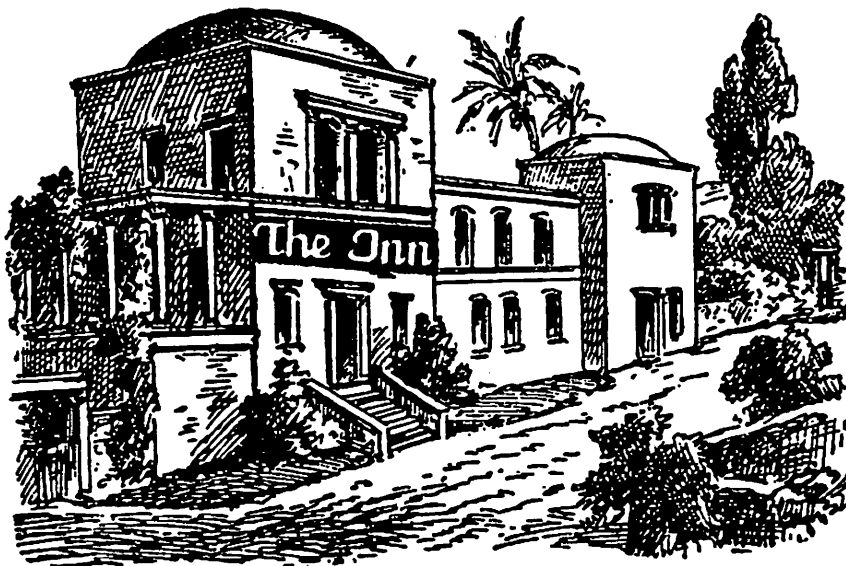
GALATIANS 5:16; 2 PETER 1:4; 2:10; 1 JOHN 2:16

***Living in Religious Error**

MATTHEW 15:9; JAMES 5:10

***Love of Self**

LUKE 18:13; ROMANS 12:3



No Room In The Inn?

Introduction:

- A. Read text: (*Luke 2:7*)
- B. Millions of words written about Christ's birth and life
 - 1. Some joyful and others sad
 - 2. Words of our text tell us Jesus born in world of rejection
 - 3. No place to later lay His head (*Matthew 8:20*), no place in the Inn to be born
- C. So busy with taxes, had no idea that Son of God was being born
- D. Same is true today, so busy with the physical things, no place in the Inn for Him
- E. In this lesson, look at some things that crowd out Jesus:

I. Because Of. . .Love Of Riches

- A. Riches always represented as one of enemies of God
 - 1. Doesn't have to be this way
 - 2. God made Adam and Eve rich (*Genesis 1:29,30*)
 - 3. What happened? Allowed these to be more important than God's will
 - 4. Allowed lust to overshadow God (*1 John 2:16*)
 - 5. Eve chose the fleshly over God (*Genesis 3:6*)
- B. From that day a problem with the human race
 - 1. Israel had this problem (*Deuteronomy 8:11-14*)
 - 2. Prophets spoke for God (*Amos 3:15*)
- C. Both Old and New Testaments warn against riches
 - 1. Money is to be a servant, not a master
 - 2. When order is reversed, trouble (*1 Timothy 6:10*)
 - 3. The rich warned (*1 Timothy 6:17*)
- D. Jews of Bethlehem overlooked Savior (*Matthew 1:21*),
 - 1. Too busy looking after material things
- E. Rich young ruler traded his soul for riches (*Matthew 19:22*)

- F. One soul is more valuable than all riches
 - 1. Jesus taught this (*Matthew 16:26*)
 - 2. Riches are temporary (*Proverbs 23:4,5*)
- G. Love for money led Ananias and Sapphira to lie (*Acts 5:3*)
 - 1. One must seek first the kingdom (*Matthew 6:33*)
 - 2. Otherwise, we close the Inn to Jesus!

II. Because Of. . .Lust Of The Flesh

- A. Lust of flesh is close kin to love of money
- B. Lust defined: "an unlawful intense, excessive, and unrestrained desire"
 - 1. Associated with all kinds of sexual immorality
 - 2. One of the three avenues of devil (*Genesis 3:6*)
 - 3. The devil used against Jesus (*Matthew 4:3-11*)
 - 4. Of the world, and should not be loved (*1 John 2:15,16*)
- C. Lust of the flesh is an enemy to the Spirit
 - 1. (*Galatians 5:16,17*)
 - 2. All 17 works of the flesh relate to lust
 - 3. Keeps one out of kingdom (*Galatians 5:21*)
 - 4. Those who practice such, have no room for Jesus in the Inn
- D. Lust of the flesh can never be compatible with Jesus
 - 1. To have the divine nature, must escape these (*2 Peter 1:4*)
 - 2. A place of punishment reserved for the fleshly (*2 Peter 2:9,10*)
- E. No way to say "I love Jesus" and follow the lust of flesh
 - 1. Must have new birth (*John 3:5*)
 - 2. Must be a new creation (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)
 - 3. Must not love the world (*1 John 2:15*)
- F. No room in the Inn, if have lust of the flesh

III. Because Of. . .Living In Religious Error

- A. Error has been a problem (in and out of the

church)

1. False teachers and error-loving listeners
- B. Pure doctrine is important to God
 1. (*Matthew 15:13,14*)
 2. Compared to thieves and robbers
(*John 10:1-5; 12*)
 3. Paul warned Ephesian elders
(*Acts 20:29,30*)
- C. Paul's attitude toward those that refused truth
 1. (*1 Timothy 6:3-5*)
 2. Warned against Hymenaeus and Philetus
(*2 Timothy 2:17,18*)
- D. John and James opposed false teachers
 1. (*2 John 9*)
 2. (*James 5:19,20*)

IV. Because Of. . .Love Of Self

- A. Some love self too much
- B. Self is good standard if controlled
(*Matthew 22:39*)
 1. Selfish pride shuts out Jesus
(*Proverbs 16:5; Romans 12:3*)
- C. Christ praised sinner without pride in temple
(*Luke 18:13*)
 1. Condemned prideful Pharisee
- D. Before following Jesus, must deny self
(*Mark 8:34*)
- E. Joseph and Mary did not force their way into the Inn
 1. Just went to a manger (*Luke 2:7*)
- F. Solomon's definition of a fool
(*Proverbs 12:15; 14:12; 26:12*)
- G. Isaiah and Paul condemn loving self too much
 1. (*Isaiah 5:21; Galatians 6:3*)

Conclusion:

- A. Do you have room for Jesus in the Inn - in your life?
- B. Have you turned Him away because of love of riches, fleshly lust, religious error, and pride?
- C. Will you obey and find room for Him today?

No Room In The Inn

Introduction:

“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7)

Millions of words have been written about the birth, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus; some have been joyful, instructive, and sad, but all that is said about the Son of God is important. The words of this text inform us that Jesus was born in an environment of rejection. Not only did the Son of Man not have a place later to lay His head (*Matthew 8:20*), but He didn't have a place in the Inn to be born. This was a busy time in Bethlehem because it was tax time. Especially those, of the house of David, had their minds on business and had no idea that the spiritual Son of David needed a place to be born. Everything else was given priority rather than Jesus!

Doesn't this sound familiar? Hasn't every generation since the time of His birth made the same mistake? Yes, millions get so caught up in fleshly things that they have no room in the Inn. We so often force Him into a stable among the animals instead of giving Him a place of honor in the Inn. It shall be our purpose in this study to look at some things in life that crowd out Jesus. Why is there often no room in the Inn—in our lives?

Because Of . . . Love Of Riches

Riches have always represented one of the many enemies of God, but it doesn't have to be this way. When God first made man and woman, He gave them dominion over all things which would meet their physical needs—*“the herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life” (Genesis 1:29,30)*. Talk about a couple being rich! The Lord just handed them the earth and all that was in it. Add to all this a beautiful garden especially planted, watered, and decorated by the hand of God, and you have the wealthiest couple ever to live on the earth. What happened? They allowed these things to become more important than God. *“The lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16)*, overshadowed God. When Eve compared the forbidden fruit with its beauty, its appeal to the appetite, and its power to make one wise (*Genesis 3:6*), to God's will, she chose the fleshly, and Adam followed her sinful ways (*Genesis 3:6*).

This was the beginning of crowding God out for riches, but not the end. This becomes a common denominator found in

all generations since Adam. In the special nation, Israel, that God formed through the seed of Abraham, this was continually a problem. When Israel forgot God and had no room for Him in their lives, they were usually blinded by the love of riches and lust. They had been warned: *“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments, his judgments, and his statutes which I command you today. Lest —when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (Deuteronomy 11-14)*. Later when Israel chose riches instead of God, Amos, a spokesman for God said: *“I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, says the LORD” (Amos 3:15)*.

Both the Old and New Testaments warn against allowing riches to crowd out the spiritual. Money is to be used as a servant instead of a master! Mankind is to love the Lord, and not money. When the order is reversed, his life becomes filled with evil. *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10)*. It is no wonder that Paul told Timothy to: *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17)*.

The things that the Jews were seeking in Bethlehem when Jesus was born were so small compared to His birth. For centuries they had looked for and studied from the prophets about His appearance. And yet, as He was ready to be born to bring salvation to the world (*Matthew 1:21*), there was no room for Him in the Inn. Material riches seem so important at the time, and millions are willing to sell their souls for them. When the rich young ruler weighed his riches against following Jesus and gaining eternal life, he chose his riches (*Matthew 19:22*).

Jesus taught that riches compared to just one soul is nothing (*Matthew 16:26*). Remember, riches are so temporary and can be lost easier than gained. Solomon warns: *“Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven” (Proverbs 23:4,5)*.

Ananias and Sapphira learned that one cannot love riches and still be a faithful Christian. Their love of riches led them to *“lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land*

for themselves" (Acts 5:3). Their actions caused them to die both spiritually and physically! Therefore, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Don't ever allow riches to close the Inn to Jesus, the Savior of the world!

Because Of. . .Lust Of The Flesh

It should be easy to see that "love of money," and "lust of the flesh" are close kin. The word "lust" as used in the Bible means an unlawful intense, excessive and unrestrained desire. It is most often associated with the flesh and especially all kinds of sexual immorality. The lust of the flesh is one of the three avenues used by the devil against Eve (Genesis 3:6), and against Jesus (Matthew 4:3-11), and listed by John as "the things in the world" (1 John 2:15,16), that should not be loved. The "lust of the flesh" is an enemy to the Spirit. "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:16,17). Paul proceeds in verse 19 to name the works of the flesh. If you will analyze the 17 works listed, you will see that all kinds of sexual impurities, murder, idolatry, fightings, and drunken parties are given. He concludes his list by saying: "that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21). What is Paul saying? Those who practice the lust of the flesh have no room for Jesus in the Inn! He is sent away to the stable.

One of the beautiful things about being a follower of Jesus is that we can be different from the corruption of the world. Remember, the lust of the fleshly world can never be compatible with Jesus, and the world and Jesus can never stay in the same heart. This is what Peter meant when he referred to the exceedingly great and precious promises given by Jesus. "That through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). If one has not escaped the world's fleshly corruption, there is no room for Jesus. Peter later writes that the Lord will "reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority" (2 Peter 2:9,10).

There is no way that one can say and mean the words, "I love Jesus," and still follow the lustful ways of the world. The new birth into the kingdom demands being new (John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). John makes it clear that if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15). Is there no room for Jesus in the Inn because of the "lust of the flesh?"

Because Of. . .Living In Religious Error

One of the difficulties in life over the centuries (even among believers) is religious error. There have always been those that feel that keeping the pure doctrine of the Bible is not necessary. Therefore, false teachers have taught, and ears that love to hear strange things have listened. True doctrine is important, and without it Jesus has no room in the Inn. Jesus taught of false doctrine: "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted" (Matthew 15:13). As to false teachers He responded: "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (v. 14). Our Lord thought of these teachers as being thieves and robbers that climb over the wall of the sheepfold instead of going through the door (John 10:1-5; 12). Paul used the same figure as he warned the Ephesian elders: "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will

come in among you not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:29,30). Thus, false teachers are compared to the attacks of savage wolves, and when following these, there can be NO room for Jesus.

As Paul instructed Timothy, how did he feel toward those that refused the truth and taught otherwise? "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions" (1 Timothy 6:3,4). In v. 5 he says that they are "destitute of the truth," and should be withdrawn from. Later in his second book to Timothy, Paul warned him against two false teachers, Hymenaeus and Philetus, and said that "their message will spread like cancer" (2 Timothy 2:17). They had "strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" (v. 18). How could these, (or anyone else) claim to make room for Jesus in the Inn?

How strongly did the apostle John feel about false doctrine? He wrote: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). James, in his little book, teaches that even a brother can become lost when he wanders from the truth, and needs to be turned back to be saved (James 5:19,20). Therefore, throw away all creed books written by man, and make room for Jesus in the Inn.

Because Of. . .Love Of Self

How many times do we have no room for Jesus in the Inn because we are so occupied with self? Please understand that there is nothing wrong with respecting one's self, because "loving self" is the standard by which we are to love our neighbors (Matthew 22:39). However, Jesus is shut out when one becomes self-righteous and self-conceited. We cannot have both sinful pride and Jesus in our hearts together. "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;" (Proverbs 16:5). Paul wrote: "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

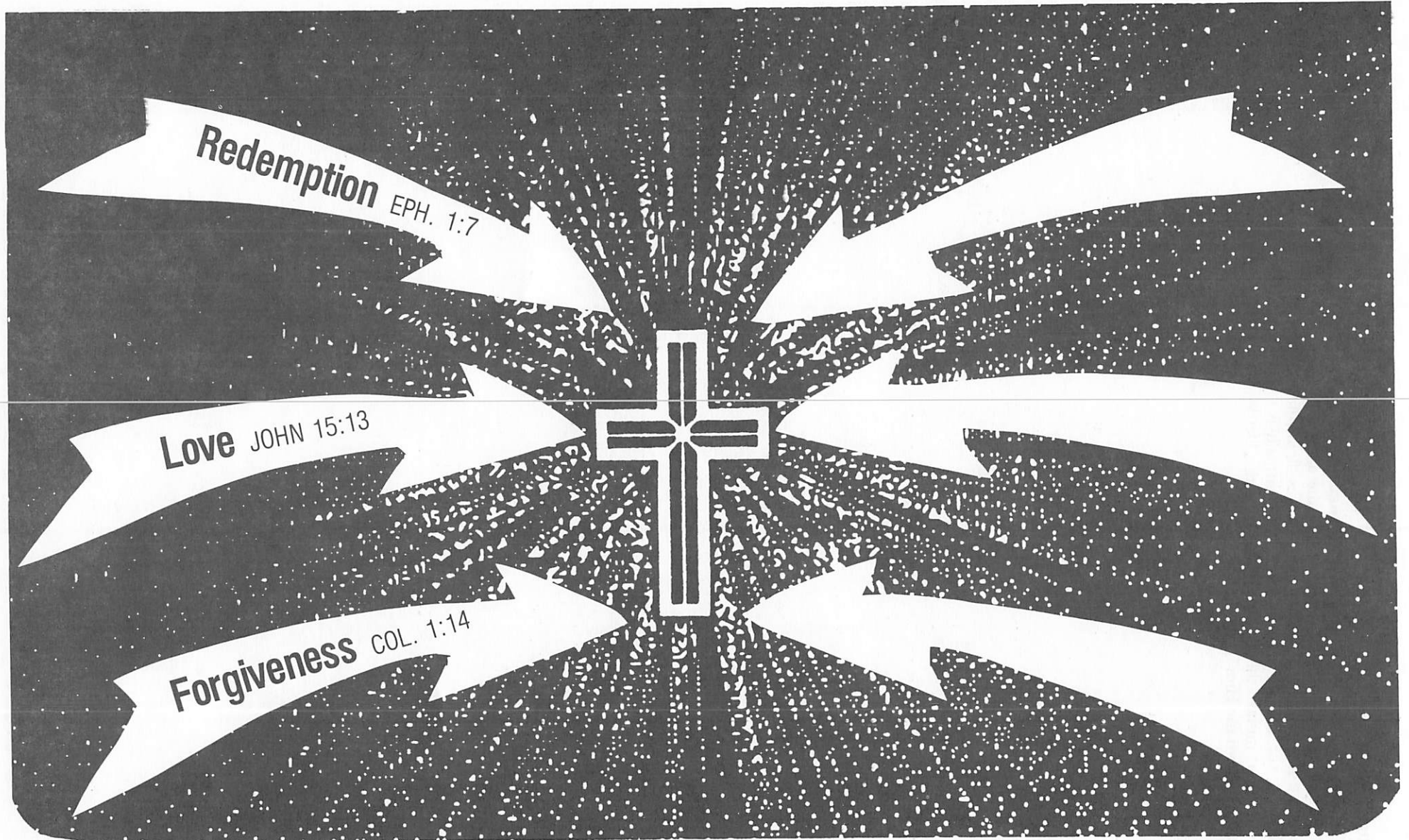
Jesus praised a tax collector that went to the temple and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), but sent the Pharisee away empty handed. The Pharisee was so full of self and his own righteousness that he had no room for anything else in his life. He felt so sold on himself that he did not ask for anything. Before one can make room for Jesus, he must first deny himself (Mark 8:34).

Jesus will enter only where He is wanted and needed. In the text, Joseph and Mary did not force their way into the Inn, but went to a lowly place where Jesus was born, wrapped "in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). Selfish pride will close the door of the Inn as quickly as anything else! Why? "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15). "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 26:12). The prophet Isaiah pronounced: "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isaiah 5:21). Then Paul summed it up: "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:3).

Conclusion:

Therefore, all of us should pause and consider if we have room for Jesus in our lives, or if we (like the ancient Inn keeper) turn Him away because of love of riches, fleshly lust, religious error, and self. To turn Jesus away spiritually is the most serious mistake that anyone can make in this life. Will you find room for Him in the Inn today?

WHAT THE CROSS BRINGS



Redemption EPH. 1:7

Love JOHN 15:13

Forgiveness COL. 1:14

Peace

Joy

Life

What The Cross Brings

Part I

Introduction:

- A. One Sunday after communion, thought on what the cross brings
 - 1. Thought of twelve things - selected six for these two sermons
 - 2. In this sermon, will look at the first three:

I. The Cross Brings Redemption

- A. Redemption means “to buy back or to set free”
- B. From Adam and Eve - Man a slave to sin
 - 1. (*Romans 3:23; Romans 6:17,18*).
- C. Before redemption, price must be paid
- D. What did it cost Christ?
 - 1. Gold and silver not enough
 - 2. Required “precious blood of Christ (*1 Peter 1:18,19*)
- E. Man did not deserve redemption, came by grace
 - 1. (*Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24*).
- F. Under Moses’ Law, a continual struggle with sin
 - 1. Had Priesthood, High Priest, Day of Atonement, and animal blood
 - 2. Still needed permanent forgiveness through Christ (*Hebrews 9:12*).
- G. Redemption is such a beautiful gift from the cross!

II. The Cross Brings Love

- A. After Christ talked to Nicodemus about new birth. . .
 - 1. Spoke of motivating force behind salvation (*John 3:14-16*).
 - 2. “Agape” strongest love word - Unselfishly considers needs of others (*John 15:13*).
- B. Did man deserve this love?
 - 1. No, he was lost in sin (*Romans 5:8*).
 - 2. Love motivated Christ to drink the bitter cup
- C. Now we can sing, “Love Lifted Me!”

III. The Cross Brings Forgiveness

- A. The cross brings needed forgiveness (*Colossians 1:14*).
- B. Jesus prayed for forgiveness from the cross (*Luke 23:34*).

- 1. Still all must come to Him in obedience to be forgiven
- C. Paul preached to the world the gospel and forgiveness
 - 1. (*Acts 13:38*).
- D. To those that obey gospel, then live and forgive others, they receive forgiveness (*Ephesians 4:32*).
 - 1. Example: Spot on handkerchief
- E. Why is forgiveness so important?
 - 1. Only way to remove death (*Romans 6:23*).
 - 2. Only way to receive a blessing (*Romans 4:7,8*).
- F. Lord’s forgiveness brings purity
 - 1. (*Isaiah 1:18*).
- G. Forgiveness comes for past sins when one obeys the gospel (*Acts 2:38*).
 - 1. Continues if one walks in the light (*1 John 1:7,9*).

Conclusion

- A. Hope these first three things the cross brings have impressed you
 - 1. They are very important
- B. Will consider three other things in Part 2
- C. Should be anxious to obey God and receive these blessings
 - 1. If you are not right with Him, will you come?

What The Cross Brings

Part 1

Introduction:

One Sunday morning while meditating on the cross shortly after taking the Lord's Supper, I asked myself the question, "What did the cross bring?" On a scrap piece of paper, I jotted down twelve important things the cross has given and from these twelve principles, six have been chosen for these two sermons. In this lesson, we shall look at the first three. The six principles found in these two sermons represent the essence of Jesus' work and purpose in coming to earth.

The Cross Brings Redemption

May we begin by observing that the cross brings redemption. Redemption means to buy back or to set free. When Christianity was born, the word redemption was associated with slavery. If any person was willing to pay the price, a slave could be redeemed. From the time that Adam and Eve committed sin in the garden, the human race was in slavery to sin. Each following generation had one thing in common - they sinned! Even the Jews, who had been given a special set of laws to protect them from evil, sinned and turned often away from God. When Paul wrote his Roman letter, he was able to sum up the whole human race of Jews and Gentiles in these words: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Even the Roman Christians had one time been "slaves of sin" (Romans 6:17), and had been made free by their obedience to the Gospel (v. 18).

Before there can be redemption, a price must be paid. Therefore, the only way that Christ could bring redemption was to pay the price. How much did it cost to offer redemption to the whole world? Was there enough gold and silver in the world to pay? No, physical wealth did not have that much value! Peter quotes the price in these words: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19). The word precious used here suggests something rare and of great value. Of all the things that existed in the world, only His blood could redeem, and this makes His blood precious indeed!

Did mankind deserve this redemption? Was God returning to man a favor that He owed? If a rich man of the first century observed a slave that was honest, obedient, and a perfect model of a slave, he might say, "That man deserves to be free! I'm going to redeem him." But this was not true with lost humanity. Man was guilty of sin, and didn't deserve to be free, therefore, redemption came through grace. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Paul also wrote, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

Under the law of Moses, there was a continual struggle to deal with sin. There was set forth a priesthood, and the High Priest offered the blood of animals to deal with the sins of the people year after year. However, as important as this system was to Israel, permanent forgiveness could come only through Jesus as the High Priest. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). What a gift the cross brings when it brings redemption!

The Cross Brings Love

Please observe further that the cross brings love. After Jesus had explained the new birth to Nicodemus, He then explained the motivating force behind salvation. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-16). The Greek word "agape" used here is the strongest word in existence for love. It is a love that unselfishly considers the needs of others even above that of self. When Jesus referred to this love He said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Once there was a little girl that needed a kidney transplant to save her life. A search was made, but a donor could not be found that was compatible to her. It was finally discovered that only her little brother's kidney would save her life. When they asked him about giving one of his kidneys, he thought for a moment and then said that he was willing. They were rolled into the operating room side by side, and a few moments later the little boy asked the Doctor, "How long is it now before I die?" He had agreed to give the kidney thinking that it would cost him his life.

When Jesus agreed to express His love for sinners, He knew for sure that it would cost Him His life!

Again we might ask, "Did mankind deserve this love?" No, in fact, he deserved to die forever because of sin. "But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Love motivated Jesus to go to the greatest depth of suffering, and to drink the bitterest cup in existence, so that sinners might be forgiven. Therefore, every saved sinner can sing, "Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help, Love lifted me."

The Cross Brings Forgiveness

As we look further into what the cross brings, let us remember that it brings forgiveness. Paul made this declaration about Jesus: *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Colossians 1:14). Even on the cross, Jesus looked down on an angry mob with hate and murder in their hearts and said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34). Jesus not only forgave from the cross, but His act of dying and the shedding of His blood made it possible to forgive all that would come in obedience to the will of God.

When Paul and other missionaries traveled over the country preaching the gospel, they could remind sinners that Christ offered forgiveness. Paul told his audience at Antioch in Pisidia that Jesus had brought to the world forgiveness. *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 13:38). To those that obey the gospel and then follow Jesus to the point that they are willing to forgive others, they will receive forgiveness from the cross. The apostle to the Gentiles wrote the church at Ephesus: *"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you"* (Ephesians 4:32).

Forgiveness turns an ugly life into one that is beautiful. One time a man was showing his artist friend a rare and expensive handkerchief that he had ruined by getting on it an ugly ink blot. His friend looked at it and asked, "Could I borrow this handkerchief for a while?" He gladly consented, and a few days later when he returned the handkerchief, there appeared on it a beautiful artistic design. He had taken the ugly spot and with more ink had turned it into something beautiful. This is what happens to our lives when there is true forgiveness from Christ.

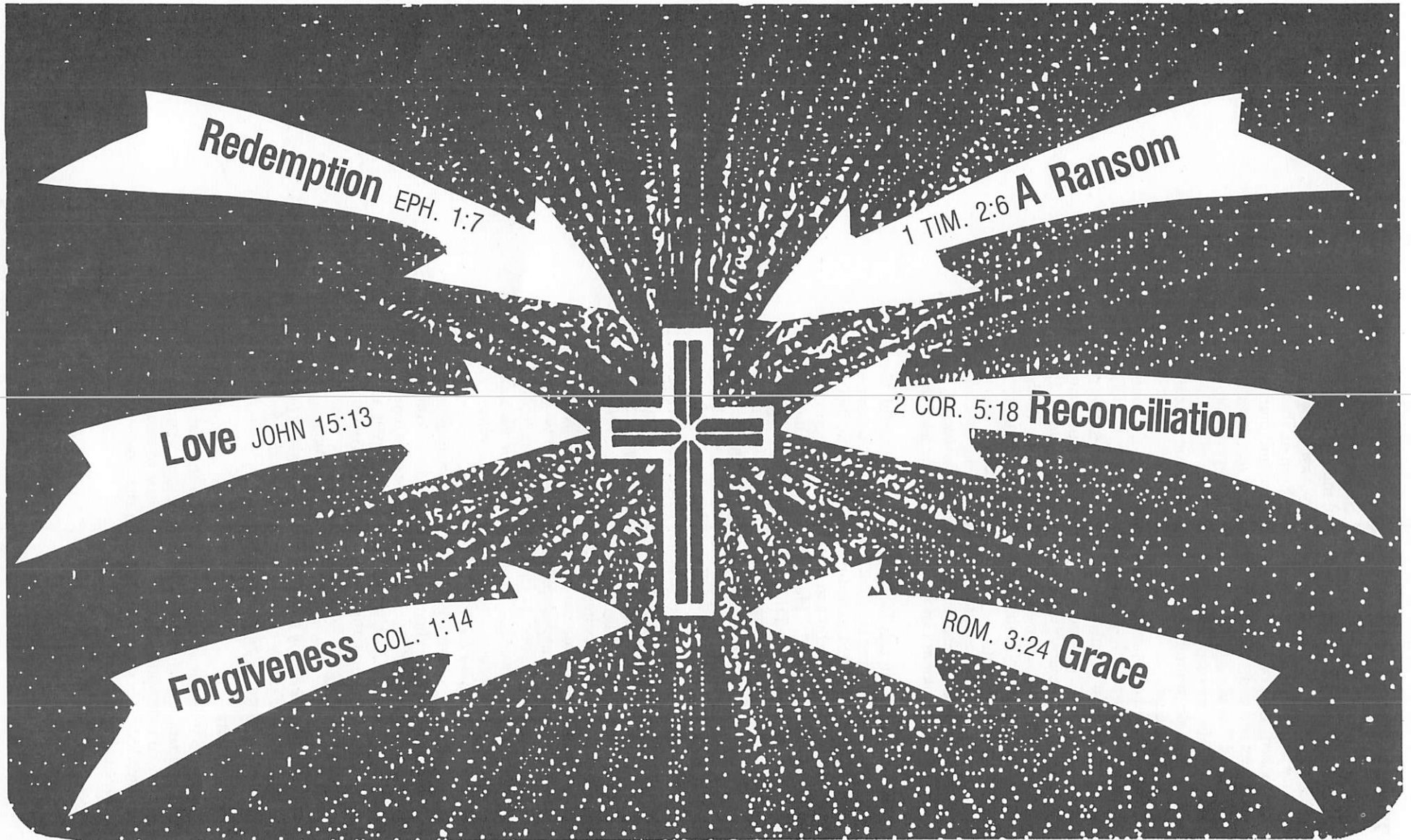
Why is forgiveness so important? (1) It is our only way of being made pure from past sins so that we can be accepted by our Father in heaven. Remember, Sin brings death (Romans 6:23), but forgiveness brings life. (2) Forgiveness is the only way we receive God's blessings. *"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin"* (Romans 4:7,8). When the Lord forgives, there is purity. Isaiah described the results of forgiveness in these words: *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18).

This beautiful forgiveness from the cross takes place in two important ways. (1) When a penitent believer confesses Christ to be the Son of God, and is baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). (2) Then secondly, forgiveness is not limited to past sins, but if the newly forgiven child of God will walk faithfully, there will be forgiveness for future sins. *"But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. . . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:7,9).

Conclusion:

The three things that we have studied in this sermon are very important, and they make the cross of great value. Have you allowed redemption, love and forgiveness to be a part of your life? Jesus has given so much from the cross - are you willing to obey and serve Him?

WHAT THE CROSS BRINGS



What The Cross Brings

Part 2

Introduction:

- A. The word of God elevates the cross
- B. In first sermon, looked at three things the cross brings
 - 1. Redemption, love, and forgiveness
- C. May we consider further three other important things received from the cross:

I. The Cross Brings A Ransom

- A. Paul declares to Timothy - the cross brings a ransom
 - 1. (*1 Timothy 2:5,6*).
- B. Ransom: "A price paid for release or redemption of a captive."
 - 1. Example: War prisoner released
- C. Jesus came to bring a ransom (*Luke 10:45*).
 - 1. Yet only a few will accept (*Matthew 7:14*).
- D. In 1829 Supreme Court decided that a pardon must be accepted or it is lost.
 - 1. Many refuse ransom daily for death (*Romans 6:23*).
- E. Ransom also suggests taking the place of another
 - 1. Example: Two brothers playing in old belfry
 - 2. Jesus chose to die so others may live.

II. The Cross Brings Reconciliation

- A. Reconciliation among the most beautiful words of the Bible
- B. Means: "Re" - again or renew.
"Conciliate" - to gain friendship.
- C. Reconciliation - "To renew or gain friendship again."
- D. Before sin, man and God were friends
 - 1. Disobeyed and lost God's friendship (*Genesis 3:6*).
- E. God motivated by love to reconcile man (*2 Corinthians 5:18,19*).
 - 1. Happened while man was an enemy (*Romans 5:10*).
- F. If cross had not brought reconciliation, no friendship with God, because man left God.
- G. Still, sinners must be reconciled to God (*2 Corinthians 5:20*).

III. The Cross Brings Grace

- A. One of the most beautiful words in the English language
 - 1. Millions have sung: "Amazing Grace."
 - 2. Amazing because it takes sinners to the cross for forgiveness
- B. Jews and Gentiles must be justified by grace
 - 1. (*Romans 3:24,25*).
 - 2. Favor that no person deserves
 - 3. Deserved death - sinners (*Romans 5:8*).
- C. Grace brings salvation (*Titus 2:11*)
 - 1. Grace and faith (*Ephesians 2:8*)
 - 2. Must obey, but no purchase power involved
- D. Grace is important because all are wretched (*Romans 7:24*).
 - 1. Grace can save - brings eternal life (*Titus 3:7*).
- E. Sadly, the majority will refuse grace
 - 1. Only a penitent, confessing, obeying, heart will be saved
 - 2. The gift is free, but must be accepted
 - 3. Millions choose broad way to destruction.

Conclusion:

- A. These six things are so important
- B. Should make all more appreciative of the cross
- C. If the cross has not brought these things to you, at this time you should turn to God!

What The Cross Brings

Part 2

Introduction:

The word of God elevates the cross to an exalted position as it sends forth to the human race the beautiful things needed to be forgiven and to be right with God. In a previous sermon, we looked at three important things the cross brings - Redemption, Love, and Forgiveness. Now in this sermon, may we study seriously three other important principles that the cross brings.

The Cross Brings A Ransom

Looking further at what the cross brings, Paul declares to Timothy that Jesus brings a ransom. *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1 Timothy 2:5,6). The word ransom means a price paid for the release or redemption of a captive. During times of war, prisoners would be captured, and if they were of great value, a ransom would be paid for their release. This describes one purpose of the cross. It was to pay the ransom price so that sinners might be set free.

Jesus expressed His mission to earth in these words: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). Even though Christ paid the price for all, only a few will allow themselves to be set free (Matthew 7:14). This pardon (paid by Jesus' blood) must be accepted by obedience or it is forfeited.

In 1829, Wilson and Porter were convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail and were sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the time set for Wilson's execution, he was pardoned by President Jackson. Strangely enough, Wilson refused the pardon. The case went to the Supreme Court and the court finally handed down the decision: "A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him."

Most people will agree that Wilson acted foolishly by refusing to accept the pardon. Yet many of these same people daily reject the pardon which God has provided through Jesus for everyone condemned to hell for their sins. *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23).

The idea of ransom also suggests taking the place of another in death, and this was the ransom price paid by Jesus at the cross. He didn't deserve to die, we did! It was for our sins, not His, for which He died. Those that allow Him to save them are literally ransomed from spiritual death. He died so that we may live.

Once two young brothers were playing in an old belfry and

had climbed several feet above a concrete floor. They were hanging on to a joist that broke and as they began to fall, the older brother caught hold of another two by four and the little brother grabbed hold of his brother's legs. There they were hanging suspended several feet above the concrete floor. The older brother tried to raise himself up to safety, but with his little brother hanging on, he was unable to do so. After many efforts, the little brother looked up and asked, "Could you save yourself if I were not holding on to you?" The older brother answered, "Yes!" The little boy turned loose and fell to his death so that his older brother could live.

Jesus made the same choice for mankind. He gave himself in death as a ransom so that all who accept Him might live. What a precious gift from the cross!

The Cross Brings Reconciliation

This is one of the beautiful words that shows further the importance of the cross. The word suggests moving from one state to another. The prefix "re" means again or renew, and the word "conciliate" means to gain friendship. Thus, to renew or gain friendship again. Before sin, God and man were the closest of friends, but this friendship was severed when Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6). However, God's love motivated Him to provide a means whereby man could be reconciled to Him. *"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation"* (2 Corinthians 5:18,19). This reconciliation took place while all were enemies to God. *"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life"* (Romans 5:10).

The greatest friendship we can ever have is with God. Friends on earth will often let us down, because some are fair weather friends. When the going gets rough, they pull out. Like the Prodigal Son, he had friends as long as his money was in supply, but when it was gone, so were his friends. Jesus is a friend that is true all the time, and especially when we need Him. Someone has written: "A friend is one to whom we may pour out the contents of our hearts, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away!"

If the cross had not brought reconciliation, we could never be friends with God, because it was man that left God. Even though God provided the means of reconciliation through His Son, all sinners must be reconciled to God. Paul ad-

monished: *"We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20). Thanks to the cross of Christ, we can (in spite of sin) be a friend with God.

The Cross Brings Grace

The word grace is one of the most beautiful words in the English language. We have been singing over the years, "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see." What is this amazing grace that we sing about? Why is it so amazing? It is amazing because it takes us back to the cross where God's favor to lost humanity was offered. Immediately after Paul declared that all have sinned, that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners, he wrote: *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by his blood, through faith. . ."* (Romans 3:24,25). Grace is a favor that no person on earth deserves, and is a gift of love that was set forth while man was in sin. *"But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

One time a little boy had lost his parents in death, and had tried to survive alone. His clothes became torn and dirty, and he was weak and hungry. He walked several miles to an orphanage and asked the Superintendent to accept him as an orphan. The Superintendent asked, "How do I know you are an orphan, what do you have to convince me?" The little boy stepped forward and said, "Here I am, just look at me!"

Thus, without grace there would be no salvation. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"* (Titus 2:11). Paul further verifies this truth: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). Even though God has asked sinners to obey Him to receive grace, there is no purchase power involved since grace is presented as a gift. Therefore, to those that have enough faith to obey His will, this unearned favor, grace, is given.

Again we ask, why is grace so important? Because, without it all accountable persons are in a wretched condition. Paul declared to the Romans: *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* (Romans 7:24). The answer to Paul's question is amazing grace! Life has many temptations along the way and the devil uses his power to trap us, but none of these are so severe but what God's amazing grace can save us and lead us to an eternal home. *"That having been justified by his grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life"* (Titus 3:7).

Because Jesus went to the cross, we have grace and can go boldly before His throne for forgiveness. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16). What a precious gift the cross gives when a sinner receives grace.

Let it be remembered that even though the cross brings grace and it is offered freely, the majority will refuse it! God will not extend His grace to a heart unprepared to receive it. Only a penitent, confessing, and obedient heart can accept this precious gift from God. Yes, the gift is offered to sinners, but they must receive it with the proper heart. Millions will choose the broad way to destruction when grace is so freely offered because they will not turn from their sinful ways to the will of God!

Conclusion:

It is believed that these three things mentioned in this sermon (along with the other three studied in a previous ser-

mon) are so important to our spiritual and eternal existence, and we should appreciate these precious gifts and praise the great Godhead for such wonders. If the cross has not brought these things to your soul, you should turn to God now.

THINGS FOR CHRISTIANS TO FLEE

1 TIM. 6:9-11

Temptation-2 PET. 2:9

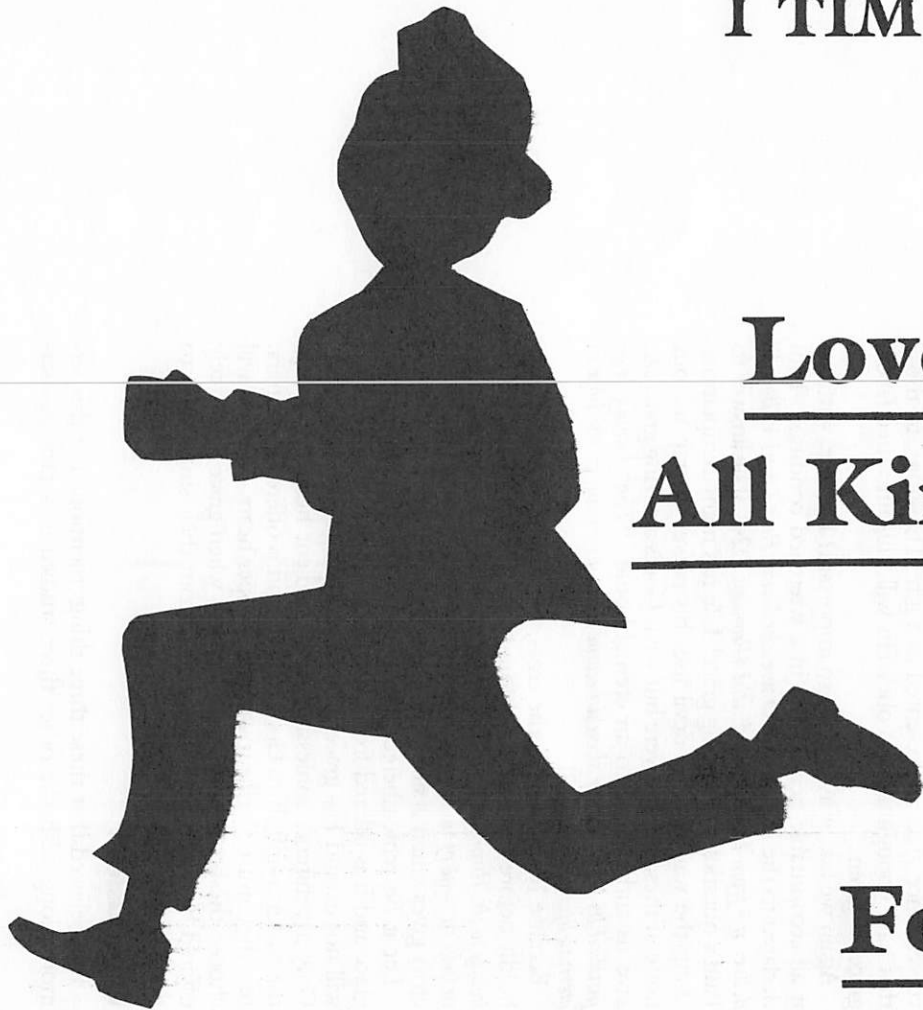
Love of Money-ACTS 5:1-10

All Kinds of Evil-1 THESS. 5:22

A Snare-PROV. 29:6

Greediness-EPH. 4:19

Foolish Lusts-ROM. 13:14



Things For Christians To Flee

I Timothy 6:9-11

Introduction:

- A. Among what Paul loved was Timothy
 - 1. Son in gospel - godly mother & grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5)
- B. Paul wanted Timothy to stay strong spiritually
- C. Numerates several dangers
 - 1. "Flee these things" (v. 11).
- D. Wish to study what he was to flee:

I. Flee Temptations

- A. Temptation used here in the evil sense
- B. Define: "Any attempt to entice to do evil"
 - 1. Good sense: "A testing that aims at spiritual good"
- C. James uses temptation in both ways
 - 1. Good: (James 1:2)
 - 2. Evil: (James 1:13,14)
 - 3. The evil, Paul wants Timothy to flee
- D. The only way to win - run away
 - 1. Example: Joseph (Genesis 39:12).
 - 2. Running is hard for devil to handle (James 4:7).
 - 3. Jesus won by continual resistance (Matthew 4:10,11).
- E. Example: Indian setting an animal trap
- F. How does one flee temptation?
 - 1. Doing our part
 - 2. Allowing God to help (2 Peter 2:9).

II. Flee Love Of Money

- A. Some feel love of money just a 20th century problem
 - 1. Wrong, all generations
- B. Not commanded to flee: "money" but "love of money"
 - 1. Money either a master or servant
 - 2. "Love of money" root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10).
- C. What was the first recorded problem in the church?
 - 1. Ananias & Sapphira lied over money (Acts 5:3,4).
- D. Paul didn't want Timothy to love something so

temporary

- 1. (Proverbs 23:5).
- E. Can we imagine all the sins today from love of money?
 - 1. Inside and outside religion?
- F. Parable of sower - thorny soil
 - 1. "deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22).

III. Flee All Kinds Of Evil

- A. General expression: All kinds of evil
 - 1. That which is morally wrong, wicked, harmful, injurious
- B. God's word determines evil
 - 1. Evil also speaks for itself
 - 2. Example: Gardener and poisonous plant
- C. (Romans 2:8,9) - Promised punishment on evil doers
 - 1. Must abstain from evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
 - 2. Must abhor evil (Romans 12:9).
- D. How does God feel about evil?
 - 1. The reason for the flood answers
 - 2. (Genesis 6:5,6).
- E. God still hates evil today.

IV. Flee A Snare

- A. Snare: "A trap or device set to capture bird or animal"
- B. Paul warns against snare of riches
- C. Devil great trapper - "love of money" the bait
 - 1. (Proverbs 29:6).
 - 2. Bird in snare won't sing - Righteous rejoice
- D. Many snared by thinking that money will buy all things
 - 1. They lie, cheat, hard heart, break law
- E. Must lay up treasures in heaven
 - 1. (Matthew 6:20,21).
- F. Need to train our children about snares

V. Flee Greediness

- A. All things given by Paul to flee are related
 - 1. Greediness associated with love of money
- B. Defined: "Excessively eager to acquire or possess something beyond what one needs."

- C. Paul described unconverted Gentiles to Ephesians
 1. (*Ephesians 4:19*).
 2. Selfishness associated with greediness
- D. The more wealthy a nation - the more greed
 1. Example: Lincoln and two boys - "The matter with the world: one has a nut, and the other one wants it."
- E. One of qualifications for elders -
 1. "Not greedy for money" (*1 Timothy 3:3*).
 2. Would hinder one from properly leading a flock
- F. Paul wanted best for Timothy - therefore flee greediness!

VI. Flee Foolish Lust

- A. Lust associated with - unlawful sexual desire
 1. Good and natural desires, but when corrupted - lust
- B. World removes all restraints - Practices lust
 1. Christians must be different (*Romans 13:14*).
- C. John calls Christians from practice of the world
 1. Sums up lust of flesh, eye, pride of life (*1 John 2:16*).
- D. Paul often warns against "lasciviousness"
 1. "unbridled lust, excess, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness and insolence."
 2. All kinds of immoral practices
- E. Those that choose sexual immorality
 1. Enemies with God (*James 4:4*).
 2. Won't inherit the kingdom of God (*Galatians 5:21*).
 3. Will reap death (*Galatians 6:8*; *Romans 6:23*).
- F. Some feel they can handle both lust and Christianity
 1. Impossible: "Sin like a stream of water, small in its beginning, then enlarging continually in its onward flow toward the ocean; at first easily managed and controlled, but after a while becoming large, deep, strong and unmanageable; so sin in its continuance and growth becomes a mighty torrent, overwhelming, uncontrollable, like a Niagara sweeping everything in its course over the precipice" (Zartman).
- G. Timothy commanded to flee youthful lust (*2 Timothy 2:22*).
 1. Lust can be even stronger temptation with youth
- H. Paul has spiritual portrait in mind for Timothy
 1. Only a single line changed - destroys likeness

Conclusion:

- A. We must flee these same things today
 1. Can't get involved in these and be a Christian
 2. If we think so, deceived (*Galatians 6:7*).

- B. Consider your life in regard to:
 1. Temptation, love of money, all kinds of evil that snare, greediness, and foolish lusts.
- C. Have these hindered you from obeying the gospel?
 1. Have these hindered you from faithfulness as a Christian?
- D. If yes, flee from these to God!

Things For Christians To Flee

1 Timothy 6:9-11

Introduction:

Among the many things that Paul loved upon this earth must have been his son in the gospel, Timothy. This young man was not only a help to Paul, but he had a great spiritual background with a godly mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5), which made Paul love and appreciate him more. Therefore, Paul wanted Timothy to keep the faith, fight the good fight, study the scriptures, and keep himself pure from sinful lusts. In the text before us, Paul numerates several dangers that would confront him and calls upon him to: “*flee these things*” (v. 11), and then tells him the good things to pursue. It shall be our purpose in this lesson to study the things Timothy was asked to flee.

Flee Temptation

Temptation is used here in the evil sense. The word means a “trial or proof,” and may be a trial of evil or good. Temptation can signify any attempt to entice to do evil, or it can indicate a testing which aims at spiritual good. James uses temptation in both senses in the first chapter of his book: “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*” (James 1:2). This is the good sense. Then he speaks of the kind of temptation that comes from the devil: “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed*” (James 1:13,14). This is the kind of temptation that Paul wants Timothy to flee!

The only way to win over temptation is to run away. Those that feel that they are strong enough to face temptation day by day without yielding are getting ready for a fall. One of the things that we appreciate about Joseph of the Old Testament is the fact that he knew when to run from temptation. He was set up by Potiphar’s wife to yield to her lustful desires. However, Joseph knew that if he stayed, he would perhaps yield and sin against God and his master, Potiphar, therefore, he ran away (Genesis 39:12). It was not an easy decision, but a wise one. Be assured that it is still wise to flee temptation.

Our running away from temptation is a difficult thing for the devil to handle. As long as we stay near by, he can gradually break down our resistance to sin, but when we flee, he loses. “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus won by continually resisting. Each temptation was resisted by quoting a scripture to show that to yield would be wrong, and then Jesus drove him away: “*Away with you, Satan! . . . Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and*

ministered to him” (Matthew 4:10,11). It is dangerous to keep the devil around, and to reach the point where his temptations are not taken seriously.

“A man watched an Indian preparing a trap to catch a wild animal, and was surprised to learn that the Indian never sets the trap the first time the animal appears. Instead, he lets it come repeatedly to feed where the trap is, and then, when it has become bold and thoroughly familiar with the surroundings, the Indian sets the trap so it will catch the animal, and he gets it.

That is the way temptation works. It does not drive one shaft into the heart of its victim at first, but deceives it and lures it on, and then the fatal blow is delivered. Temptation is a sleepless, unwearying enemy, watching and waiting to find us off guard” (Macartney).

Now we should be able to understand why Paul wanted Timothy to flee temptation. How do we flee temptation? It is accomplished by doing our part, and then trusting God to help. We should never try to run away alone or we will fail. God wants us to rely upon His help. Peter declares this: “*Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment*” (2 Peter 2:9).

Flee Love Of Money

We may feel that the temptation to love money is a problem only in our modern age, but this is not true, because this has been a problem in all generations. Some have mistakenly thought that money itself is evil, but this is also false. Paul does not command Timothy to flee “money”, but rather flee the “love of money.” What is the difference? Money is a useful and valuable tool for life, and will serve us as a faithful servant, but the love of money is an evil master that drives us into greed, dishonesty, and all kinds of evil. When Paul mentions the love of money in our text, he says: “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (1 Timothy 6:10).

What was the first recorded serious problem of Christ’s church after its establishment? It was the love of money. Ananias and Sapphira, members of the church in Jerusalem, sold a possession and kept back part of the proceeds, but pretended to give all. Peter said, “*Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God*” (Acts 5:3,4). The love of money led both Ananias and Sapphira to lie and to lose their lives!

Paul didn't want Timothy to get caught in this sinful trap. He didn't want him to love that which is so temporary. Solomon wrote from his wisdom and experience in life that money is not permanent: "*Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven*" (Proverbs 23:5).

Can we even begin to imagine the sins that are committed today because of the love of money? The list is long both inside and outside of religion! One of the things that often crowds religion from a heart is being deceived by what riches will do. Jesus gave a parable about a sower that sowed his seed into different kinds of soils. The purpose of this parable was to describe the various hearts that would hear the word. Some seed fell among the thorns and were choked out. His explanation: "*Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful*" (Matthew 13:22). Can't we begin to see why Paul wanted Timothy to flee the love of money?

Flee All Kinds Of Evil

In addition to specifying individual sins for Timothy to flee, Paul uses a more general expression "all kinds of evil." The word evil means that which is morally wrong or bad - that which is wicked, harmful and injurious. What determines evil? God's word instructs us as to what is evil, but be assured that evil also speaks for itself, because one cannot choose evil without suffering its consequences.

One time a gardener found a plant that he loved and decided to bring it to his garden. He was warned that it was poisonous and very destructive to his garden, but he wanted it so badly that he gave it a special place in his garden. Several years went by without a bloom, but finally the leaves became like thorns and nettles, and the blooms had a sickening odor. He worked for days digging it up, and for years to come, sprouts appeared in his garden. This describes the consequences of evil, because we continue to reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7,8).

Paul promised: "*but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek*" (Romans 2:8,9). This is why he commanded: "*Abstain from every form of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Also: "*Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good*" (Romans 12:9).

How does God feel about those that are evil? Perhaps the answer to this question is best described by observing why God destroyed the whole human race (except for eight souls) with a flood. Notice God's attitude toward man just before the flood: "*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart*" (Genesis 6:5,6). Does God still feel that strongly against evil? Yes, He still hates it, and those that live this way without forgiveness through the blood of Christ, will spend eternity apart from God.

Paul's love for Timothy led him to warn him against all kinds of evil. This is something that we need to flee today.

Flee A Snare

A snare is a trap or device set to capture a bird or animal. In the sense of our text, Paul is warning Timothy against being caught in a destructive trap that comes from riches. The devil

is the world's greatest trapper. He sets snares to trap us in sin, and the love of money is often the bait. One may become so engrossed in seeking riches that he doesn't see the snare. Solomon writes: "*By transgression an evil man is snared, but the righteous sings and rejoices*" (Proverbs 29:6). A bird caught in a snare does not sing because all freedom is gone. However, the righteous has avoided the trap and not only sings, but rejoices!

One of the ways we are snared is in thinking that money will solve all problems of life. We see the bait, but not the trap. Those that become snared by the love of riches will lie, cheat, grow hardhearted toward fellow man, grow cold toward God, and in some cases break most of the laws of the land. That which has promised so much freedom, has trapped them into bondage.

This is why Jesus called upon His disciples to: "*lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth and rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:20,21).

Paul knew that Timothy was young and might not be aware of the snares along the way. As parents, we have a responsibility to warn our children of the dangers that come from the many snares of the devil. We need to pray often that they will flee the snares of the evil one!

Flee Greediness

As we continue to look at the things Paul commanded Timothy to flee, it is plain to see that all of these are related. Greediness certainly is associated with the love of money and all other kinds of evil. Greediness is defined as: "Excessively eager to acquire or possess something beyond what one needs." When Paul described the unconverted Gentile world to the church at Ephesus, he said: "*Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*" (Ephesians 4:19). One cannot think of greediness without selfishness. Those involved in this sin are so concerned about their excesses that they forget the needs of others. Paul doesn't want Timothy to have any part of this and calls upon him to flee greediness.

It seems that the more wealth a nation obtains the more prevalent is greediness. There is never a time when we can stop running from greediness, because it will destroy our souls.

"Lincoln was one day walking along a street in Springfield holding the hands of his two boys. They were crying lustily. 'What's the matter with the boys, Abe?' asked a neighbor.

Lincoln replied, 'The matter with them is the matter with the world: one has a nut, and the other one wants it'" (Bryant).

When Paul gave the qualifications for elders he included: "*Not greedy for money*" (1 Timothy 3:3). He saw in greed a sin that would keep a man from leading the spiritual flock of God. Since Paul wanted the best for his son in the gospel, he called upon him to flee greediness, and as Christians we must do the same.

Flee Foolish Lusts

The word lust is usually associated with an unlawful sexual desire. It is defined as an intense and often excessive or restrained sexual desire. There are certain natural desires that God has created into mankind, but He has also given instructions as to how these are to be fulfilled. However, when these desires are corrupted and turned into lusts, they become sinful, foolish, and destructive. The world removes all restraints

and lives by lustful practices, but Paul does not want Timothy to fall into this dangerous snare. Therefore, he calls upon him to flee foolish lusts! Paul's advice to the Romans also applies: "*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts*" (Romans 13:14). He is saying that Christians are not to allow lust of the flesh to be a part of their lives.

When John commanded followers not to love the world nor the things of the world, he mentioned three things to avoid: "*The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life —is not of the Father but is of the world*" (1 John 2:16). There is no way that a Christian can follow foolish lusts and still serve God. One of the words that Paul used often in his writing to describe lust was "lasciviousness." This is defined as "unbridled lust, excess, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, and insolence." This type of unbridled lust includes all kinds of sexual immoral practices. What could be more degrading in this life, and what could be more destructive spiritually? Those who choose this type of life are enemies with God (James 4:4), cannot inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21), and will reap death (Galatians 6:8; Romans 6:23). Paul wants Timothy and all other Christians to flee such foolish lusts!

There are those who feel that they can get involved with lust, but still keep it under control. This is not true, because the desire for more lust grows and grows until one's life and soul are destroyed. "Sin like a stream of water, small in its beginning, then enlarging continually in its onward flow toward the ocean; at first easily managed and controlled, but after a while becoming large, deep, strong and unmanageable; so sin in its continuance and growth becomes a mighty torrent, overwhelming, uncontrollable, like a Niagara sweeping everything in its course over the precipice" (Zartman). Therefore, Timothy's only hope of escape is to run from, and to flee foolish lusts.

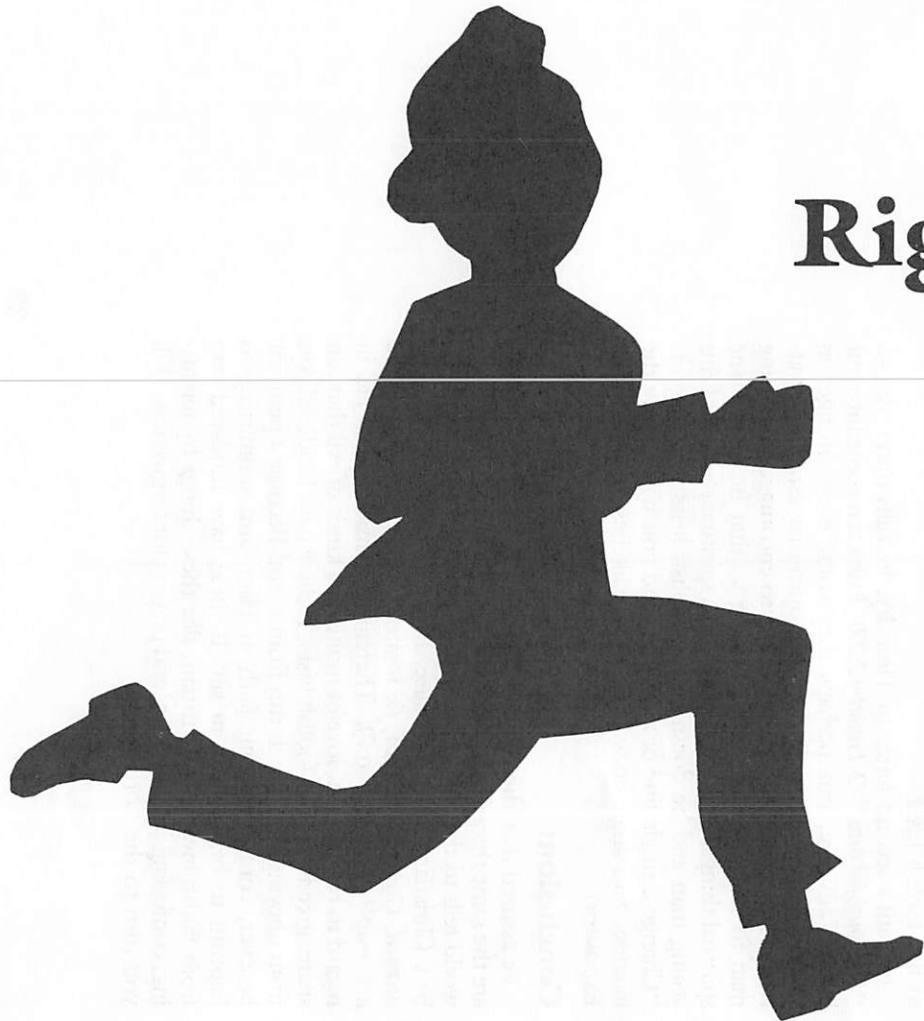
In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he calls upon him to "*Flee youthful lusts*" (2 Timothy 2:22). Lusts can come into our lives at any age, but perhaps they come even stronger in youth. How one handles lusts in youth may establish a pattern for the years ahead. Paul wants to encourage this young man to run from lusts while young so that he can pursue spiritual things. Paul has in his mind a spiritual portrait of this young man and he doesn't want foolish lusts to change it. "Change a single line of a portrait, and you will destroy the likeness. So a single sin will destroy our likeness to God" (The Expositor).

Conclusion:

Be assured that the things that Paul asked Timothy to flee are the same things that we must flee as Christians today. The world tells us that we can be involved in these things and still be a Christian, but this is false. In Paul's words: "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*" (Galatians 6:7). Therefore, consider your life in regard to temptation, love of money, all kinds of evil that can snare, greediness and foolish lusts. If these have hindered you from obeying the gospel, run from them! Become a penitent believer, confessing your faith in Him, and submitting to baptism to be saved from sin. If these have hindered you from faithfulness as a Christian, flee these things by repenting, confessing your wrongs, and praying for forgiveness. Will you turn to the Lord today?

THINGS FOR CHRISTIANS TO PURSUE

1 TIM. 6:11



Righteousness-1 COR. 15:34

Godliness-1 TIM. 4:8

Faith-ROM. 10:17

Love-EPH. 6:24

Gentleness-GAL. 5:23

Patience-HEB. 12:1

Things For Christians To Pursue

1 Timothy 6:11

Introduction:

- A. After numerating things for Timothy to flee
 1. Calls upon him to pursue good things
 2. Must run FROM devil, but TO God
(James 4:7,8)
- B. Timothy under same Christian age as we are today
 1. Therefore, must pursue the same
- C. May we consider the things Timothy was to pursue:

I. Pursue Righteousness

- A. Greek for righteousness (dikaiosyne)
 1. "The quality of rightness or justice."
- B. Before righteousness, must be a right and wrong standard
 1. Only God can determine what is right.
 2. When man sets his own standard - wrong!
- C. Paul's Jewish brethren made this mistake
(Romans 10:3)
 1. Thus, only those that follow word of God - righteous
 2. Man by himself, will not be righteous
(Romans 3:23)
- D. To pursue righteousness, one must study the word
 1. (2 Timothy 2:15)
- E. Are we pursuing righteousness today?
 1. Do we study, attend Bible classes
 2. When truth is studied, do we apply it?
- F. "The Bible is a book of faith, and a book of doctrine, and a book of morals, and a book of religion, of special revelation from God, but it is also a book which teaches man his own individual responsibility, his own dignity, and his equality with his fellow man" (Daniel Webster).
- G. Paul wanted Timothy to pursue righteousness in another sense
 1. He would have to seek forgiveness through gospel
 2. Gospel, power of God unto salvation
(Romans 1:16)
 3. Gospel, in it the righteousness of God revealed (v. 17).

4. This forgiveness makes sinner righteous
- H. How do we pursue righteousness today?
 1. Obey commands that lead to salvation
(Mark 16:16)
 2. By following His word for continual forgiveness (1 John 1:7)
 3. This will bring life (Proverbs 21:21).

II. Pursue Godliness

- A. Greek word for godliness appears fifteen times in N.T.
 1. Fourteen times translated godliness one holiness
 2. Means: "Living in such a way that God and His will are reflected in one's life."
- B. To be like God, must follow daily His word
 1. Must seek a holy life
 2. World is ungodly - must flee its practices
 3. Number one exercise, godliness
(1 Timothy 4:7,8)
 4. Things Christians can do, but do not compare to godliness
- C. Example: Man buried in Westminster Abbey - monument:
 1. "He feared man so little, because he feared God so much."
- D. Paul had so many trials and persecutions
(2 Corinthians 11:23-28)
 1. How could he carry on?
 2. His secret of contentment: (1 Timothy 6:6)
 3. Closer to God, the more one can face difficulties
 4. Peter included godliness in graces
(2 Peter 1:6)
- E. Godliness must be pursued - flesh holds back
 1. With Jesus' help, can have victory
 2. Paul described this battle and victory
(Romans 7:15-23; 25; 8:1)
- F. Someday the Lord will appear
 1. Frightening if unprepared to meet Him
- G. How does one prepare?
 1. By seeking God first rather than the earth
 2. This earth will dissolve (2 Peter 3:11,12)

III. Pursue Faith

- A. Pursuing faith (like others mentioned) is very important
1. (*Hebrews 11:6*)
 2. Means have been provided to increase faith (*Romans 10:17*)
 3. Millions have not been willing to pay the price
- B. Many have trouble defining faith
- C. Three boys' definition of faith:
1. "Faith is taking hold of God"
 2. "Faith is holding on to God"
 3. "Faith is not letting go!"
 4. Let us consider these three correct answers
- D. How does one take hold of God?
1. Not by faith only like demons (*James 2:19*)
 2. By submitting to His will (*Matthew 7:21*)
 3. By a faith working through love (*Galatians 5:6*)
 4. By gladly receiving the word (*Acts 2:41*)
 5. "Faith without works is dead" (*James 2:20*)
- C. One must hold on and not let go!
1. Not enough just to be born into God's family (*John 3:5*)
 2. Must also live faithfully as a child
 3. Danger of making shipwreck of faith (*1 Timothy 1:19*)
 4. This danger can be avoided - if pursue faith
 5. What could be more disastrous - serve and leave?
 6. Sad portrait of Demas (*2 Timothy 4:10*)
- D. Only way to stay saved, hold on to God until death (*Revelation 2:10*)

IV. Pursue Love

- A. Paul used strongest Greek word for love - (aga'pe)
- B. Does not attempt to define it - tells what it will do
1. (*1 Corinthians 13*)
 2. Shows concern for the ones loved (*John 3:16*)
 3. Only way to know God (*1 John 4:8*)
- C. Only true followers of Christ have this love
1. Person of world puts self first
 2. Jesus demonstrated true love (*John 15:13*)
 3. Timothy needed to pursue love - spiritual spark plug
- D. This kind of love cannot be hidden
1. Example: Girl with locket, "Whom not having seen I love."
- E. Secret of Paul's strength (*Philippians 1:21; 4:13*)
1. Kind of love Paul wanted Timothy to pursue
- F. Closed his epistle to Ephesians with love

(*Ephesians 6:24*)

V. Pursue Gentleness

- A. This word is associated with meekness and is in list of fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:23*)
- B. The world considers meekness, weakness. Wrong!
1. Paul commanding Timothy to be strong, not weak
 2. Thus, gentleness and meekness - power under control!
- C. Jesus stronger than all humanity combine
1. Yet, "gentle and lowly" (*Matthew 11:29*)
 2. The power was there, but under control
- D. Jesus taught that the meek would inherit the earth (*Matthew 5:5*)
1. Christians must walk in gentleness (*Ephesians 4:2*)
 2. (*1 Peter 3:4*)

VI. Pursue Patience

- A. Two Greek words in New Testament for patience
1. (hupomone) - "endure under trials" free from cowardice or despondency
 2. (makrothumi'a) - "longsuffering" attitude toward people
 - a. Used in list of fruit of Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*)
- B. Patience used by Paul in text: (hupomone) - to endure under trials!
1. The world is going to attack the faithful
 2. Going across grain of sinful world, brings reaction
- C. Christians must run with (hupomone) - patience (*Hebrews 12:1,2*)
- D. One of greatest dangers of Christian today - giving up!
1. Pathway of life is never smooth
 2. "The ripest fruit is most often pecked by the birds"
- E. "Lord, help me to be for Thee,/ Just like a big, strong cedar tree;/ When all the other trees are bare,/ The cedar stands so green and fair,/ The wind and storm, the ice and cold/ Make it more beauty to behold,/ So I would stand in trial and test,/ Just trusting You to do what's best,/ Though others fail, Lord, keep Thou me!/ May I a cedar Christian be!" - Selected

Conclusion:

- A. Can you imagine the change in our lives if we pursued these six?
1. Must flee evil, but must also pursue the good
- B. Have you become unfaithful because you stopped pursuing good?
1. If so, there is a need for repentance and prayer.
- C. If you have never entered the Christian race, NOW is the time!

1. Why not as a penitent believer, confess your faith in Christ, and put Him on in baptism?

Things For Christians To Pursue

I Timothy 6:11

Introduction:

After Paul had numerated several sinful things from which Timothy was to flee, he called upon his son in the gospel to pursue certain things that are right. It is not enough to run from evil, but one must run toward good. Immediately after James commanded to: “Resist the devil,” he said, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you” (James 4:7,8).

Since Timothy was living under the same Christian age that we are under today, we need to pursue the same principles. Therefore, it shall be our purpose in this sermon to study closely the things that Paul wanted Timothy to pursue.

Pursue Righteousness

The Greek word for righteousness (*dikaiosyne*) suggests, “the quality of rightness or justice.” Before there can be true righteousness, there must be a standard to determine right. The Bible teaches all the way through that only God can determine what is right and wrong. When man sets his own standard of right, he becomes wrong! This was one of the problems with Paul’s Jewish brethren in the flesh. They were lost because, “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3). Therefore, only those that follow the word of God can be considered righteous. When man is left to himself, he will not be righteous, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

To pursue righteousness, one must study and follow the word of God. This same young man, Timothy, was commanded by Paul to: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). One is not commanded to please self, but to be approved of God. This is the kind of righteousness that Paul wanted Timothy to pursue.

Are we pursuing righteousness today? Do we spend time with the word of God in private study? Do we attend every Bible class possible so that we can lean of God’s righteousness and truth? When the truth is found, do we apply it to our lives? Be assured that the Bible points us to God and His way of righteousness.

“The Bible is a book of faith, and a book of doctrine, and a book of morals, and a book of religion, of special revelation from God, but it is also a book which teaches man his own individual responsibility, his own dignity, and his equality with his fellow man” (Daniel Webster).

There is another sense in which Paul must have wanted Timothy to pursue righteousness. After Timothy had sought diligently to know and follow the word, he would still fall

short by his own strength. Before he could be righteous to the point of not being condemned of God, he would have to seek the forgiving power of the gospel. In writing to the Romans, Paul declared the gospel (death, burial and resurrection of Christ) to be the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Then he immediately declared: “For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith” (v. 17). Not only is God righteous, but the sacrifice of Jesus makes it possible for both Jews and Greeks to be righteous. How is this accomplished? Through obedience (Romans 6:17) and faith, there is forgiveness. Where there is forgiveness from God, there is justification and the sinner becomes righteous.

How do we pursue righteousness today? By obeying the commands of God that lead us to be saved (Mark 16:16), and by following His word that also shows us how to live to be continually forgiven (1 John 1:7). This is the righteousness that Paul wanted Timothy to pursue. “He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor” (Proverbs 21:21).

Pursue Godliness

The Greek word for godliness appears fifteen times in the New Testament and fourteen times it is translated godliness, and one time holiness. It means living in such a way that God and His will are reflected in one’s life. To be like God, one must strive daily to follow His word and, to be holy in life. The world is classified as being ungodly, but the Christian must be different. Paul wanted Timothy to flee the ungodly practices of the world and to pursue being like God. Paul also wrote: “But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself rather to godliness. For boldly exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:7,8). There are many things that Christians can do that are not wrong, but they are of little value compared to godliness. Why? Because the earthly things of life (such as bodily exercise) are temporary, but godliness affects our lives now and forever!

There is a man buried in Westminster Abbey with these words on his monument: “He feared man so little, because he feared God so much.” This should be true of all those that live godly lives.

Many Bible students have wondered how Paul could spend his life in continual trials, persecutions and perils (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). As he faithfully followed Jesus, he had great contentment, and expressed his secret to Timothy: “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). The closer one is to God, the better he can face and deal with the many difficulties of life. This is why Peter included godliness in his list of graces for all Christians to follow (2 Peter 1:6).

Godliness does not come without effort, because one must pursue it. The flesh tries daily to pull us away from God, and if we don't rise up and fight, the flesh will win. However, when one pursues godliness through the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be victory. Paul wrote of the forceful battle that is waged between flesh and spirit to the Roman Christians (*Romans 7:15-23*). Who will deliver Paul from his wretched state? His answer: *"I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! . . . There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"* (*Romans 7:25; 8:1*).

Some day, either in our lifetime or after we are dead, the Lord will appear. Is this a frightening thought? Yes, and especially if we are unprepared to meet Him. How do we prepare? By seeking God first in our lives rather than investing all in things of the earth! After Peter had announced that all these earthly things would disappear he admonished: *"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. . ."* (*2 Peter 3:11,12*). Like Timothy, shouldn't we pursue godliness?

Pursue Faith

Another thing that Paul wanted Timothy to pursue was faith. As we can see, like the first two principles we have studied, this one is also important. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him"* (*Hebrews 11:6a*). The Lord has provided all that is necessary for each Christian to increase his or her faith, but all must pursue it. *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (*Romans 10:17*). Do we want a stronger faith? If yes, then we must study faithfully and diligently the word of God. Millions have wished for a stronger faith, but only those that have pursued faith by studying the word have received it.

There are those that have difficulty defining faith. Perhaps this will help: "Three boys gave their definition of faith. One said, 'Faith is taking hold of God.' A second said, 'Faith is holding on to God.' A third said, 'Faith is not letting go!' Each boys was right." (Bryant).

Let us look at the three answers given. First of all, faith is taking hold of God. How is this done! Some would say by simply believing there is a God, but this is not enough. Even the demons believe and tremble (*James 2:19*), but they are far from taking hold of God. One takes hold of God when his faith is strong enough to submit to His will. Jesus taught: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven"* (*Matthew 7:21*). Therefore, it must be a faith that works through love (*Galatians 5:6*). It must be a faith that leads the sinner to *"gladly receive his word"* (*Acts 2:41*), as the three thousand sinners did when the Lord's church began. James teaches us that *"Faith without works is dead"* (*James 2:20*).

Then, faith is also holding on to God, and not letting go! It is not enough for one to be born into God's family (*John 3:5*), but one must live faithfully as a child of God. Many have started out strongly in faith, but later allowed their faith to be lost. Paul referred to those that had made shipwreck of their faith (*1 Timothy 1:19*), and this implies that they stopped holding on to God! They let go when the going got rough! Could this be why Paul wanted Timothy to pursue faith? What could be more disastrous than for one to live his life faithfully to God for a time, and then later leave Him? This evidently happened to Demas, one of Paul's workers: *"For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world"* (*2 Timothy 4:10*). The only way that a saved person can stay

saved is to hold on to God until death (*Revelation 2:10*). There is never a time to let go.

Pursue Love

Paul used the Greek word *agape* which is the strongest word ever known for love. It is so forceful and powerful that Paul does not attempt to define it in his beautiful love chapter (*1 Corinthians 13*). Instead, he tells all the unexpected things that love will do. After pondering these many unselfish efforts that come from love, it is obvious that this kind of love is extremely concerned for the ones loved. When Jesus told Nicodemus of God's gift of salvation to the world, He said: *"God so loved (agape) the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (*John 3:16*). This kind of love reaches its ultimate force when John declares: *"He who does not love (agape) does not know God, for God is love (agape)"* (*1 John 4:8*).

Only those that are in Christ and following Him will have this love. The person of the world puts himself first, and all others can "get lost!" Jesus' love led Him to live a life for others and to die a death of sacrifice. *"Greater love (agape) has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"* (*John 15:13*). If Timothy would only pursue love, this would be the spiritual spark plug of his life. This kind of love cannot be hidden, but affects every aspect of one's life.

"Henry Drummond tells of a young girl whose perfect grace of character was the wonder of those who knew her. She wore on her neck a gold locket which no one was ever allowed to open. One day, in a moment of unusual confidence, one of her companions was permitted to touch the spring and learn its secret. She saw written these words, 'Whom not having seen I love.' That was the secret of her beautiful life!" (Hallock).

There is a statement made by Paul to the Philippian Christians that we hear often as the secret of Paul's strength: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (*Philippians 1:21*). Have you ever wondered what Paul had in mind when making this statement? Could it have been Christ's all encompassing love that motivated Paul to press on even in the shadow of daily death? With this kind of love as his example, he could say: *"I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me"* (*Philippians 4:13*). This was the kind of love that Paul wanted his beloved Timothy to pursue! Paul loved the Lord, and he wanted Timothy and all others to do the same. He closed his epistle to the church at Ephesus with these words: *"Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen"* (*Ephesians 6:24*).

Pursue Gentleness

Paul now turns to another characteristic he wishes Timothy to pursue - gentleness. This word is associated with meekness, and is included in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:23*). The world has never learned the definition of this word. They consider a gentle or meek person as one that is weak. This is not true! Paul is not commanding Timothy to be weak, but rather strong. Thus, a meek and gentle person is one that has power that is under control! When Jesus invited those who labor and are heavy laden to receive rest, He said: *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (*Matthew 11:29*). If you could combine all the strength and power of the whole human race into one great giant, he would be a weakling compared to Jesus, and yet

Jesus was meek and gentle. The power was there, but it was under control!

Jesus further taught His disciples: *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). Gentleness is a characteristic that must be present in all Christians to be pleasing to God. When Paul asked the Ephesian Christians to walk worthy of their calling, he explained: *"With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering bearing with one another in love"* (Ephesians 4:2). The apostle Peter instructed how Christian wives were to adorn themselves with an inward beauty: *"Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God"* (1 Peter 3:4).

Pursue Patience

There are two Greek words used in the New Testament for patience. One is hupomone' which means to endure under trials. Christians that have this kind of patience are free from cowardice or despondency. The other Greek word is makrothumi'a and is often translated longsuffering. This word refers to one's attitude toward people, and this is the word used in the list of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

However, the patience that Paul calls upon Timothy to pursue is hupomone' - to endure under trials! Those that give their all to live for Christ will be attacked by the world. One cannot expect to go across the grain of those in sin without a reaction, but this must not stop one from enduring. The Hebrew writer calls upon his readers who were Christians to *"run with endurance (patience) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross"* (Hebrews 12:1,2). The same Greek word is used here as in the text.

Paul knew that the many evils of the world would try to discourage Timothy, but if he would pursue patience, he would win. Perhaps one of the greatest dangers we face today as Christians is giving up - backing off when all is not well. We may wish that the pathway to life will always be smooth, and that enemies will never come our way, but this is far from the reality of life. The closer we live to the Lord, the more patience to endure we need. "The ripest fruit is most often pecked by the birds." Someone must have been thinking about endurance when writing these words:

"Lord, help me to be for Thee,
Just like a big, strong cedar tree;
When all the other trees are bare,
The cedar stands so green and fair,
The wind and storm, the ice and cold
Make it more beauty to behold,
So I would stand in trial and test,
Just trusting You to do what's best,
Though others fail, Lord, keep Thou me!
May I a cedar Christian be!" -Selected

Conclusion:

Can you imagine what a change would be in our lives if as Christians we would pursue these six things? Remember, it is not enough just to flee the evil, but we must pursue the good. If you have become unfaithful as one of God's children, if you have not pursued these spiritual traits, don't you feel that it is important for you to repent of your sins, confess them, and pray?

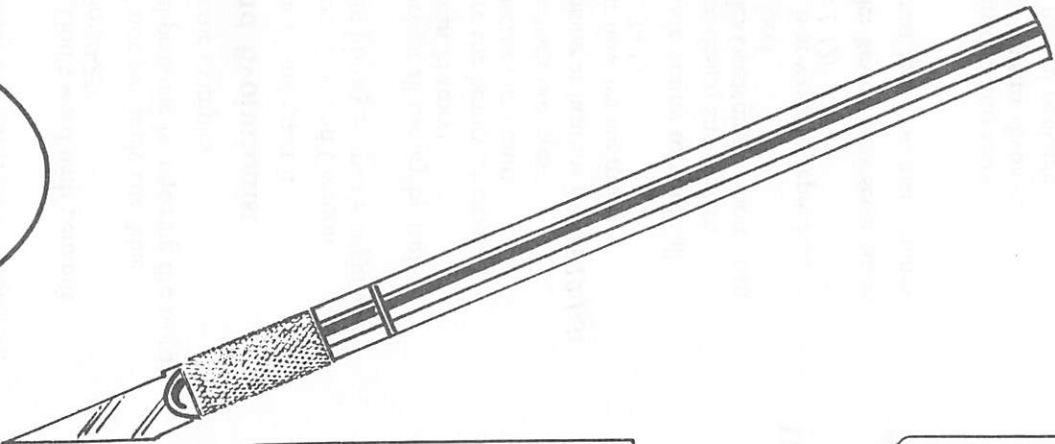
Perhaps you have never entered the Christian race to seek eternal life? Isn't there a desire in your heart to believe that

Jesus is the Christ, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Him, and put Him on in baptism? The best time to obey God and His will is now!

Penknife Religion

Jeremiah 36:23

23 And it came to pass, *that* when Je-hu-di had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth.



Infidel
Genesis

GENESIS 1:1
HISTORY
BEAUTY
DESIGN

Sectarian
John

ONE CHURCH
ONE HEAD
LORD'S SUPPER
SINGING BAPTISM

Church
Hebrews

FAITHFULNESS
TO GO
GODLY LIVING

Penknife Religion

Jeremiah 36:20-23

Introduction:

- A. Picture on chart is called a penknife
 - 1. Can be used to cut out newspaper clippings
 - 2. Can be used for good or evil
 - 3. Example: Lady cut out (*Mark 16:16*) from Bible
- B. In text, king cut God's word with penknife
 - 1. (*Jeremiah 36:20-23*)
- C. Most people will not physically cut Bible
 - 1. Use mental penknife by rejecting the word
- D. Please consider some examples:

I. The Infidel And Evolutionist

- A. They read (*Genesis 1*) and reject it
- B. Not easy to cut out God and Creation
 - 1. Must ignore history — man's origin and purpose
 - a. Must accept all history by faith (American History)
 - 2. Must ignore the beauty of creation
 - a. Bible declares its beauty
 - b. Can see with our eyes
 - c. Try looking at heavens (*Psalms 19:1-3*)
 - d. Look at how we are made (*Psalms 139:14*)
 - e. God made beauty to satisfy all
 - 3. Must ignore design and pattern
 - a. Example: Gardening is more than raising food
 - b. Nature is at work to reproduce (*Genesis 1:12*)
 - c. Example: Review how seeds travel
- C. The unbeliever must ignore so many things

II. The Sectarian

- A. Religious world divided into sects
 - 1. How do they justify division?
 - 2. By using a mental penknife
 - 3. Consider some passages that are cut out
- B. Cut out teaching on "one church"
 - 1. (*Ephesians 1:22,23*) — Church is His body
 - 2. One body (*Ephesians 4:4*)
 - 3. They leave in "one hope," but if cut out

"one body," can cut out "one hope"

- 4. How can Christ have many bodies?
- C. Cut away Christ as the only head
 - 1. Must reject Paul's teaching (*Colossians 1:18*)
 - 2. Also: (*Ephesians 5:23*)
 - 3. Millions follow an earthly head
 - 4. Others ignore Jesus by adding and subtracting from His word
- D. Cut away New Testament teaching on Lord's Supper
 - 1. Broke bread steadfastly (*Acts 2:42*)
 - 2. Churches today partake — holidays, quarterly, etc.
 - 3. Early church example (*Acts 20:7*)
 - 4. Come together without remembering Lord's death (*1 Corinthians 11:26*)
- E. Cut away command to Sing in heart
 - 1. Add instruments
 - 2. New Testament command (*Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16*)
 - 3. New Testament instrument — human heart
- F. Cut away teaching on baptism
 - 1. Baptism essential to reach blood (*Mark 16:16*)
 - 2. Baptism essential for new birth (*John 3:5*)
 - 3. Baptism saves (*1 Peter 3:21*)
 - 4. Baptism washes away sins (*Acts 22:16*)
 - 5. Baptism remits sins (*Acts 2:38*)

III. Members Of Christ's Church

- A. Can use penknife even in Christ's church
 - 1. By ignoring teaching, deciding what is important
 - 2. Some ignore teaching on faithfulness
 - 3. Know verses, but ignore them
- B. Some ignore passages to work, and attend
 - 1. Don't want to sacrifice
 - 2. Refuse to be faithful in all areas (*Revelation 2:10*)
- C. The Jerusalem church was steadfast
 - 1. (*Acts 2:42*)
 - 2. Paul taught steadfastness (*1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9*)

3. Christians are not to forsake
(*Hebrews 10:25*)
 4. Using penknife makes one weak
- D. Some ignore passages to “GO” preach
1. The word teaches to go (*Mark 16:15*)
 2. We build buildings and say “COME”
 3. Only a few, compared to world, come
 4. A proven rule: “When we go, they come”
 5. Local work is important, but must also “GO”
 6. (*Acts 1:8*)
- E. Some ignore passages on godly living
1. Allow world to lead us
 2. TV; teaching daily practices of the world
 3. How we cut out (*Titus 2:11,12*)
 4. Must live in world, but not by world’s ways
 5. Example: right for ship to be in water, but not water in ship
 6. (*James 4:4; 1 John 2:15*)

Conclusion:

- A. Have looked at three classes that use penknife
- B. Have you used mental penknife?
- C. Have you refused to obey Gospel
 1. Have you cut out commands to obey?
- D. Why not as a penitent believer confess your faith and be baptized?
- E. If unfaithful, return now!

Penknife Religion

Jeremiah 36:20-23

Introduction:

The picture that you see on the chart is commonly called a penknife. It is used by artists, handicraft workers, and by many others as an effective tool. Some use the penknife to cut out articles in magazines and newspapers. Please keep in mind that this can be either a useful or harmful tool. It can be used to destroy if placed in the wrong hands.

One time a minister was studying with a lady God's way of salvation. He reviewed the various passages on faith, repentance and confessing Christ to be the Son of God. Finally he turned to *Mark 16:16* and read: "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" Pointing his finger, he said to her: "Lady, this is in your Bible too!" She quickly replied, "No it isn't! I cut it out and threw it away."

Hundreds of years before this incident, there was an Old Testament king that used his penknife on the word of God. There was a man that discovered a lost portion of the word of God, and decided to share it with others. After they heard it read, it was decided to take it to the king. "*And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king. And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth*" (*Jeremiah 36:21-23*).

Not too many today will go so far as to use a physical penknife on God's word, but they are bold in using their mental penknife. When they deny certain passages and refuse to teach and obey them, they have used their mental penknives. It shall be our purpose in this message to look at some examples of those that use their mental penknives on the word of God.

The Infidel And Evolutionist

Will you notice first of all that the infidel and evolutionist cut away at the word of God. They turn to Genesis one and read: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (*Genesis 1:1*). Then day by day they read how God spoke everything into existence and after each day was able to say that it was good. After the complete story of creation is read, the infidel and evolutionist say that they don't believe a word of it. With mental penknives, they cut it from the Bible.

However, they do not recognize the fact that it is not easy to cut God and creation out of the Bible, because before this can be done, many things have to be ignored. First of all, history must be ignored, because Genesis is a history of beginnings. It answers the all-important questions, "Where did we

come from?" and "Why are we here?" So much of the history that we learned in school, and want our children to learn, must be accepted by faith. We learn of the founding of this great nation and its first presidents, but we have never seen them. We learn about a civil war that happened in our nation, but we did not see the war fought. Yet, we believe and teach our children that this history is true and by faith we should accept it. This is correct, but we should also teach that the history of the Bible is true and needs to be accepted by faith.

Not only must the infidel and evolutionist ignore history, but they must also ignore the beauty of creation. In addition to the Bible declaring the beauty of creation, that same beauty is still in existence and can be seen today. How long has it been since you looked up at the heavens and saw all the stars, the moon, the sun, the clouds, the lightening, and all the beautiful colors? The Psalmist was right when he sang: "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard*" (*Psalm 19:1-3*). The Psalmist further recognized the beauty of God's creation when he said: "*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*" (*Psalm 139:14*).

There is so much beauty in God's creation that there is something for all. Only a powerful God could make so much beauty both on land and in sea to thrill the human race with its many likes and dislikes. The unbelievers must ignore all this beauty when they mentally cut out God and His beautiful creation.

In addition to the history and beauty of creation, the infidel and evolutionist must also ignore design and pattern. Over the years it has been my pleasure to grow a garden. The question is often asked: "Why do you expend all that energy to raise vegetables when you can purchase the same in grocery stores?" My answer, "Beyond the economy, freshness of food, and convenience of a garden is the daily demonstration of God's pattern and design." Every plant is eager to grow, in its own unique way, and mature seeds so that it can reproduce after its own kind (*Genesis 1:12*). These seeds also have their own special way of traveling so that they can grow in other areas. Some have wings and fly through the air, some are good for food so that birds and animals will transport them, some (like beggar lice) grab hold to man and beast for a free ride, and others (when ready) shoot themselves through the air. Did all this design just happen by chance? The unbeliever ignores design and pattern when he cuts God out as creator with his mental penknife!

The Sectarian

The religious world is divided into various sects with differing beliefs. In fact, there are hundreds of churches with their divided doctrines and creeds. How do they justify this division? By using a mental penknife to cut out the passages that teach that there was only one church founded by Christ that practiced only New Testament teaching. Let us observe some of the passages of the Bible that must be cut away in order to practice denominationalism.

Those that practice such must cut out the "one church" teaching of the Bible. Paul wrote: *"And he put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all"* (Ephesians 1:22,23). Here, Christ's church is called His body. In the same book, Paul declared: *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling"* (Ephesians 4:4). Those that cut out the one body - one church, often leave in the one hope! However, if the "one body" can be cut out, why not also cut out the "one hope?" How can there be many differing bodies when the Lord Jesus has only one? How can there be many churches when He promised and built ONLY one? (Matthew 16:18).

Others cut away Christ as the only head of the church. To do this, they must mentally cut out Paul's words: *"And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). Again, *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23). Nowhere in all the Bible does Christ agree to share the headship with anyone, and yet, almost daily we hear of those that are following a man here on earth as the head of the church. Others that will not refer to themselves as a head, function as such by adding and subtracting commandments from Christ's teaching.

Then there are those that cut away with their mental penknife the New Testament teaching on observing the Lord's Supper. The word of God declares that the early Christians: *"Continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). Many churches partake of the Lord's Supper every three months, some on special days only, and others once or twice each year. Is this continuing steadfastly in the breaking of bread? Luke records that: *"On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight"* (Acts 20:7). When a church comes together week after week without "breaking bread," haven't they used their mental penknife to cut away this New Testament example? Paul writes: *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). When a church refuses to partake of the Lord's Supper, and refuses to remember His death, haven't they cut away the word of God?

The majority of religions uses their penknives on the command to sing and make melody in the heart. One can read every passage in the New Testament that relates to music in worship in the Lord's church, and not a single passage even hints that it is permissible to use a mechanical instrument in worship. Paul's command: *"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19), but this is cut out! Again: *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual*

songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). The instrument used in these passages is the human heart, but these verses are mentally cut out and replaced with "singing and playing."

Another area where millions have used their mental penknife on the word of God is on the subject of baptism. The Bible teaches as plainly as language can be written that baptism is an essential command to be obeyed by the sinner to reach the saving blood of Christ, but this command is rejected by the majority. Therefore, they mentally cut it out! Jesus taught: *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). He also included baptism in the essential birth required to enter the kingdom of God, *"Unless one is born of WATER and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). The apostle Peter wrote: *"There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism. . ."* (1 Peter 3:21). Even the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus, was commanded: *"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). When Peter preached the first gospel sermon in the church, he commanded sinners to: *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38). However, as plainly as these scriptures are written, they are mentally cut out, and other doctrines taught. Thus, sectarianism uses the penknife on the word of God.

Members Of Christ's Church

Even among those that are claiming to restore the New Testament church, penknives are being used daily. It becomes so easy to decide what is important to follow as a Christian and what can be ignored. Therefore, many in the church use their mental penknives to cut out all the passages that deal with faithfulness. These know that the verses for faithfulness are there, but disobey them. There is no way that one can consider himself or herself faithful when being involved only occasionally in work and worship. Faithfulness is associated with being present at all classes and services, being steadfast, and being involved in work. Jesus demands faithfulness. To the church at Smyrna He commanded: *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).

When the church began in Jerusalem, it was noted for its steadfastness. Luke wrote of these Christians: *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer"* (Acts 2:42). Just think how this would strengthen the church today if all members would follow this example! One of Paul's strongest admonitions to Christians is found in the words: *"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Also: *"And let us not grow weary while doing good"* (Galatians 6:9). The Hebrew writer: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together"* (Hebrews 10:25). Those in the church that purposely forsake the assembly, refuse to work and grow stronger for the Lord, and grow weary, are cutting these passages out of the Bible with their mental penknives.

Another place where so many have cut away at the word is in the command to go into the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). Instead of going, we have often built large buildings and invited the sinners to come. Unfortunately, since this is not God's way of reaching the lost (as important as it is), only a few have come. God's rule (down through the centuries) is: "When we go, they come!" Have you ever imagined what would have happened in Paul's time if he and others had not gone forth to the world? Would Christianity have spread to the world? We know the answer!

Please know that the local work is very important, but it is to be reinforced by its ability to reach out and teach someone with the gospel. Jesus wanted the gospel preached in Jerusalem, but He also wanted it preached *“in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). The church of the 20th century will never grow and spread the way it should until we stop cutting out the “go into the whole world” passages and begin obeying them.

Notice further that many in the church have used their penknives on the verses of the Bible that teach godly living. The world today is making one of its biggest pitches against the church. In fact, the world is advertising its fleshly ways more vividly than ever before. Television, with all its good points, is also being used to present murder, drunkenness, adultery, fornication, evolution, and all fleshly lusts. Are Christians immuned to this? Can we feed on it 365 days a year and still live godly lives? Evidently we have convinced ourselves that we can. However, these same sins of the world are becoming more and more a problem each year in the church. Is the devil winning in our lives?

Have we used our penknives on the following verses? *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”* (Titus 2:11,12). Can we follow this passage and follow the ways of the world? We often say, “But we have to live in the world!” Yes, but we don’t have to let the world live in us. It is all right for a ship to be in the water, but there is trouble when water gets into the ship. When the world becomes our friend, God becomes our enemy (James 4:4). When we love the world, we lose the love of the Father (1 John 2:15).

Conclusion

In this lesson we have looked at three types of people that use their penknives on the word of God. The majority will never physically cut a word from the Bible, but mentally the word is ignored. If you haven’t obeyed God’s commands to become a penitent believer that confesses Jesus to be God’s Son, and to be baptized for salvation, is it because you have cut these passages from the Bible? If as a Christian you have cut out God’s teaching on faithfulness and godly living, isn’t it past time for you to come back, repent and pray for forgiveness? If God is not in your life today, why not respond now?

A Family For The Lord

INFLUENCE

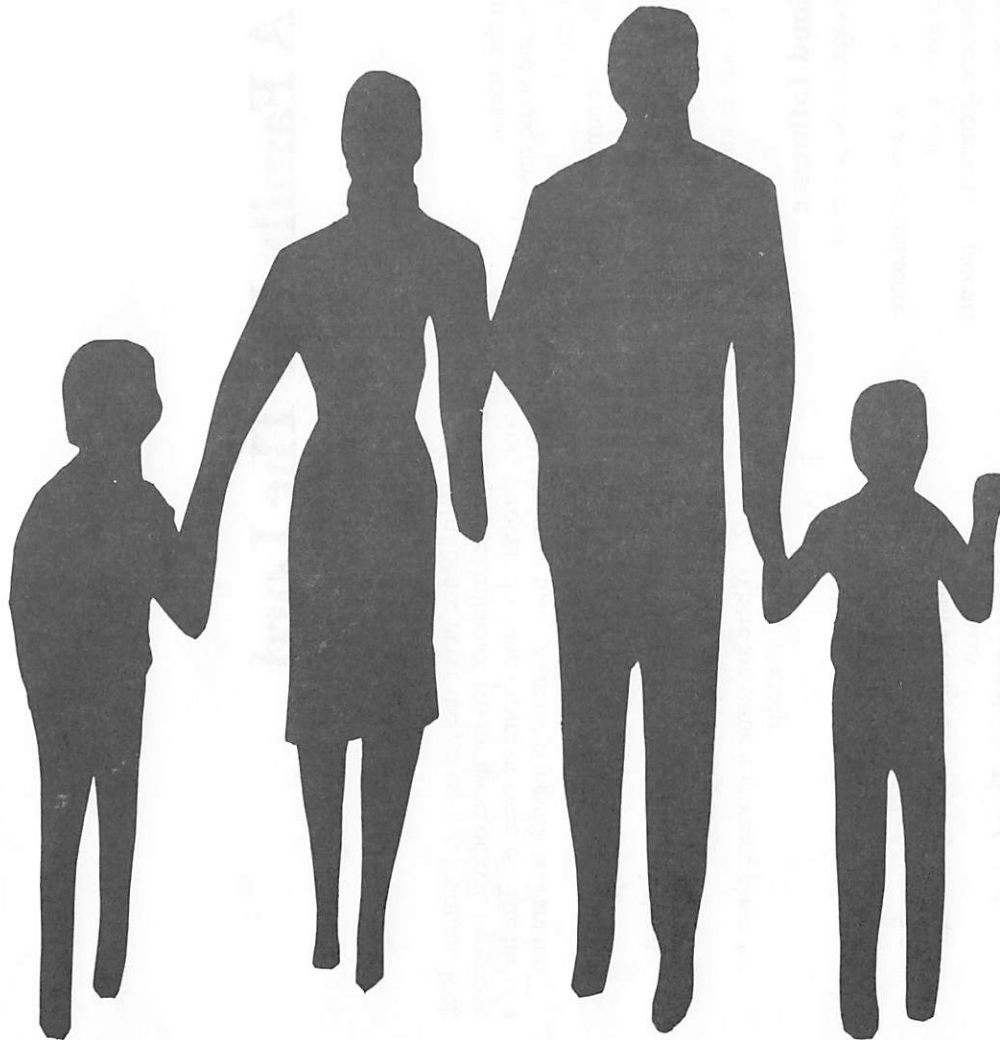
Rom. 14:7

WORSHIP

John 4:24

LOVE

1 Cor. 13



A Family For The Lord

Introduction:

- A. Millions of families in this nation
 - 1. Some are happy and some miserable
- B. What makes the difference?
 - 1. There are families, and families for the Lord
 - 2. Vast difference, family for the Lord follows His way

- C. In this sermon wish to look at some God-given concepts:

I. There Must Be Good Influence

- A. Both parents must recognize the power of influence
 - 1. Can't exist without some kind of influence
 - 2. It will be either good or evil
 - 3. Children will become (generally) as parents
 - 4. We see a few exceptions

B. The thought of influence motivated this poem:
You gave us our children for such a little while/ To enjoy their tender youth and smiles/ Infants, toddlers, children, and teens/ These years were so short it seems/ Until they were full grown!/ Yet, you gave us time to mould/ them strong for life/ To teach them what is wrong and right/ Laughter, problems, hugs, and tears/ Love aglow through the years/ Until they were full grown!/ One by one they went from parental nest/ To build their own treasured homes/ Marriage, laughter, problems to meet/ And then the sound of little feet/ Now that they are full grown!

- C. Most parents can see how they influence their children
 - 1. Example: Son and wood carving
 - 2. Boys want to be like dad, and girls like mom
 - 3. May not want to influence, but we do (*Romans 14:7*)
- D. Example: Batsell Barrett Baxter and little boy
- E. We should ask, "How faithful do I want my children to be?"
 - 1. Our faithfulness will help them (*1 Corinthians 15:58*)
 - 2. Example: Elderly man obeyed gospel, not family

F. "Influence never dies; every act, emotion, look and word makes influence tell for good or evil, happiness or woe, through the long future of eternity. The life of a faithful Christian man (woman) is a guide to Paradise" (Thos. Kempis).

II. There Must be True Worship

- A. A family for the Lord is concerned about worship
 - 1. This is our link with God
 - 2. Where are some important places for family worship?
- B. At home
 - 1. Public worship is important, but worship begins at home
 - 2. Here we show example in worship
 - 3. Must be sincere, they see through hypocrisy
 - 4. Must train them (*Proverbs 22:6*)
 - 5. How many parents are conscientiously rearing children for Lord?
 - 6. How do we compare to Hannah (*1 Samuel 1:28*)?
 - 7. She paid the full price
- C. At public worship
 - 1. After family worship, public worship easier
 - 2. Remind children at home to prepare for worship
 - 3. Parent's attitude toward worship important
 - 4. Stern discipline essential at worship (*John 4:24*)
 - 5. Example: Corrected when talking as a boy
 - 6. Respect for worship is passed down to next generation
 - 7. Failure causes our youth to be lost to the church
 - 8. "What greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship?" (Carlyle).

III. There Must Be True Love

- A. A family for the Lord will have love
 - 1. Love beautiful wrapping that encloses all other virtues in a family (*1 Corinthians 13*)
 - 2. Since God is love (*1 John 4:8*) families must

seek love

3. Example: Each child a new canvas, paint love
4. The more we paint love, the closer we get to God
5. "Love is the purification of the heart from self; it strengthens and ennobles the character, gives a higher motive and a nobler aim to every action of life, and makes both man and woman strong, noble, and courageous; and the power to love truly and devotedly is the noblest gift with which a human being can be endowed" (Miss Jeusbury).

6. We must teach our children to experience love (*1 Corinthians 13*)

7. What will be taught when teaching love?

B. Love will share

1. Shows the awfulness of selfishness
2. Not easy, words "my" and "mine" important to children
3. Love teaches the proper balance
4. Jesus will be our leading example (*John 15:12,13*)

C. Love has good manners

1. A challenge to teach good manners, love will help
2. Love provides the proper environment for all other things
3. Love removes the ugly, and leaves good manners

D. Love is unselfish

1. Selfishness can be a real family problem
2. Children may show less selfishness outside the family
3. May seem we are failing in family, but love is positive
4. Example: Boy and car for brother
5. Sooner or later, love will shine through

Conclusion:

A. Therefore, seek a family for the Lord

B. Seek good influence, true worship, and love

C. "Happy are the families where the government of parents is the reign of affection, and obedience of the children the submission of love."

D. Are you a Christian father, mother or Christian youth?

1. If you haven't obeyed the gospel, now is the time
2. If you have drifted away, now is the time to return!

A Family For The Lord

Introduction:

As we allow our minds to scan across this wonderful nation, we can visualize millions of families. The word family itself has a beautiful sound and brings joy to the heart; however, some of this joy dissipates when we recognize the fact that so many of these families are filled with heartaches, hatred, and tears. Thus, we are reminded that a family can bring the greatest joy or the deepest sorrow. What makes the difference? It is not because the concept of the family breaks down, but it is because millions fail to apply God's concept of the family. It is my belief that there are "families" and then there are "families for the Lord," and there is a vast difference between the two. God, in His word, has laid down principles to help the family and to make it happy, but when these are ignored, homes fail. However, when these God-given principles are followed, the product is a family for the Lord. Please consider prayerfully some of these concepts:

There Must Be Good Influence

Before a family can be labeled a "family for the Lord," both parents must recognize the power of influence, and how that it is at this point that a family either goes right or wrong. A family cannot exist without some type of influence, because influence will be present either for good or evil. Our children will become (to some degree) what they see in us as their parents. As a general rule, bad children come from bad parents and good children come from good parents. Yes, there are exceptions, because all of us have known youth that grew up to be outstanding Christians even though their parents were evil, but again this is the exception and not the rule.

The importance of parental influence was on my mind when I wrote the following poem:

You gave us our children for such a little while
To enjoy their tender youth and smiles
Infants, toddlers, children, and teens
These years were so short it seems
Until they were full grown!

Yet, you gave us time to mould them strong for life
To teach them what is wrong and right
Laughter, problems, hugs, and tears
Love aglow through the years
Until they were full grown!

One by one they went from parental nest
To build their own treasured homes
Marriage, laughter, problems to meet

And then the sound of little feet
Now that they are full grown!

Most parents can see how they influence their children from week to week. Please note this personal example. Since my hobby is woodworking, one day I decided to carve a goose and a duck, and after several hours of work, these were completed and displayed on the fireplace hearth. Do you know what else was displayed there? A miniature duck carved by our son. For you see, boys want to be like dad and girls want to be like mom. This may be frightening, but it is true! You might say, I don't want to influence my children to be like me—I refuse to have an influence on them. This is impossible, because you may choose not to influence them for good, but you will still influence them for evil. Paul was teaching this principle when he wrote: "*For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself*" (Romans 14:7), and this is especially true with our families.

Batsell Barrett Baxter wrote of an example that impressed his life deeply: "I remember several years ago, on a Sunday morning after I had preached a sermon, I came down from the pulpit, as my custom was, and sat on the front row while the Lord's Supper was being served. There was a little boy of pre-school age on that front row, who inched over toward me until he sat very close beside me. Then, he leaned close to my ear and said, 'I wish I was you.' Nobody ever said that before and nobody since. Just a little boy whose name I did not even know. I knew his family. I had seen him a few times, but I did not even know his name. But he had heard me preach about Christ and he had seen me stand in front of the congregation. It was my impact as a preacher, not as an individual, that had impressed him so deeply. His statement left an imprint on me. I cannot afford to disappoint that little boy, just as you cannot afford to disappoint the people who look at you."

Therefore, if you desire to have a family for the Lord, you should ask: "How faithful do I want my children to be to the church? How much interest do I want them to have in Christianity when they grow up?" The answers to these questions will be determined by your influence now! How faithful are you (as parents) to the Lord and His church (1 Corinthians 15:58)?

When working with the church in Alabama, I received a call concerning an eighty year old man that was searching his Bible for the truth. After going by to visit, I found that he had basically learned what to do to be saved. Thus, after a short time of teaching, (accompanied by his daughter) I baptized him into Christ. Only one week later I preached his funeral and we laid his body to rest in a private cemetery

nestled in the foothills of the Monsanto Mountains. Even though this man turned to the Lord in the last shadow of his life, we could never influence his daughter to study or attend worship. Do you know why? What this man did at eighty he should have done when younger to influence his family for the Lord. The rearing of children for the Lord is a full time job for parents, and we need to be seriously involved.

“Influence never dies; every act, emotion, look and word makes influence tell for good or evil, happiness or woe, through the long future of eternity. The life of a faithful Christian man (woman) is a guide to Paradise.” (Thos. Kempis).

There Must Be True Worship

When one studies further the concepts that make a family for the Lord, it is important to consider worship. True worship is our link with God in a world given over to sin, and it is in the home that our children are taught the real importance of worship. Those that leave worship to God out of their lives, cannot have a family for the Lord. Where are some of the places that worship can be a genuine part of a family?

(1) At home

When we think of worship, it is often natural to think about a public assembly or as many express it, “going to church.” This is vitally important, but the true foundation for worship begins in the home. When the Lord blesses our home with little ones, we have a responsibility to keep God always before them. This is done in the first place by our example. A child learns to know God and to worship Him by observing his parents. Those that pretend to know God for the sake of their children will be shocked to learn that their children know the truth about them. Just as true love and adoration for God can’t be hidden, neither can the role of a hypocrite. Believe me, they know where we stand, and there is no middle ground. We either show our children that God is everything or He is nothing.

The father that sends his children to worship with the hope that they will learn to truly love God even though he himself has no interest, is deceived. This is not following Solomon’s advise, “*Train up a child in the way he should go*” (Proverbs 22:6). However, when God is real to the father, He will be real to his children.

It is wondered how many parents are conscientiously rearing their children for the Lord. The Old Testament tells of Hannah that promised God that if He would give her a son she would give him back. God gave her Samuel and during the first years of his life, Hannah was at work for God. The time finally came and as she presented him to Eli, he was fully prepared, and what a great contribution Samuel made to the work of God (1 Samuel 1:28). This faithful mother must have lived God before him daily. The price tag has not been reduced, for if we want our children to be true worshippers today, we must show them by our lives at home the greatness of God.

(2) At Public Worship

Once the foundation for worship has been firmly laid at home, it will be easier to teach them how to honor Him at the assembly. Parents should not wait until the service begins to prepare for worship. As the day of worship gets closer, our children should be reminded of the importance of the occasion. Here again, our attitude at home is carried into the public worship. If our children are made to feel that we don’t

want to go, and if we criticize the church and all related to it before and after worship, they will be difficult to control. If ever there is a time for stern discipline, it should be when there is misbehavior at worship. Our children must know that God demands all to “*worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24).

When I was just a little boy, I had been taught the importance of reverence in worship. It was finally decided that I could sit with the other boys if I would be at my best. During the first part of the service, all went well until the boy next to me took from his pocket a new shiny penny. He began to talk about it, but I resisted. Finally it got so interesting that I decided I could talk if I kept my eyes on my mother. About the time I thought all was going well, she must have had eyes in the back of her head, because she got up, came to me, took me by the arm and marched me hurriedly (before all those eyes) to where she was sitting and seated me firmly by her side. This may not have passed the laws of child psychology, but it sure taught me a lesson about being reverent in worship!

A family for the Lord will be taught the importance of worship, and this will be carried into our children’s lives as they rear their children. We often read about how many of our young people are lost to the church, and it is wondered how many are lost because they are never taught the proper respect for worship.

In the words of Carlyle: “What greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship?” Can’t the same be said about the family? What greater calamity can fall upon a family than the loss of worship?

There Must Be True Love

When looking further into what is involved in rearing a family for the Lord, we must also consider the important concept of love. Love is the beautiful wrapping that encloses all other virtues in a family (1 Corinthians 13). Since God Himself is love (1 John 4:8), how could a family be designated as a family for the Lord without it? When God adds to our families children, one by one, He is issuing with each addition, a challenge to develop and promote love. Try to image that when a child is given to us, that such is like a new canvas on which a picture has never been painted. God hands us the paints and brushes and says, “paint for me a masterpiece of love.” This is our greatest challenge because the more we paint love, the closer we keep them to God. Each stroke of the brush gives them the qualities they need to be successful in life—now and forever.

The power of love in our families cannot be over-estimated. In the words of one writer: “Love is the purification of the heart from self; it strengthens and ennoble the character, gives a higher motive and a nobler aim to every action of life, and makes both man and woman strong, noble, and courageous; and the power to love truly and devotedly is the noblest gift with which a human being can be endowed” (Miss Jeusbury).

When we as parents show love to our children in our own lives, we must also teach and enforce the characteristics of love. Love is not simply a beautiful word to be defined, but rather a way of life to be experienced. Instead of defining love, Paul wrote in (1 Corinthians 13) what love will do. What are some of the things that will be taught to our children when we teach them love?

(1) Love Will Share

Love will teach our children the meaning of sharing and the awfulness of selfishness. This is not easy since most children become very possessive of those things that belong to them. The words "my" and "mine" are big and important words in their vocabularies. However, love teaches the proper balance between the importance of self and sharing with others. Jesus our Lord is the greatest example to keep before our children as we teach them to share with others: *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"* (John 15:12,13).

(2) Love Has Good Manners

One of the challenges faced by parents is to teach their children good manners, and the many positive characteristics of love will promote this. Love provides the proper environment for all other great attributes of life to grow and bear fruit. If your children are taught not to envy, not to boast or be full of pride, and not to be rude, not self-seeking, and not easily angered, don't you believe that they will have good manners? Remember, these traits and others are present when love abounds.

(3) Love Is Unselfish

Selfishness can be a great problem in the family unless love is present to turn things around. For some strange reason, children will often show less selfishness outside the family, than in it, and this is where love must be taught. As we teach our children love, there will be times when we feel that love has failed, but it hasn't! You see, love is a positive virtue and it stays alive and strong even when buried among childish ways. Think about the following illustration:

A man once parked his car on a street. Up came a boy and looked it over. His eyes were wide with admiration of the beautiful car.

"Where did you get this car?" he asked. "My brother gave it to me," replied the man. "My, I wish. . ." The man knew the boy was wishing that he had a new car like that.

But the lad went on and finished the sentence surprisingly: "I wish I could be a brother like your brother was. I have a crippled brother who cannot get out. I would buy him a car like this" —The Teacher

Remember, sooner or later love (when taught as God would have it taught) will shine through, because love is unselfish.

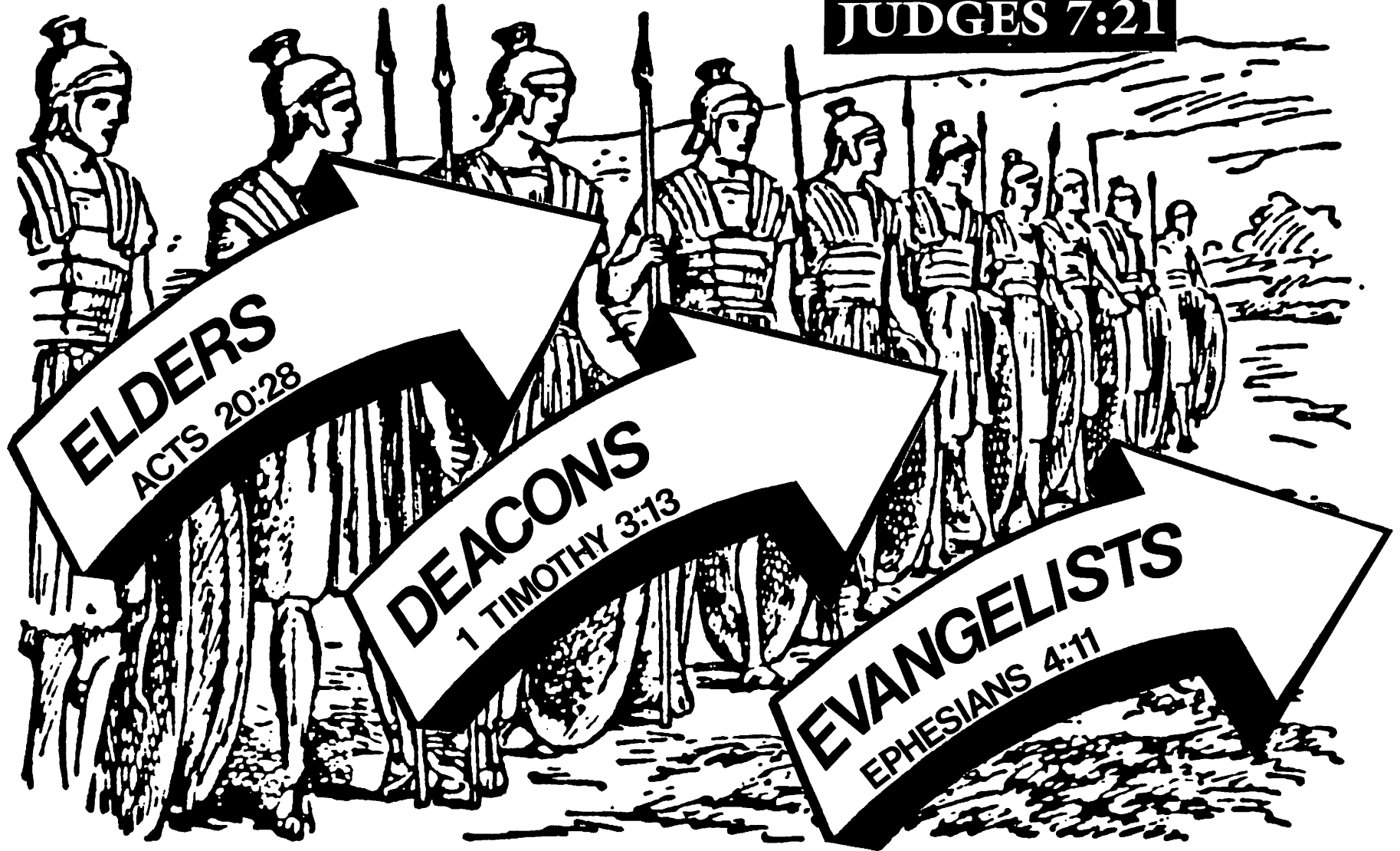
Conclusion:

Therefore, if you seek a family for the Lord, you must make your home an environment of love, and this will become a solid foundation for all the principles in this sermon to be built. "Happy are the families where the government of parents is the reign of affection, and obedience of the children the submission of love."

Would you seek to have a family for the Lord? Are you a Christian father, mother, or youth? If you are not a child of God, would you be born again through obedience to the gospel? If you have drifted away from the Lord, now is the time to return. Remember: "A happy family is but an earlier heaven" (Bowring).

Every Man Stood In His Place

JUDGES 7:21



Every Man Stood In His Place

Introduction:

- A. God has given leadership a prominent place in all generations
 - 1. Families, military, kings, elders, deacons, evangelists
 - 2. Leadership is still important today
- B. In *Judges 7*, there is leadership in action
 - 1. Time of the judges that delivered oppressed Israel
 - 2. One of the times, God raised up Gideon
 - 3. Enemy so great:
"lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number" (v. 12)
- C. Gideon's army of 32,000 reduced to 300
 - 1. Divided 300 into three groups of 100
 - 2. Armed them with trumpets, empty pitchers and torches
- D. With God's help and Gideon's leadership won the battle
 - 1. *"And every man stood in his place"* (v. 21).
- E. Need leadership in church today to win
 - 1. Will look at those in church that need to stand:

I. The Elders

- A. God's plans from the beginning to have elders
 - 1. Called also bishops, pastors, overseers
 - 2. Millions have ignored this plan, still important
 - 3. Many churches have become weak, stunted, dead, divided because elders did not stand
- B. Paul spells out elder's place (*Acts 20:28*)
 - 1. *Take heed to yourself*
 - a. Before they can help others, must be right
 - b. Must meet specific qualifications (*1 Timothy 3, Titus 1*)
 - 2. *Take heed to all the flock*
 - a. Didn't say "some or most of the flock" but ALL
 - b. Weak, strong, loveable and unloveable, good, and bad
 - c. Should not neglect a single sheep

- 3. *Oversee by the Holy Spirit*
 - a. Holy Spirit has given complete instructions to elders
 - b. The principles can solve all problems
 - c. (*2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17*)
- 4. *Be overseers*
 - a. Called bishops (*Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1,2; Titus 1:7*)
 - b. Big difference between "overseeing" and "overlooking"
 - c. If overlook sins, weaknesses, etc. not standing in their place
- 5. *Shepherd the church*
 - a. Feed and care for spiritual sheep
 - b. Only one feed - Word of God
 - c. Pure Word is not too rich (devil talking)
 - d. Caused many shepherds to dilute Word
 - e. Some sermons filled with everything else rather than the Word (Example: text only scriptures)
 - f. Elders should not allow this, promotes starvation
- C. Elder's place is important - involves eternal things
 - 1. Must be obeyed (*Hebrews 13:17*)
 - 2. Elders are responsible to feed flock
 - 3. God has given elders a place of honor when they stand in their place!

II. The Deacons

- A. Another that must stand in their place - deacons
 - 1. Deacon (diakonos) means servant
 - 2. They are not the same as elders
 - 3. Some of qualifications are same (*1 Timothy 3:8-10*)
- B. Notice, they are to serve, not rule
 - 1. When deacons assume role of elders, out of place
 - 2. Some religions ignore elders and choose deacons only
 - 3. Not according to Word, New Testament church had both
 - 4. (*Philippians 1:1*)

- C. Mistaken idea, elders over spiritual, deacons over physical
 - 1. Not so, elders over both - deacons serve in both
 - 2. Deacon's work is very important when in place
- D. (*Acts 6:1-7*) example of servants (although not called deacons)
 - 1. These men appointed to serve tables (*Acts 6:3*)
 - 2. This allowed apostles and elders to give time to prayer and preaching
 - 3. This caused the Word to spread (*Acts 6:7*)
 - 4. Therefore, deacons important without infringing on elders
 - 5. When deacons in their place, helps elders to do same
 - 6. Serve well, good standing (*1 Timothy 3:13*)

III. Evangelists

- A. "He gave some to be evangelists" (*Ephesians 4:11*)
 - 1. Those that must preach the Word (*2 Timothy 4:2*)
 - 2. Important assignment
- B. Many called evangelists preach a mixture (*Matthew 13:25*)
 - 1. False prophets, blind leaders (*Matthew 15:14*)
 - 2. Evangelist can lead either ARIGHT OR ASTRAY
- C. Some feel that Bible is too strong, must be edited, softened
 - 1. Refuse to preach one body, Spirit, Lord, faith and baptism (*Ephesians 4:4,5*)
 - 2. Think will drive people away (Such is from devil)
 - 3. What drives people away; dogmatic opinions, hobbies, soft soaping, and compromise! (Not the Word)
 - 4. True evangelist gives truth (*John 8:32*)
 - 5. Example: Teaching truth at Senior Citizen class
 - 6. Preacher does many other good works, preaching his work
- D. Notice some ways preachers step out of their place
 - 1. *By being the pastor*
 - a. Elders, not ministers are pastors (*Acts 20:28*)
 - b. Even if preacher serves as one of the pastors, he is still not the pastor!
 - c. Many flocks have been harmed when preacher steps aside from his place to become "the pastor"
 - 2. *By compromising truth*
 - a. Wrong to seek unity by compromising truth
 - b. Jesus wanted unity (*John 17*)
 - c. Not willing for any to perish

(*2 Peter 3:9*)

- d. Must be on God's terms - not on error
- 3. *By hobby riding*
 - a. This has kept preachers from their place
 - b. Must mention issues that divide, and brethren that are teaching error (*2 Timothy 4:10; Galatians 2:11*)
 - c. If takes priority over the Word -wrong!
 - d. ONLY antidote against false issues - God's Word
 - e. The Word must be first and foremost in preaching

Conclusion:

- A. When elders, deacons and evangelists stand in their place
 - 1. There will be success for the Lord's church
- B. Like the 300 men of Gideon, there will be victory
- C. Are you on the Lord's side? Have you obeyed the gospel?
 - 1. Faith, repentance, confessing Christ to be God's son, and baptism puts one into Christ
 - 2. Have you done this - have you lived faithfully?

Every Man Stood In His Place

Introduction:

As one studies God and His actions down through the centuries, it becomes obvious that He has given leadership a prominent place in all generations. Whether we consider a patriarch over a family, a national leader like Moses, special judges, kings, elders, deacons, and evangelists, they have all been very important to His guidance of mankind, and be assured that leadership today is still of great importance.

In *Judges 7*, we have an example of leadership in action. This is the period of Old Testament history when God used judges to free Israel of oppressors. At this time, they had done evil and God delivered them into the hands of Midian for seven years. After heavy persecution, the Israelites cried out to God, and He decided to deliver them under the leadership of Gideon. The enemy was of such a great number that they are described as: "*lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number*" (v. 12). Gideon had 32,000 men which seemed so small against such an army, but God had him to reduce his soldiers to only 300. Gideon divided these into three groups, stationed them in strategic places, armed them with trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches, and they awaited his orders. Thus, with God's help, Joshua's leadership, and the fellowship of his 300 men, the battle was won. God chose a man that could lead others to success for we read: "*And every man stood in his place*" (v. 21).

One of the greatest needs in the church today is to have leaders and followers to stand in their place. God has assigned all a place, and to refuse to stand weakens the attack against the devil. Please consider prayerfully in this sermon those in the church that need to stand.

The Elders

From the earliest existence of the church down to the present time, it has been God's plan to have elders (also called bishops and pastors) to oversee and lead the church. Just because millions have ignored this plan does not lessen its importance. The past has witnessed thousands of congregations that have become either weak, stunted, dead, or divided because elders did not stand in their God-given place. In *Acts 20:28*, Paul spells out the eldership's place: "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.*" Note that there are five things representing the place of the elders:

(1) Take heed to yourself

Before elders can shepherd a flock, they must have

themselves right. When the qualifications of *1 Timothy 3*, and *Titus 1* are met, these men will be ready to properly care for the needs of the flock.

(2) Take heed to all the flock

Paul didn't say "some of the flock," or "most of the flock," but to "ALL THE FLOCK!" This means to shepherd the weak and strong, the loveable and unlovable, the good and the bad. Not a single sheep needs to be neglected.

(3) Oversee by the Holy Spirit

Today, the Holy Spirit has given complete instructions in the Word to guide a flock. There will never be a problem that arises among the sheep but what the principle to solve it can be found! In the words of Peter: "*His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3). The Word of God is capable of making the man of God: "*complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

(4) Be overseers

These men are called bishops (*Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1,2; Titus 1:7*). There is a vast difference between "overseeing" and "overlooking." When an eldership overlooks the sins, weaknesses, unfaithfulness, and special needs, they are not standing in their place.

(5) Shepherd the church

This means to feed and care for the spiritual sheep. Remember, there is only one feed that is acceptable with God—THE WORD OF GOD! Some have felt that the pure Word is too rich and will founder, but this is "devil talk," and not of God! Such a deceptive attitude has caused many shepherds to dilute the Word with the thinking of the world. Have you not heard sermons filled with everything else except the Word? It was said of one man, "if he reads a text, you better rejoice, because this is all the Bible you will hear in the sermon!" When an eldership allows weeks and months to go by with very little Word being taught, they are starving the flock, and out of their place.

The place that God has given elders is an important one because their work involves eternal things. The Hebrew writer places a great responsibility on their shoulders in these words: "*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account*" (*Hebrews 13:17*). Did you get the full impact of this statement? Elders are overseeing souls in view of eternity! Remember, every sheep in your congregation that dies from spiritual malnutrition, becomes weak, and entangled in the world, dies lost

eternally from your flock. However, those that you properly feed and keep, will spend eternity with God!

What a place and honor God has given those that serve as elders and bishops of God's flock. Stand in your place, and you will receive blessings from God both now and forever!

The Deacons

Another group of leaders that must stand in their place are the deacons. The word deacon is translated from the Greek word diakonos, and simply means a servant. They are NOT the same as the elders—they are NOT given the same responsibility. Even though some of their qualifications are the same, Paul gives two listings. After completing the list for the elders, he writes: *“Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless”* (1 Timothy 3:8-10). Notice, they are to SERVE not RULE! When deacons assume the role of the elders in any way, they have gotten out of their place. Some religions of today have ignored the eldership completely and have chosen in its place a deaconship, but this is NOT according to God's word! Christ's church in the first century had BOTH bishops and deacons. Paul began his letter to the church at Philippi: *“to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the BISHOPS AND DEACONS”* (Philippians 1:1). Thus, like all other members of the congregation, the deacons are to carry out their God-given place under the oversight of the elders.

There has been a mistaken idea in the thinking of many down through the years that the elders are over the spiritual matters, and the deacons are over the physical. Not so! The elders are OVER BOTH, and the deacons serve in both capacities UNDER the oversight of the elders. The work of deacons is a beautiful thing when they stand in their place, and be assured that the body will prosper and grow from their service.

In Acts 6:1-7, we have an example of the work of deacons or servants. They are not (at this point) called deacons, but who would deny that they rendered an important service that illustrates the importance of deacons. A problem arose in the church at Jerusalem when the Grecians felt that their widows were being neglected by the Hebrews. This was evidently a legitimate complaint because the twelve took action to solve the problem. They called upon the brethren to choose: *“seven men to good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business”* (Acts 6:3), and they appointed them to serve. This allowed the twelve to give themselves completely to prayer and preaching. What affect did this have on the church? *“And the word of God spread; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7).

The place of deacons is an important one, and they don't need to infringe on the place of elders to be important. In fact, when the deacons are in their place, the bishops (elders) can more successfully carry out their oversight. Paul wrote: *“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 3:13). Be assured that GREAT battles are won for the Lord against Satan when elders and deacons stand in their place.

Evangelists

Among the many types of leaders that God chose, *“He gave some to be evangelists”* (Ephesians 4:11), and has given them a

very important place—to preach the word. To the young preacher, Timothy, Paul wrote: *“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2). This is our God-given assignment, and if the word is not preached, we are out of our place, and will fail!

When one makes a quick survey of the religious world, it is heartbreaking to see those that are NOT preaching the pure Word. They evidently feel that something else is needed, and thus they sow an impure mixture of seeds (Matthew 13:25). They are false prophets, blind leaders, and must answer to God (Matthew 15:14). The man in the pulpit has an awesome responsibility, for he can either lead ARIGHT or ASTRAY. However, he will lead aright and have nothing to fear if he will preach only the Word.

There are those today, (even in the Lord's church) that feel that the Bible is too strong, and must be edited (by the preacher) for the listening audience. They seem to feel that plain teaching on the “one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4,5) will drive people away! This kind of thinking is from the devil. The things that drive people away are: dogmatic opinions, hobbies, soft soaping, and compromise—it's not the Word! The religious world is full of these, and when people come to us, our PLACE is to give them the truth (John 8:32).

It is my privilege each week to teach a Bible class at the Senior Citizen Building which is made up of students from many religions. Each week the word of God is taught without reservations, and to my knowledge, not a single person has been offended. It's hard for an honest person to find fault with God! Recently, these were taught about the church in a universal and local sense. One man said, “this means that there were no denominations in the first century.” I assured him that these came many years later. He came to this conclusion from simply studying the Bible. You can't improve on teaching and preaching the word!

Now, the preacher does many other good works (other than preaching) that help people as well as to show the Bible lived in his own life, but his place as an evangelist is to preach the Word, and everything else must compliment this.

How are some of the ways that preachers step out of their place?

(1) By being the pastor

Some become the pastor as they preach. We have already studied that elders (also called bishops and pastors) and not the preacher, are to oversee the flock (Acts 20:28). Even if an evangelist assumes the responsibility of a preacher and elder, he is still “one of the pastors,” and NOT “the pastor.” Only the Lord in heaven knows how many flocks have been harmed when a preacher steps aside from his place and becomes “the pastor.” What does this really mean? It means that he is attempting to perform as an eldership and evangelist all in one person, and this is not God's way. He removes the elders from their place while stepping out of his.

(2) By compromising truth

A minister steps out of his place when he seeks unity to the point of compromising truth. Jesus wanted unity, and prayed for it (John 17). The Lord is not willing that any perish, but that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). However, He does not want unity at any price for unity must be on God's

terms. Any preacher (regardless of his popularity and past success) that leaves God's Word and fellowships error to unite, has stepped out of his place.

(3) By hobby riding

One of the things that has kept thousands of preachers from standing in their place is hobby riding. Sometimes it may be necessary to mention the issues that divide, and even mention by name brethren that are teaching error. Paul did this occasionally (*2 Timothy 4:10; Galatians 2:11*). However, when this is a part of every sermon, and takes priority over the Word, the speaker is out of his place. Remember, the only antidote against false issues and false teachers is GOD'S WORD in its full strength. Let it be always FIRST and FOREMOST in our preaching.

Conclusion:

It is believed that when these three types of God-assigned leaders (elders, deacons, evangelists) stand in their place, like the three groups (100 each) of Gideon's, there will be a great victory won for the Lord!

Are you on the Lord's side? Have you obeyed the gospel? Remember, faith, repentance, confessing Christ to be the Son of God, and baptism puts one into Christ. Have you done this? Have you lived faithfully?

IS

LIFE WORTH

LIVING?

I

We Help Others-LUKE 10:30-37

We Live To Be Needed-ACTS 9:36

We Are Thankful-EPHESIANS 5:20

We Are A N.T. Christian-2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Is Life Worth Living?

Introduction:

- A. This question has been asked by millions, many say "no"
 - 1. 1,000 commit suicide daily (worldwide)
 - 2. 25,000 Americans kills themselves annually
 - 3. Suicide, in 1970 tenth most common cause of death
- B. Is this because life is not worth living?
 - 1. No, have reached point where they feel it is not
 - 2. Therefore, important to get inner man thinking right (*Proverbs 23:7*)
- C. In this message want to discover the true worth of life

I. If We Help Others

- A. Life is worth living if we help others
 - 1. Happier involved rather than self-centered
 - 2. If live only for self, self will let us down
- B. Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper (*Genesis 4:9*)"
 - 1. Yes, we need to help bear one another's burdens
- C. Jesus illustrated this with the good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30-37*)
 - 1. Review His emphasis
- D. "If I can stop one heart from breaking,/ I shall not live in vain;/ If I can ease one life the aching,/ Or cool one pain,/ Or help one fainting robin/ Unto his nest again,/ I shall not live in vain" (Emily Dickinson).
- E. James defines pure religion (*James 1:27*)
- F. Paul believed in sharing and bearing with one another
 - 1. (*Romans 14:7; Galatians 6:2*)
- G. "I'm going your way, so let us go hand in hand. You help me and I'll help you. We shall not be here very long, for soon death, the kind old nurse, will come back and rock us all to sleep" (William Morris).
- H. Jesus spent His life ministering to others
 - 1. (*1 Timothy 2:5,6*)
- I. Make a point to help someone every day
 - 1. When helping others, helping ourselves
 - 2. Happy when following Jesus (*1 Peter 2:21*)

II. If We Live To Be Needed

- A. Happy when we live in such a way that we are needed
 - 1. Example: Boy in newspaper killed all family: "I felt left out"
 - 2. Without being needed, life is a vacuum
- B. We must work to avoid this instead of blaming others
 - 1. This is where Christianity helps
 - 2. When properly serving the Lord, feel needed
- C. Christianity is a way of life
 - 1. Paul discovered this (*Romans 14:8*)
 - 2. Paul allowed Christ to lead him (*Philippians 4:13; 1:21*)
- D. Many feel left out because they neglect opportunities
 - 1. "Hell begins on the day when God grants us a clear vision of all that we might have achieved, of all the gifts which we have wasted, of all that we might have done which we did not do. . ." (Gian-Carlo Menotti)
- E. When opportunities knock, we better answer
 - 1. Example: Young lady and beautiful autumn leaf
 - 2. Rich man lost opportunities forever (*Luke 16:19-31*)
- F. Christians should utilize every opportunity to do good
 - 1. Like Dorcas (*Acts 9:36-39*)
- G. Too many want success without effort, must meet challenges
 - 1. "The heights by great men reached and kept/ Were not attained by sudden flight,/ But they, while their companions slept,/ Were toiling upward in the night" (Longfellow).
 - 2. "If we want more roses, we must plant more trees."
 - 3. "God provides food for the bird, but He does not throw it into the nest."

III. If We Are Thankful

- A. The only way that God will help us in all areas is to be thankful
- B. Life is too big to tackle alone. . .you plus God

equals the majority!

1. Without God there is fear
 2. No way to measure the damage caused by fear
 3. Fear strips one of God and courage
- C. "He that loses money loses little, he that loses health loses much, but he that loses courage loses all."
1. Need to thank God for His guidance and protection
- D. Such a great blessing to know God and live in America
1. Millions accept blessings without gratitude
 2. Visit other countries, and you will see our blessings
- E. Our greatest gratitude should be for spiritual blessings
1. All spiritual blessings in Christ
(Ephesians 1:3)
 2. Christians should give thanks always
(Ephesians 5:20)
 3. Be thankful to be a new creation
(2 Corinthians 5:17)
- F. Jesus disappointed when He found ingratitude
1. The lepers *(Luke 17:17)*
- G. Our greatest possession - a thankful heart
1. This leads us to serve the Lord faithfully
 2. "A thankful spirit is like sunshine upon the fields" (Holdcraft).

IV. If We Are A New Testament Christian

- A. All success on earth will be a failure, if not a Christian
1. Not enough to be religious, but must please God
 2. *(Matthew 7:21)*
 3. Must seek His word and live by it!
- B. Watered-down religion doesn't make life worth living
1. This type of religion is vain
(Matthew 15:8,9)
- C. It is a great feeling when we know that we are pleasing God
1. Even though way is narrow *(Matthew 7:14)*
 2. Happy destination - Life!
- D. One becomes a New Testament Christian by:
1. Sincere faith *(Hebrews 11:6)*
 2. Repentance *(Acts 2:38)*
 3. Confessing Christ as Son of God
(Romans 10:9,10)
 4. Baptized for remission of sins *(Acts 2:38)*
- E. Happiness then comes from being a new creation in Christ
1. *(2 Corinthians 5:17)*
 2. Then the things discussed in this sermon will be ours

Conclusion:

- A. Yes, if these conditions are met, life is worth living
- B. Solomon tried all physical things, but found life worth living only if right with God
(Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- C. Are you a faithful Christian?
- D. Are you right with God? Why not respond now?

Is Life Worth Living?

Introduction:

This question has been asked by millions through the years, and it is sad that many have answered "no!" In fact, we are told that more than 1,000 persons (world-wide) commit suicide each day, with more than 25,000 Americans killing themselves annually. Suicide was reported as the tenth most common cause of death for all Americans in 1970, and it ranks even higher today. Why? Is it because life is not worth living? No! It is because many have reached the point where they FEEL that life is not worth living. Therefore, it becomes important to get our inner man thinking correctly. Solomon was right when he gave this appraisal of man: "*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he*" (Proverbs 23:7). Thousands give up on life because they never learn to develop the inner man. In this message, it is hoped that all will discover the true worth of life.

If We Help Others

In the first place, life is worth living if we live to help others. We are truly happy when we are involved in helping others. Too often we live only for ourselves. Then, when bad health, bankruptcy, or disappointments come our way, it threatens all that we have - ourselves, and we become unhappy. In the early history of the human race, Cain, one of the sons of Adam, asked God: "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Genesis 4:9). The answer was and still is, "yes"! We need to bear one another's burdens, and we need to be concerned about each other.

Jesus taught the importance of helping others when He told of a man that was traveling: "*from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead*" (Luke 10:30). A priest and a Levite saw him and left him to die. However, a Samaritan had compassion on him, "*and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'*" (vs. 34,35). Jesus praised this man for being a neighbor to him, and commanded a lawyer to "*Go and do likewise*" (v. 37).

Emily Dickinson had a great thought when she penned the lines:

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin

Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Pure religion is defined by James in these words: "*To visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*" (James 1:27). We need each other as we walk together toward eternity. Paul wrote: "*For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself*" (Romans 14:7). He commanded the Galatian churches, "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2).

William Morris wrote: "I'm going your way, so let us go hand in hand. You help me and I'll help you. We shall not be here very long, for soon death, the kind old nurse, will come back and rock us all to sleep." Jesus spent His life and ministry helping others. His coming to earth was not an experience for Himself, but to serve others. He came to give His life in sacrifice so that others might live and enjoy eternal life (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

Let us make a point to help someone each day of our lives, for when we help others, we are helping ourselves. We can never follow in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21) until we share our lives with others.

If We Live To Be Needed

In the second place, please note that life is worth living if we live to be needed. A newspaper article appeared a few years ago reporting of a young boy who killed all his family. When the boy was asked why, his only answer was: "I felt left out!" One of the basic needs of human beings is to belong, to feel needed, and when this is lost, life becomes a vacuum. We must all work to keep this from happening to us. When one feels useless, it is not always the fault of the people around us. Each of us has a responsibility to find where we are needed and where we can be of help in this life. This is where Christianity in its purity is a great asset!

Christianity is a way of life, not just a set of rituals performed occasionally! It is a Christ-centered life. "*For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's*" (Romans 14:8). Paul lived this principle in his life, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13). "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). Many of us reach the point of feeling left out because we have rejected thousands of opportunities to do good. The writer (Gian-Carlo Menotti) put it this way: "Hell begins on the day when God grants us a clear vision of all that we might have achieved, of all the gifts which we have wasted, of all that we might have done which we did not do. . ." When opportunities knock, we had better answer because they may never return again!

One time a young lady was reading a book under a tree during the beautiful season of autumn. There came a puff of wind, and she noticed a big beautiful leaf with multiple autumn colors float to the ground beside her. She thought, "This is the most beautiful leaf I have ever seen, and when I complete this chapter, I'll get it." A few moments later, another strong puff of wind blew it away and even if she could have found it, it would have never been the same. She lost an opportunity forever.

This illustrates how we can lose opportunities of a more serious nature in life. The rich man of (Luke 16:19-31) longed for lost opportunities. When he found there was no hope for himself, he wanted to warn his brothers, but it was too late. He had neglected his opportunities to be needed by others (even the poor beggar named Lazarus that was sick and hungry) and now everything was lost to him forever.

On one of Paul's journeys, he found a lady named Dorcas. It was said of her, "*This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did*" (Acts 9:36). This woman died, and still her reputation for good followed her. "*And all the widows stood by him (Peter) weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them*" (v. 39). What a joy it must have been for Peter to use the power of God to bring her back to life. She was a woman that was needed!

Too many of us want success in life to be handed to us without any effort on our part, but this can never be! We become needed when we meet each challenge, large or small, with long, hard hours of work. Longfellow must have had this thought in mind when he wrote:

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

How true are the sayings: "If we want more roses, we must plant more trees," and "Get thy tools ready; God will find thee work."

We can all be needed if we will only find our place. We must believe in God and ourselves - then find our place in life. Never forget that God helps only those who help themselves. "God provides food for the bird, but He does not throw it into the nest."

If We Are Thankful

The only way that we can honor God, allow Him to remove our fears, and to direct our lives, is to be thankful. When we get on the Lord's side and live with gratitude in our hearts, we reduce life to a size that we can handle. One man with God represents the majority! Those that leave God out and make an effort to tackle life alone will have disappointment and fear. To find life worth living, we must conquer fear! Though we were given the power to speak the speech of ten thousand great orators, and possessed the wisdom of Solomon, we would not be able to convey the damage fear has done to the human race. Why is fear so detrimental to man? Because it separates him from God and robs him of his courage, and without courage he is defeated. "He that loses money loses little, he that loses health loses much, but he that loses courage loses all."

We have so much to be thankful for, especially if we live in America. Whatever our status in life, we are rich when we live in America! Our hearts should ache when we think of the thousands in this nation who are not thankful - who have

opportunities for happiness, but close their eyes and reject them. Thousands have visited other countries and returned, thanking God for America. Yes, even America has her problems, but for every problem there are hundreds of blessings.

However, our gratitude should not begin and end with physical blessings. Our greatest blessings for which to be thankful are spiritual blessings that can be found only in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). Paul instructed the Ephesian Christians: "*Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ephesians 5:20). What a privilege to be a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and yet there are those who have been living the Christian life for years that never feel true gratitude. How easy it is to receive the blessings of Christ daily, and never thank God sincerely for them.

During Christ's ministry, He healed ten lepers while they were on their way to visit the priest. Do you know how many returned to thank Him? Only one! "*So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?'*" (Luke 17:17). How sad He must be today when we fail to be thankful! Failing to be thankful can destroy our happiness.

It has been said that the greatest possession for which to be thankful is a thankful heart. We are surrounded by more than enough blessings to make us happy and rich, but we must accept them with an open heart. Let us look around and count our riches. Remember, "A thankful spirit is like sunshine upon the fields" (Holdcraft).

If We Are A New Testament Christian

All the success and happiness we find on earth will be a total failure if we are not right with God. It is not enough to just be religious or to refer to ourselves as Christians, we must please God. Jesus said: "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21). Be assured, His will is found in the Word of God!

Happiness in religion does not come from a watered-down type of religion. Traditions and teachings of men render a religion vain. When Jesus condemned the Scribes and Pharisees, He quoted from Isaiah and said: "*These people draw near to me with their mouth, And honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:8,9).

Be assured that God does have a way - He has a divine plan for man to follow, and He is not pleased with anything less! One of the greatest feelings in the world is to know that we are serving and pleasing God. Yes, the way is narrow, and few find it (Matthew 7:14), but it is worth seeking since its destination is life.

When one becomes a New Testament Christian by faith (Hebrews 11:6), repentance (Acts 2:38), confessing Christ to be the Son of God (Romans 10:9,10), and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), life becomes new and worth living (2 Corinthians 5:17). As faithful Christians, all the things we have discussed in this sermon will be ours - we will share our lives with others, feel needed, remove fear, and be thankful.

Conclusion:

After the wise man Solomon of the Old Testament had experimented with all facets of life, seeking to find true happiness, he came to the following conclusion: "*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Have you found happiness by becoming a

Christian and by living faithfully the Christian life? Will you respond to the Lord's invitation so that you can be right with God and find life worth living?

FOUR ESSENTIALS FOR

RIGHT

DOCTRINE *1 TIM. 6:3, 4*

LIFE *1 TIM. 4:12*

ATTITUDE *EPH. 4:15*

SIGHT

FAITH IN GOD

FAITH IN MAN

HEB. 11:6

ISA. 55:11

MIGHT

POWER OF GOD

POWER OF WORD

EPH. 3:14-19

ROM. 1:16

FIGHT

GO FORTH *MK. 16:16*

FIGHT SIN *1 TIM. 1:18*

FIGHT ERROR *1 COR. 9:26*

SOUL-WINNING

Four Essentials For Soul Saving

Introduction:

- A. Soul saving important since (*Mark 16:16*)
- B. Not limited to apostles, but also to us
- C. Preaching Gospel is God's method of soul saving
- D. Someone has suggested four essentials:
 - 1. Right, Might, Sight, and Fight
 - 2. Wish to discuss these:

I. Soul-Winner Must Be Right

- A. Must be right in doctrine
 - 1. Many spend their time promoting error
 - 2. Will fail with God (*Matthew 15:13*)
- B. Paul told Timothy of true teaching, and warned against error:
 - 1. (*1 Timothy 6:3,4*)
- C. Some feel that doctrine is not important
 - 1. Promote error, creeds, and traditions
 - 2. They cut their hearers off from God (*2 John 9*)
- D. Paul felt necessity to preach gospel (*1 Corinthians 9:16*)
 - 1. Not even angel from heaven - other gospel (*Galatians 1:8,9*)
 - 2. Jude said must contend for the faith (*Jude 3*)
- E. Must have the right life - right example
 - 1. (*1 Timothy 4:12*)
 - 2. Jesus taught to let light shine (*Matthew 5:16*)
- F. One must have also the right attitude
 - 1. Can present truth, but fail because of attitude
 - 2. Wrong attitude hides light under bushel
 - 3. Some say, "Truth is all I need!"
 - 4. Must present truth with love (*Ephesians 4:15*)
- G. Example: Jesus taught woman at well
 - 1. True worship must have both spirit and truth (*John 4:24*)
 - 2. Even though truth makes free (*John 8:32*)
 - 3. Even though Jesus is truth (*John 14:6*), must have the right attitude.

II. A Soul-Winner Must Have Might

- A. Can't win souls with own strength ONLY
- B. Must turn God's power on with prayer
- C. Paul greatest soul-winner of 1st century
 - 1. Depended on Lord's power (*Ephesians 3:14-19*)
 - 2. His secret (*Philippians 4:13*; *Philippians 1:21*)
- D. Might is also received by word of God
 - 1. Even during miracles, used power of word (*Romans 1:16,17*)
 - 2. Powerful sword (*Hebrews 4:12*)
- E. Some think a perverted gospel will reach people (*Galatians 1:7*)
 - 1. Deceived, only word of Lord will last (*Matthew 24:35*)

III. A Soul-Winner Must Have Sight

- A. One must look beyond this life into eternity
 - 1. Must have faith (*Hebrews 11:6*)
- B. Must point sinner to Holy life here, and to heaven
- C. Heroes of *Hebrew 11*, died in faith (*Hebrews 11:13*)
- D. Sight must also include faith in man
 - 1. Majority will be lost, but still the few (*Matthew 7:13,14*)
 - 2. Even though wayside, thorns, rocky, still good soil (*Matthew 13:1-23*)
 - 3. Can have faith in some responding because made in God's image (*Genesis 1:26*)
 - 4. Must believe if plant and water, God will increase (*1 Corinthians 3:6*)
 - 5. If Christ had not believed that some would accept, wouldn't have given great commission (*Mark 16:15*)
 - 6. Word will not return void (*Isaiah 55:11*)

IV. A Soul-Winner Must Have Fight

- A. Souls must be won from the devil
- B. Jesus fought Satan with sword (*Matthew 4:1-11*)
- C. Must fight to win souls, and live Christian life
 - 1. (*Ephesians 6:10-18*)

- D. Timothy charged to fight (*1 Timothy 1:18*)
- E. Paul was a fighter (*1 Corinthians 9:26,27*)
- F. Must fight false teachers and errors
 - 1. Truth sets free (*John 8:32*)

Conclusion:

- A. Hope you want to be a soul-winner for Jesus
 - B. Recognize the need for Right, Might, Sight, and Fight
 - C. Obey His will today.
- * The points for this sermon came from an outline by Joe Slater, published in "Outreach."

Four Essentials For Soul Saving

Introduction:

Ever since Jesus commanded His apostles to go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature (*Mark 16:15*), soul saving has been an important subject. This assignment was not limited to the apostles, but is the assignment of all Christians today. Preaching the gospel is God's method of saving souls, and we need to do our best in carrying this out.

Someone has suggested that to save souls, we must be *RIGHT*, look to God for *MIGHT*, preach it with faith and *SIGHT*, and attack the devil with a great *FIGHT!* These four words, and what they represent are essentials for soul saving. Your special attention is desired as we look closely at these four important words.

A Soul-Winner Must Be Right

A soul-winner must, first of all, be right in doctrine. There are those that spend many dedicated hours promoting error and the doctrines of men. However, Jesus taught, *"Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted"* (*Matthew 15:13*). The God of heaven will not accept false doctrine. Paul wrote Timothy of the true teachings of the Lord, and warned him against those that would teach differently: *"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions"* (*1 Timothy 6:3,4*).

There are those that feel that doctrine is not important, and they devise their creed books based on teachings of men and traditions. They blindly encourage their hearers to accept such doctrines, but what they fail to understand is that they are cutting themselves off from God. John wrote: *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"* (*2 John 9*). Paul expressed himself about this, *"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!"* (*1 Corinthians 9:16*). He also taught the Galatian churches that even an angel from heaven could not teach another gospel without being accursed (*Galatians 1:8,9*). To please God, and to save souls on His terms, we must have the right doctrine, and *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (*Jude 3*).

We must also have the right life, and set the right example. How can one lead a soul to Christ without living Christ? To Paul's son in the gospel, Timothy, he wrote: *"Let no one*

despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (*1 Timothy 4:12*). These six things represent the way one lives. When these are right in our lives, we reflect the light of Jesus. After the Lord taught His disciples to be like a city on a hill, He concluded, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (*Matthew 5:16*). If Christ has not changed our lives, how can we expect to change others to follow Christ?

Along with the right doctrine and life, one must have the right attitude. It is possible to present the truth, and still fail because of a poor attitude. One of the fastest ways to put a bushel over our lights is to display an unchristian attitude! Have you ever heard some say, "The truth is all you need - I'm not important!" This is not true, because the Lord has chosen to place truth in our hands, and He wants it presented properly. Paul gives the formula, *"...but, speaking the truth in love,"* (*Ephesians 4:15*).

When Jesus taught the woman at Jacob's well about true worship, He did not teach truth only, but said, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth"* (*John 4:24*). Even though the truth will make you free (*John 8:32*), and even though Jesus refers to Himself as being the truth (*John 14:6*), truth, to be effective, must be carried out with the right attitude. Therefore, it is essential to be right in doctrine, life, and attitude for successful soul saving.

A Soul-Winner Must Have Might

Those who attempt soul-winning by using only their own strength will fail, because even though human strength must be used, all must depend on God's power. It is absolutely essential in soul-winning to turn on God's power by sincere prayer. The greatest soul-winner in the first century church was Paul. What was the secret to his success? Yes, he was a great man, but he would be the first to say that he was nothing without the Lord's help. To the church at Ephesus he wrote, *"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"* (*Ephesians 3:14-19*). He summed up the source of his strength in these words, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (*Philippians 4:13*). Again, *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (*Philippians 1:21*).

Might is also received from the power of God's word. Some feel that the word is not powerful enough, therefore, they seek supernatural things such as tongue speaking and miracles. However, even in the days of miraculous manifestations, Paul considered the Word the source of God's power. The power he used in soul-winning was the gospel! "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*" (Romans 1:16,17). Why was the word of God so mighty? The Hebrew writer answers, "*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, . . .*" (Hebrews 4:12).

We may be tempted in soul saving to believe that our ability, our strength, and our method represent the power, but this is not true. Those who pervert the gospel (Galatians 1:7) to please the crowd so that they can be reached, are deceived in thinking that this is more powerful than the Word. All the teachings, philosophies, and wisdom of men will pass, and only the Word of the Lord will last (Matthew 24:35). It is so important to trust in prayer and the Word of the Lord for the might needed in soul winning.

A Soul-Winner Must Have Sight

To get involved successfully in soul-winning, one must be able to have the proper sight. One must be able to look beyond the present time and even into eternity. Therefore, our sight must include faith in God, and if we seek souls without it, we are defeated before we begin. "*But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6).

The goal of every soul-winner is to point the ones being taught to a holy life while on earth, and to an eternal one in heaven. This can be done only when we believe the many promises which are yet to come. All the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, "*. . . died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" (Hebrews 11:13). They had a sight that was not limited to this physical earth, but by faith penetrated even into eternity.

One's sight must also include faith in man. Even though the majority, as Jesus taught will be lost (Matthew 7:14), there are always the few that will respond, and we must believe this in soul-winning. Even though some seed will fall by the wayside, some will be choked by thorns, and some will not produce because of the stones, there will always be the good soil that will produce fruit (Matthew 13:1-23). Why can we have this kind of faith in man? Because he has a soul made in God's image (Genesis 1:26), and can be touched by the preaching of God's word. Therefore, we must believe that when the seed is planted and watered that God WILL give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

If Christ had not believed that the gospel would produce saved souls, He would not have commanded His apostles to go preach it! Isaiah quotes God: "*So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*" (Isaiah 55:11). Do we have this kind of sight today?

A Soul-Winner Must Have Fight

The fourth essential for soul-winning is fight! Souls have to be won from the devil and sin, and this represents a forceful battle. Just as an army goes forth to fight, Christians are also

sent forth. "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). It is not easy to teach most sinners to the point that they will give up sin, but with a strong battle waged, some can be won. With prayer and the word, the devil can be defeated if we are willing to fight. Jesus was able to put Satan on the run after fighting him with the sword, the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11), and we can fight with the same sword. The real question that each of us must answer is, "Are we willing to fight?" It is sad, but true, that so many want to win the battle without a fight. They want sin to surrender without going through the pains of battle. Remember, in Christianity, the war is never over as long as we live. We fight sin in winning others, and we fight sin in our own lives as Christians (Ephesians 6:10-18). Paul gave Timothy the following command: "*This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophets previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare*" (1 Timothy 1:18). His and our success depends on waging a good warfare!

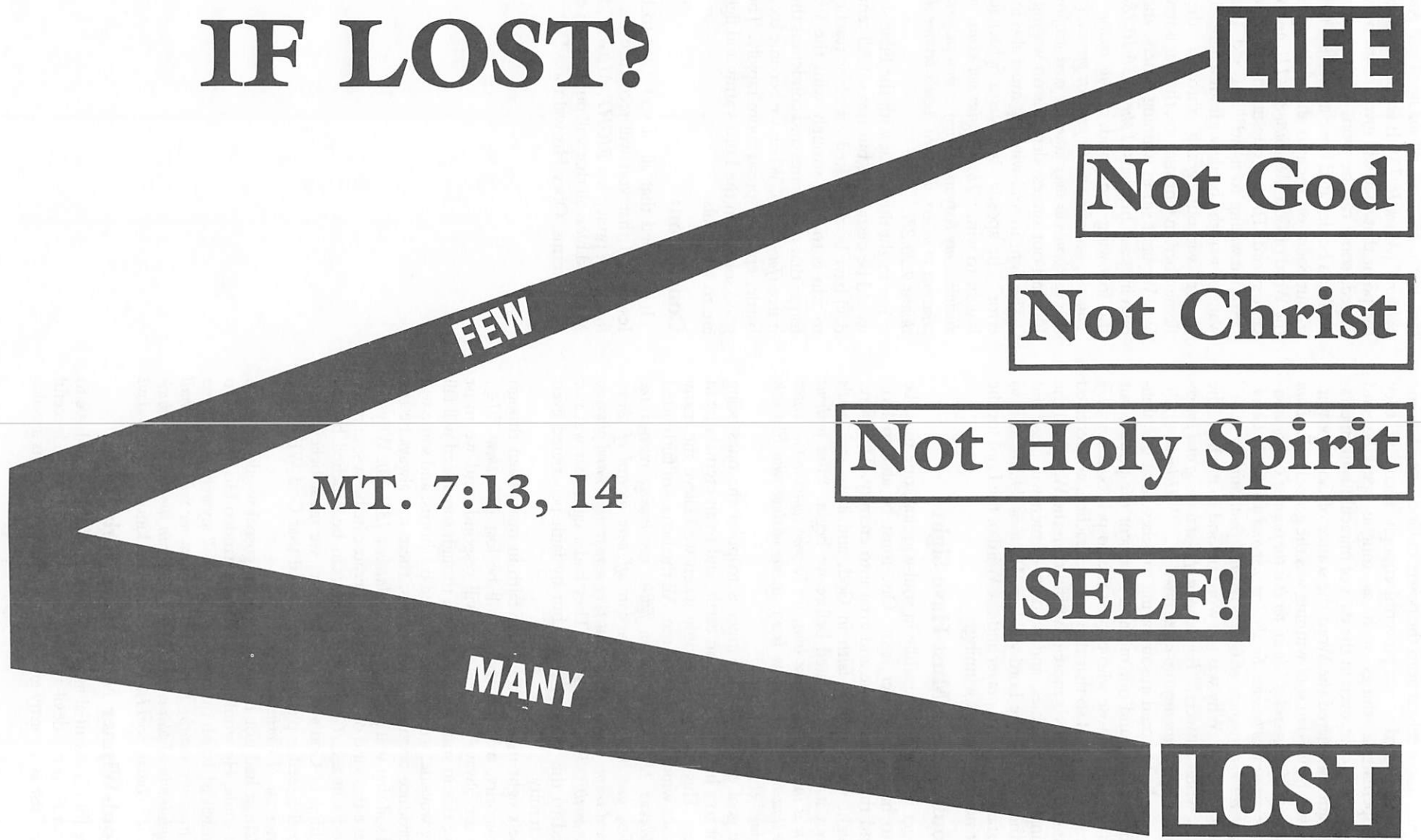
The fight in soul-winning must also include the fighting of error. The apostle Paul was a fighter for the Lord, and he fought to win. "*Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*" (1 Corinthians 9:26,27).

You might think that with the Bible so attainable that error would be destroyed, but not so! All centuries (even in Paul's day) have been infested with false teachers, and the only way to win is to fight strongly with the Word. We must never forget that error binds and condemns the soul, but truth sets it free (John 8:32). When we become lax and stop fighting the battle, error is spread more rapidly. Therefore, we must be good soldiers in the Lord's army and fight courageously if we are to win souls.

Conclusion:

It is hoped that all of you want to be a soul-winner for Jesus, and that you will recognize the essentiality of these four great principles: *RIGHT*, *MIGHT*, *SIGHT*, and *FIGHT*. May God bless all that will put forth an effort to save souls on God's terms. Obey His will today!

WHOM CAN ONE BLAME IF LOST?



LIFE

Not God

Not Christ

Not Holy Spirit

SELF!

LOST

MT. 7:13, 14

Whom Can One Blame If Lost?

Introduction:

- A. Jesus makes most startling statement
(*Matthew 7:13,14*)
 - 1. Jesus is saying that majority will be lost
- B. Not unreasonable statement
 - 1. Only fraction of world know true God
 - 2. Only fraction in U.S. actively follow religion
 - 3. Majority of religions following creed books
 - 4. Even in New Testament church, majority do not serve
- C. Only the few are giving their all to God's will
 - 1. Thus, Jesus says few will find it
- D. This brings us to the question, "Whom can one blame if lost?"
 - 1. May we seek the answer!

I. One Cannot Blame God

- A. God has always been interested in man's salvation
 - 1. Chosen before foundation of world
(*Ephesians 1:4*)
- B. Even in the Garden of Eden, only one tree forbidden
 - 1. They could eat of all others - very fair
 - 2. After sin, God still fair (*Genesis 3:15*)
- C. The human race multiplied, so did sin
 - 1. God sorry He had made man (*Genesis 6:6*)
 - 2. Destroyed all except eight souls, but still loved
 - 3. From one of Noah's sons, gave a promise
(*Genesis 12:3*)
- D. This nation was born, God went all the way to preserve it
 - 1. Gave them Moses, a great leader
 - 2. Gave them a spiritual tribe Levite to help spiritually
 - 3. Gave them a pattern for tabernacle
 - 4. Gave them a special law to guide them
 - 5. Even their rebellion did not stop God from bringing Savior
- E. God allowed His prophets to foretell the Messiah
 - 1. Out of rebellion, saved one tribe to bring Jesus

- 2. Therefore, can't blame God if lost!
- F. Why was God so anxious to save lost mankind?
 - 1. Love (*John 3:16*)
 - 2. God is love (*1 John 4:8*)
 - 3. Love motivated salvation (*1 Timothy 2:3,4*)
 - 4. Explains why gospel was preached
(*Romans 1:16,17*)
 - 5. Thus, no way to blame God if lost!

II. One Cannot Blame Christ

- A. Can't blame Christ, didn't leave a stone unturned
 - 1. Left heaven to become flesh (*John 1:14*)
 - 2. Left riches to come to poverty
(*2 Corinthians 8:9*)
- B. Why would Jesus make such a sacrifice?
 - 1. To bring salvation - a salvation mission
 - 2. Came to taste of death for others
(*Hebrews 2:9*)
 - 3. Could never blame Jesus if lost
 - 4. Love motivated Him to lay down His life
(*1 John 3:16*)
- C. Jesus extended the invitation for salvation
 - 1. (*Matthew 11:28-30*)
 - 2. All His actions show His interest in saving the lost
- D. The Lord doesn't want any lost (*2 Peter 3:9*)
- E. Also showed His interest in salvation, by His living
 - 1. Taught others how to follow to gain life
 - 2. Taught them how to love others, and what to hate
 - 3. Taught them good morals in families, as neighbors, and in business
 - 4. Taught them how to be good citizens in His kingdom
 - a. (*Matthew 16:18*)
- F. His mission to earth summed up (*Luke 19:10*)
 - 1. No way one can blame Jesus if lost!

III. One Cannot Blame The Holy Spirit

- A. Many things that we do not understand about the Holy Spirit
 - 1. Know for sure, one person in Godhead,

and concerned about man's salvation

- B. Jesus promised the coming of Holy Spirit
(*John 14:26*)
 - 1. Promised apostles Holy Spirit baptism
(*Acts 1:5,8*)
- C. Coming of Holy Spirit involved in conversion of 3,000 (*Acts 2*)
 - 1. Helped make birthday of church a great beginning
- D. Work of Holy Spirit continued after Pentecost
 - 1. Apostles baptized in the three persons of Godhead
 - a. (*Matthew 28:19*)
 - 2. Guided the authors of the New Testament
(*2 Peter 1:21*)
 - 3. Brought all scriptures (*2 Timothy 3:16,17*)
- E. Would not know way of salvation without Holy Spirit
- F. Spirit also invites sinners to salvation
 - 1. (*Revelation 22:17*)
 - 2. Can't blame Holy Spirit if lost

IV. One Must Blame Self

- A. Since one cannot blame Godhead if lost, must blame self!
 - 1. God has provided salvation in its fullness
 - 2. He has never forced a sinner to be saved
- B. Offered ONLY to those that accept by obedience
 - 1. In (*Acts 2*) thousands saved, but thousands lost
- C. Why were thousands lost?
 - 1. Would not receive the word and baptism
(*vs. 40,41*)
 - 2. Only those that obey the gospel will be saved
 - a. (*2 Thessalonians 1:8*)
- D. How does a sinner obey the gospel?
 - 1. By becoming a penitent believer
 - 2. By confessing Christ to be the Son of God
 - 3. By being buried and raised in the act of baptism
 - a. (*Romans 6:1-4*)
 - 4. This makes one a servant of righteousness
(*Romans 6:17*)

Conclusion:

- A. Only one way that saves - the gospel
 - 1. Other teachings will be lost
(*Matthew 15:13,14*)
- B. Only those that do the Father's will - saved
 - 1. (*Matthew 7:21*)
 - 2. This will put you on the narrow way to life
- C. If you don't choose salvation, can blame ONLY yourself for being lost!

Whom Can One Blame If Lost?

Introduction:

In *Matthew 7:13,14*, Jesus perhaps made the most startling statement of His ministry. He said: *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* Any way you read this, Jesus is saying that the vast majority of the world will be lost.

This is not an unreasonable statement when we think about it. The world with its billions has only a small percent that know about the true God of the Bible. Even in our own nation, the majority do not actively follow a religion based on the Bible, because their god is the world. When we focus in on all religions in America, the majority are following creed books based on traditions and opinions of men, and religion is not that serious to them. Then coming on down to those that are striving to restore the New Testament church, it is obvious that the majority do not work to be faithful Christians putting the church first.

This leaves the faithful few that are giving their best to spread the gospel and promote church growth. Therefore, it becomes easier to understand the Lord’s shocking statement that only a few will find the way to eternal life.

Now to the question, “Whom can one blame if lost?” May we seek the answer.

One Cannot Blame God

From the very beginning, and even before He made man, God has been interested in mankind being saved. Paul assured the Ephesian Christians that *“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, . . .”* (*Ephesians 1:4*). When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, He showed fairness to them. He told them that they could eat of all the trees except one, *“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (*Genesis 2:16,17*). If God had allowed them to eat of only one, and all others forbidden, we might have thought Him unfair, but He gave them all trees except one.

Even after man and woman disobeyed Him, God still showed His desire for their salvation! He could have said, “I’m through with you, and since you have brought on yourself death, you shall die forever,” but instead, He promised them hope over the seed of the serpent through the “seed of woman” (*Genesis 3:15*).

The human race began to multiply, and so did sin to the point that, *“the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart”* (*Genesis 6:6*). The world

was so evil that He destroyed all except eight souls in a flood, but God still showed (through these eight) that He wanted mankind to be saved. From one of the sons of Noah, Shem, God began a special race. He later promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation, *“And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (*Genesis 12:3*).

This special nation was born and God made every effort to keep them in a covenant relationship with Him for their salvation and the salvation of others. He gave them a great leader, Moses, and set aside one of the twelve tribes (Levite) to help them with spiritual faithfulness. He gave them a pattern for a tabernacle so that all kinds of offerings could be made for their sins. He gave them a special law to guide them in the pathway of righteousness, but they continually turned their backs on God, and sought sin and idolatry. However, this did not stop God from showing His love for their salvation. He sent many prophets to teach and warn them, but the majority continued in their sinful ways. Even when God would have to punish them, He would still call them to repent and return to Him.

In the midst of their rebellion, God allowed His prophets to foretell the coming of the Messiah that would save those that would obey Him. Even though ten of the twelve tribes became so evil that God gave them up to the world, He was still able to persevere the tribe of Judah through which the Savior would come. Therefore, how can anyone blame God if they are lost?

Why was God so concerned about man being saved? Jesus gives the answer: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (*John 3:16*). Since God is love (*1 John 4:8*), it is love that motivates Him to save the lost. Paul recognized this principle when he wrote: *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (*1 Timothy 2:3,4*). This should explain why that God gave the Gospel and wanted it preached to the world, because, *“for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;”* (*Romans 1:16,17*). There is no way that anyone can blame God if they are lost!

One Cannot Blame Christ

Neither can one blame Jesus Christ, the Son of God, if he is lost, because He did not leave a stone unturned to make the way of salvation possible. Before coming to earth to flesh, the Lord Jesus had the riches and glories of heaven. When He left heaven to become flesh (*John 1:14*), He went from riches to

poverty! *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Why did Jesus give up all these riches to become poor? It was for the purpose of providing salvation for all. Jesus’ trip from heaven to earth was a salvation mission. He didn’t come to just live on the earth, but to die for all. *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone* (Hebrews 2:9). Then, how could anyone ever point their finger at Jesus and blame Him for their being lost? Every step He took, every act He performed, and every pain He suffered was motivated by love for lost humanity. John wrote, *“By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”* (1 John 3:16).

Jesus wanted the lost to be saved, and extended His invitation of love. *“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30). Doesn’t this sound like one that is interested in our salvation? Could anyone ever blame Him if they are lost? The apostle Peter described the Lord’s feelings toward the lost in these words: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

Not only did Jesus show His concern for the lost by dying, but also by living. During His ministry on earth, He taught those that would follow Him how to live to prepare for eternal salvation. He taught them how to feel toward their enemies, friends, neighbors, and families. He taught them how to conduct their business and how to respond to the laws of the land. In short, He taught them how to be faithful citizens in His church or kingdom that He would build (Matthew 16:18). Everything that Jesus did while on earth can be summed up in the words, *“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Therefore, no one can ever point their finger at Jesus and blame Him for their being lost.

One Cannot Blame The Holy Spirit

We may spend several hours studying the Holy Spirit and then declare that there are many things that we do not understand about Him, but there is one thing that is crystal clear. The Holy Spirit is one of the persons in the Godhead, and He is concerned about the salvation of lost humanity. As Jesus made preparations to die and return to His Father, He promised His apostles the coming of the Holy Spirit. *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”* (John 14:26). One of the last things that Jesus said to His apostles before ascending, was about the promise of the Holy Spirit: *“For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. . . . But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:5,8).

The great event of three thousand souls in Acts 2 took place because of the coming of the Holy Spirit. His coming made the noise *“as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting”* (v. 2). This brought the large crowd together to hear Peter and the other apostles preach

the gospel. All nations represented could understand in their own language because of the power of the Holy Spirit (vs. 5-11). Thus, the Holy Spirit helped make this a great day of salvation and a powerful beginning for the Lord’s church. Just think of what this day would have been like without the coming of the Spirit! No, the Holy Spirit cannot be blamed if one is lost.

The work of the Holy Spirit does not end with this great beginning, but continues throughout the spread of salvation to the world. When Jesus sent His apostles forth to teach and baptize, He commanded: *“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 28:19). To show His interest further in salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit guided the authors of the Bible to record the word of God to be preached. Peter writes: *“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:21). Paul wanted his son in the gospel, Timothy to know that: *“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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). How would we know about the Savior, the gospel, and how to obey it if it were not for the Word of God given us by the Holy Spirit? Yes, He has also made every effort for man’s salvation, and cannot be blamed if one is lost.

Near the close of the New Testament, Jesus issued the great invitation and included the Spirit: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely”* (Revelation 22:17). Therefore, there is no way to blame the Holy Spirit if one is lost!

One Must Blame Self

Since one cannot blame God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit if he or she is lost, who is to be blamed? The answer, self! God has provided salvation in its fullness, but He has never forced a sinner to accept. The beauty of salvation is offered ONLY to those that save themselves by obedience. On that marvelous day of Pentecost when three thousand obeyed and were saved (Acts 2), there were thousands that went away lost. Why? Because they would not obey the gospel. After Peter finished his sermon, he said, *“Be saved from this perverse generation. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them”* (Acts 2:40,41).

Even though the Godhead wants all that are lost saved, only those that obey the gospel (death, burial, and resurrection of Christ) will be saved. When Paul wrote of Christ’s coming, he said He would come with His angels: *“In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

How does a sinner obey the gospel? He obeys by dying to sin by becoming a penitent believer that confesses Christ to be the Son of God, and by being buried and raised from baptism to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). The sinner obeys a form of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and becomes a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:17).

Conclusion:

There are many ways presented by man to be saved, but only one way, the gospel, is in the New Testament. These other ways will cause millions to travel the broad way to destruction. Jesus taught: *“Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will*

fall into a ditch” (Matthew 15:13,14). You don’t have to be lost, just do the Father’s will (Matthew 7:21), and you will be on the narrow way that leads to life. if you don’t choose salvation on the Lord’s terms, you can blame ONLY yourself if you are lost!

PORTRAIT OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

JESUS, FOUNDER & FOUNDATION

MT. 16:18-19

BEGAN IN JERUSALEM, A.D.33

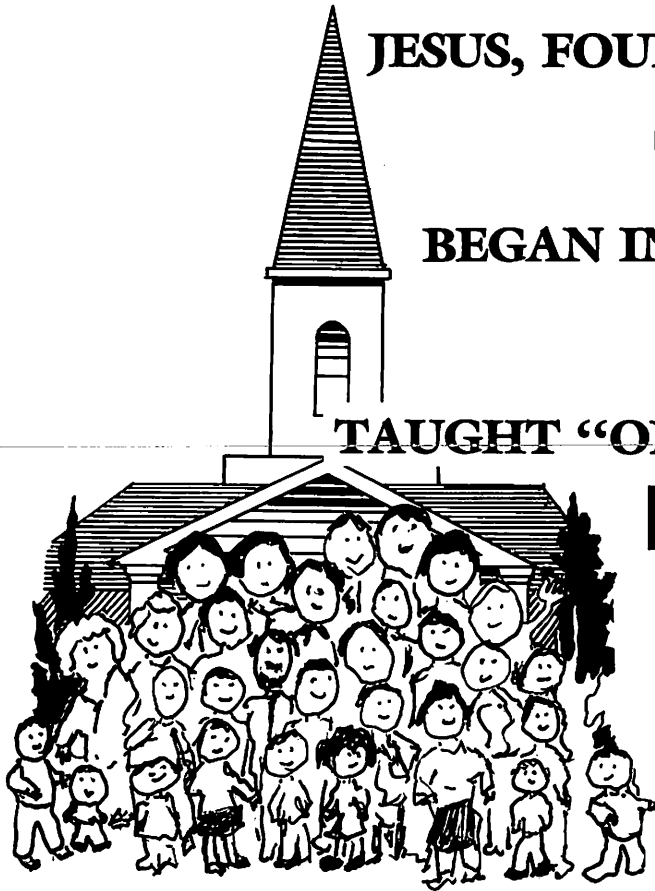
ACTS 2

TAUGHT "ONE WAY" TO BE SAVED

ROM. 1:16, 17

SHARED THE GOSPEL

1 TIM. 3:15



Portrait Of Christ's Church

Part 1

Introduction:

- A. In police work - portraits are valuable
 - 1. All criminal's characteristics are recorded (Scars, fingerprints, weight, height, etc.)
- B. These help them identify the right person
- C. The New Testament gives a portrait of Christ's church
 - 1. Many impostors in world (*2 Peter 2:1,2*)
 - 2. Only churches with true portrait - belong to Christ
- D. Observe some characteristics of this portrait:

I. Jesus Is Founder And Foundation

- A. Promised to build His church (*Matthew 16:18*)
 - 1. Kept His promise (birthday - *Acts 2*)
 - 2. Any church founded BEFORE or AFTER *Acts 2*, is not His church!
- B. Foundation - "Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God" (*Matthew 16:16-18*)
- C. No other foundation allowed (*1 Corinthians 3:11*)
- D. Jesus - Chief cornerstone (*Ephesians 2:19,20*)
 - 1. Many today look to some man - use his creed book.

II. Had Its Beginning In Jerusalem, A.D. 33

- A. This place foretold through the prophets
 - 1. (*Isaiah 2:2,3*)
 - 2. "Lord's House" - "Church of the living God" (*1 Timothy 3:15*)
- B. First Gospel sermon preached
 - 1. Jesus had told apostles to preach, "Repentance and remission of sins" (*Luke 24:46,47*)
 - 2. Peter preached - "hearts cut" (*Acts 2:37*)
 - 3. Repent, be baptized, remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*)
 - 4. 3,000 - believed - "gladly received word" (*Acts 2:41*)
 - 5. 3,000 baptized and added (*Acts 2:41*)
 - 6. Those not baptized - refused His word
 - 7. Lord added daily the saved (*Acts 2:47*)

III. It Taught God's Only Way To Be Saved

- A. Only the preaching of the gospel acceptable
 - 1. (*Galatians 1:8,9; 1 Corinthians 9:16; Romans 1:16,17*)
- B. Paul preached death, burial, and resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4*)
- C. Sinners taught to: obey the gospel (*Romans 6:17*)
 - 1. Believe - (*Mark 16:16; John 8:24; 20:30,31*)
 - 2. Repent - (*Acts 2:38; 3:19*)
 - 3. Confess Jesus to be the Christ (*Romans 10:9,10*)
 - 4. Baptized - buried and raised (*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*)
- D. Why be baptized?
 - 1. Remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*)
 - 2. Sins washed away (*Acts 22:16*)
 - 3. To get into Christ (*Galatians 3:26,27*)
 - 4. To be added to the church (*Acts 2:47*)

IV. Shared Gospel With Others

- A. Jesus taught that fields were white (*John 4:35*)
 - 1. Labor shortage
- B. Church "pillar and ground of the truth" (*1 Timothy 3:15*)
 - 1. Took truth to the world
- C. Believed and practiced (*Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:18-20*)
- D. Saved to bear fruit (*John 15:1-8*)

Conclusion:

- A. These represent first four characteristics of the portrait of the New Testament church
 - 1. Four others in another sermon
- B. Based on these first four, have you found the New Testament church?
 - 1. Have you obeyed God's way of salvation?
- C. If not, why not now?

Portrait Of Christ's Church

Part 1

Introduction:

In police work we are told that portraits are of great value, because these "mug shots" (as they are called) help identify many criminals. Also each criminal has his characteristics recorded such as scars, fingerprints, weight, height, etc. so that (in the future) should he go wrong he can be identified.

The New Testament gives an accurate portrait of Christ's church, and every characteristic can be identified. It is so important to find these and identify the true church, because many impostors are in the world. Peter warned: *"But there were false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed"* (2 Peter 2:1,2).

Therefore, be assured that only the church with the characteristics of the true portrait belongs to Christ. This is the only one He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Let us observe some of the characteristics of this portrait.

Jesus Is Founder And Foundation

While Jesus was involved in His successful ministry, He made a very important promise to His apostles. In a conversation at Caesarea Philippi He promised after Peter said He was the Christ: *"And on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). On this same occasion, He promised to give Peter the keys to this kingdom or church, which would be used for binding and loosing (v. 19). Jesus kept this promise because in (Acts 2) we read of the birthday of His church. The promises of the Old Testament prophets as well as those promises were all fulfilled on this first Jewish Pentecost feast after Jesus was resurrected.

This is the time that Jesus founded His church and any church founded BEFORE or AFTER Acts 2 is not His church. It matters not how big, how many followers, or how rich in material resources a church may be, unless Jesus is its founder, it is nothing more than a man-made church that will pass away with the earth. This is an important characteristic of His church - He must be the founder!

When one finds Jesus as the founder, he will also find the only true foundation - Christ, the Son of the living God. This is the foundation on which Jesus told Peter He would build His church. His church either stands or falls on this truth. If one could prove that He is NOT the Christ, His church would crumble, but when one proves that He IS the Christ, not even Hades can prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

This is why Paul declared: *"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Paul is not saying that another foundation could not be laid, but it could not be laid and stand! False teachers lay all kinds of foundations, but only one can be laid to stand - Jesus Christ.

When writing to the Ephesians, Paul reminded them that they were no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Then he explains how this was made possible. They had *"been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone"* (Ephesians 2:19,20). What foundation did the apostles lay? They preached Jesus as the founder and foundation - they preached Him as the chief cornerstone. They did not preach that the church was to be founded on themselves, but rather upon their teaching that Jesus is the Christ. To find the true portrait of Christ's church today, we must preach and accept the same. Many today look at some religious leader of the past and promote a creed book to support their denomination, but this is wrong. We must seek the New Testament portrait of Christ's Church if we please God.

Had Its Beginning In Jerusalem, A.D. 33

When one further searches for the true portrait of Christ's church, he must look for its place of origin. To do this, it is important to find God's promises through His prophets of the Old Testament, and then seek their fulfillment in the New. Let us turn to the great spokesman for God, Isaiah. He foretells: *"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us his ways, and we shall walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 2:2,3).

Isaiah is foretelling the coming of the "Lord's house." How do we know that the Lord's house is the church? Paul writes to Timothy so he will know how to conduct himself *"in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15). Notice further a summation of the things foretold: (1) Will be established on the top of the mountains. (2) All nations shall flow to it. (3) Many will be taught to walk in His paths. (4) The word would go forth from Jerusalem.

In Acts 2, A.D. 33, each of these prophecies were fulfilled. It was on a mountain, in the city of Jerusalem, with all

nations present, and Peter and the other apostles preached the way of righteousness. These men (with Peter taking the lead) bound and loosed what Jesus wanted as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. They preached “*Repentance and Remission of sins*” just as Jesus had commanded (*Luke 24:47*).

In this first gospel sermon, Peter preached the Christ to the point that they were “*cut to the heart*” (*Acts 2:37*). Then as believers, they wanted to know what to do. Peter told them to: “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (v. 38). We are told that 3,000 souls who “*gladly received his word were baptized*” (v. 41). There were thousands on this occasion that were NOT baptized. Why? Because they did not “*gladly receive his word.*” Who are all those today that refuse to be baptized for the remission of sins (v. 38)? Those that will not gladly receive the word!

What happened to those that “*gladly received his word and were baptized?*” They were added and saved: “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (v. 47). Everything in the Bible points to this part of the portrait as being the time and place of the beginning of Christ’s church. Thus, any other time or place becomes a man-made church and not that of the Lord’s!

It Taught God’s Only Way To Be Saved

Since the Lord’s church was established, there has been a lot of preaching, but only the preaching of the gospel is acceptable. The word of God is forceful on this point. Paul wrote that man or angel could not get by preaching another gospel without being accursed (*Galatians 1:8,9*). Paul wrote of his own preaching: “*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*” (*1 Corinthians 9:16*). Why was Paul so insistent in preaching the gospel? Why was he NOT ashamed of the gospel? His answer: “*For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek*” (*Romans 1:16*).

Since the gospel (the good news) he preached was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4*), this excluded anything else in the world. This way of salvation was a characteristic of the portrait of Christ’s church in the first century, and must be the same today.

When this gospel was preached, sinners were commanded to obey it (*Romans 6:17*). How does a sinner obey the death, burial and resurrection of Christ? He must first DIE to sin (*Romans 6:2*) by becoming a believer (*Mark 16:16; John 8:24; 20:30,31*), repenting of sins (*Acts 2:38, 3:19*), and be willing to confess his faith in Christ (*Romans 10:9,10*). Then there must be the BURIAL and the RESURRECTION! How does the sinner accomplish these two? Paul tells how he and others did it: “*Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*).

What was the purpose of obeying the gospel? To receive the remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*), to have sins washed away (*Acts 22:16*), to get “*into Christ*” (*Galatians 3:26,27*), and to be added to His church (*Acts 2:47*). The New Testament portrait of Christ’s church taught God’s only way to be saved, and the same must be taught today!

Shared The Gospel With Others

This fourth characteristic in the portrait of Christ’s church is also very important. Those saved were taught to save others. During Jesus’ ministry, He impressed on His disciples

that the world needed salvation. “*Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*” (*John 4:35*). Even in Christ’s time they had a labor shortage, and the same problem exists today. This shortage must not discourage us from sharing the gospel with others. He used a few then to spread the gospel to the world, and he can do the same now.

We must not lose sight that His church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (*1 Timothy 3:15*), and this truth must be taken to all the world (*Mark 16:15,16*). Yes, Jesus’ assignment to teach all nations was and is the biggest assignment ever given (*Matthew 28:18-20*), however, we must never lose sight of the fact that it is also the most important! Saving souls is the Lord’s way for His disciples to stay alive as a branch on the vine and bear fruit (*John 15:1-8*), and there will be serious consequences when fruit is not borne!

Conclusion:

These first four characteristics of the portrait of Christ’s church are very important and must be present before one can obey and please God. In the next sermon, four others will be considered, but please ask yourself, “*have I found these four in my life? Have I obeyed God’s ONLY way of salvation? If you must answer “no,” why wait, why not obey now?*”

PORTRAIT OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

RIGHT WORSHIP

JOHN 4:24

PROPER AUTHORITY

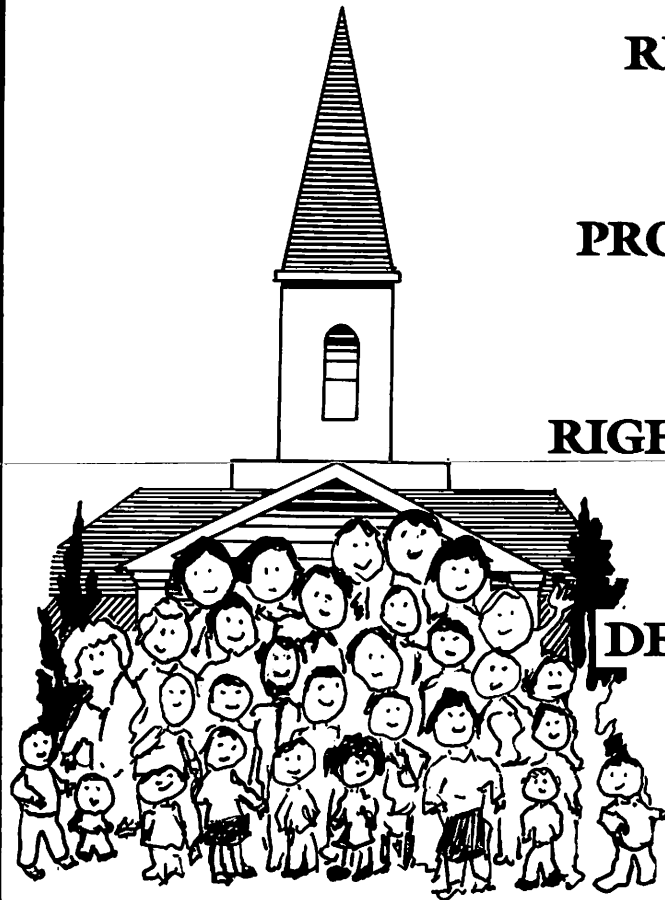
MT. 28:18

RIGHT ORGANIZATION

ACTS 14:23

DEDICATED MEMBERSHIP

1 PETER 4:16



Portrait Of Christ's Church

Part 2

Introduction:

- A. Looked at first four characteristics of portrait in Part 1
- B. Learned:
 - 1. "Jesus is the founder and foundation"
 - 2. "It began in Jerusalem, A.D. 33"
 - 3. "It taught God's only way of Salvation"
 - 4. "Shared the gospel with others"
- C. Wish to continue by studying four other characteristics of Christ's church
 - 1. Important because Jesus died for His church (*Acts 20:28*)

I. Worshipped In Spirit And Truth

- A. Many feel that any kind of worship is acceptable
 - 1. Jesus taught worship can be vain (*Matthew 15:7-9, 13*).
- B. Only one acceptable worship, "Spirit and in truth" (*John 4:24*).
- C. Most of you know that we are to worship:
 - 1. Preaching the word (*2 Timothy 4:2*)
 - 2. Singing, making melody in hearts (*Ephesians 5:19*)
 - 3. Observe Lord's Supper on first day of week (*Acts 20:7*)
 - 4. Pray (*Ephesians 6:18*)
 - 5. Giving as prospered (*1 Corinthians 16:2*)
- D. But how do we feel about worshipping in spirit?
 - 1. The same "must" is applied to spirit as to truth!
 - 2. Review the 5 acts of worship, apply to carrying them out in spirit.
 - 3. Do we have our hearts, minds, thoughts, and understanding in them?

II. Had The Proper Authority

- A. Jesus was given ALL AUTHORITY (*Matthew 28:18*)
 - 1. This leaves out all earthly leaders that claim headship
- B. Christ is the ONLY head of His church (*Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18*).
 - 1. Lord's church guided by Holy Spirit - through the Word (*John 16:13*)

- C. The Word of God will be our only book of instruction
 - 1. (*2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16,17*)
 - 2. This also applies to commands to individuals in church
 - 3. Will follow Him in: Morality, speech, and example.

III. The Right Organization

- A. Many religions have made up their own organization
 - 1. One reason why they have creed books
- B. The divine portrait calls for Elders in every church (*Acts 14:23*).
 - 1. They must be qualified (*1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9*)
- C. These men appointed: Fed the church, were overseers, shepherds, did not lord it over the flock, and watched for their souls (*1 Peter 5:1-4*).
- D. It had evangelists to preach the word (*2 Timothy 4:1,2*)
- E. Always allowed Christ to be the head (*Colossians 1:18*)

IV. A Dedicated Membership

- A. The name they wore, suggested their way of life
 - 1. Christian (*Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16*)
- B. They did not allow fear to stop them
 - 1. Some put to death (*Acts 7*)
 - 2. Some thrown in prison (*Acts 8:3,4*)
- C. Exhorted one another not to forsake the assembly
 - 1. (*Hebrews 10:25*)
 - 2. (*1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9*)
- D. Did good unto all men, especially Christians
 - 1. (*Galatians 6:10*)
- E. Practiced pure religion (*James 1:27*)

Conclusion:

- A. This portrait is in New Testament to help us imitate Christ's church
 - 1. But we must use it

- B. Only this portrait will please the Lord
1. Have you obeyed Him?
 2. Are you a member of His church?
 3. Are you faithful in His church?

Portrait Of Christ's Church

Part 2

Introduction:

In part one of this sermon on a "Portrait of Christ's Church," we looked at the first four characteristics that identify the Lord's church. We found that Jesus is the founder and foundation, that it began in Jerusalem, A.D. 33, that it taught God's only way of salvation, and shared the gospel with others.

Now, may we continue this important portrait by considering four other identifying marks. These characteristics become even more important when we recognize the fact that these help us find the church that Jesus bought with His blood (*Acts 20:28*).

Worshipped In Spirit And Truth

There are so many today in society who feel that any kind of worship is acceptable. It is common to hear such statements as, "It doesn't matter how one worships just so long as his heart is sincere," or "Every man must worship according to his faith." These statements, and many others are saying that it is not necessary to worship in spirit and truth. However, those promoting these teachings overlook that Jesus taught that worship can be vain. To show some hypocrites of His day that worship can be in vain, Jesus quoted a prophecy from Isaiah: "*These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*" (*Matthew 15:8,9*). Only a few verses further He said: "*Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted*" (v. 13).

When Jesus was engaged in a conversation with the woman of Samaria, He taught her the importance of true worship. Observe carefully His words: "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (*John 4:24*). In this verse, Jesus does not leave a choice, but says the worshipper MUST worship in spirit and truth! Which of these two principles are more important? Jesus doesn't say, but places them together as being equally important.

Many who worship feel that worshipping in "truth" is all that is necessary, but this is not true. One may follow every act of truth, but fail to have the right spirit and his worship will be wrong. Yes, "truth" is important, because the truth commands us to preach the word (*2 Timothy 4:2*), to sing and make melody in our hearts (*Ephesians 5:19*), to observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (*Acts 20:7*), to pray (*Ephesians 6:18*), and to give of our money as we have been prospered (*1 Corinthians 16:2*). These are very important and should be carried out according to the truth of the Word. However, one may obey each of these to the letter, and still

be wrong. The preaching, singing, Lord's Supper, praying and giving must be done in the right spirit. Listening to the preaching must be done in reverence for God and to learn of His Word. The singing must be done from the heart, and with spirit and understanding (*1 Corinthians 14:15*). The Lord's Supper must be observed in a worthy manner by remembering the Lord's death and body (*1 Corinthians 11:23-30*). Prayers must be prayed sincerely from the heart by faith (*James 1:5,6*). When one gives, he must do so purposefully, cheerfully, and as prospered (*1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7*).

This is the only kind of worship that God will accept today because it is a part of the New Testament portrait of the Lord's church. Man-made churches have changed the worship to please the majority, but are they pleasing God? Some people adhere strictly to the truth of worship without consideration for the spirit of worship, but are they pleasing God?

Had The Proper Authority

Before the portrait of Christ's church can be found, one must find the proper authority, because a church either rises or falls on the right authority. Just before assigning His apostles the task of teaching the whole world the gospel, Jesus said, "*All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth*" (*Matthew 28:18*). The word "all" excludes all others that might claim authority in the future. His headship and authority do not allow any person to claim headship of the church, nor do they allow any council of men to assume authority to make and enforce laws. Jesus is the head, the ONLY head, and those that teach and practice otherwise are not following the portrait of Christ's church. Paul could not have made it any plainer when he wrote: "*And he (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence*" (*Colossians 1:18*). To the Ephesians he wrote of Christ: "*And he put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all*" (*Ephesians 1:22,23*).

Therefore, those that allow Jesus to have supreme authority will follow the New Testament as the only book of instruction. He sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (*John 16:13*), and the portrait of Christ's church must be guided by the word of God. Man-made churches are guided by their creed books that have been written by men. They contain many biblical principles, but they are also filled with human decisions. The creed book says, "The Bible needs some help to be followed and understood!" From time to time, new editions are published as laws are added or deleted. This kind of action does not come from God nor the

portrait of Christ's church. His church depends ONLY on the word of God for guidance and believes that such is totally sufficient.

Paul called upon Timothy to: *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). In the next chapter he declares: *"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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Paul did not feel that anything else was needed other than the scriptures. Those seeking to restore the portrait of Christ's church will accept the Bible only for the church as a whole, and for the guidance of individual members.

The Right Organization

The portrait of Christ's church must also have the right organization. We are not allowed to choose a type of organization that we personally like. One has only to casually look around at various religions to realize that many have devised organizational structures to please themselves. This is one of the reasons why creed books are written and followed, because the type of organization they follow is written out! Some of these humanly formed organizations are quite complicated, but notice the simple organization in the portrait of Christ's church.

The divine portrait calls for elders in every church - every city (*Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5*). Before these men were appointed to serve the church, they had to meet certain qualifications (*1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9*). The words used in the New Testament to identify these men, illustrate their God-given responsibilities. They were called bishop because they were to oversee the church (*1 Timothy 3:1*), they were called shepherds or pastors because they were to feed and care for the flock (*Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11*), and they were called elders because they had to be older in the faith (*Acts 20:17; 14:23; Hebrews 13:17*).

The New Testament never speaks of a church with only one elder, but always a plurality (*Philippians 1:1*). Therefore, the authority was placed with the elders and not an elder, and those that teach and practice otherwise, depart from the portrait of Christ's church. Thus, these men had the responsibility of feeding the church, overseeing its needs, shepherding and caring for the sheep, but never lording it over the flock, and of watching for their souls (*1 Peter 5:1-4*).

The portrait also calls for deacons in the organization of the church, and their qualifications are given in (*1 Timothy 3:8-13*). The word "deacon" means to serve, and they were never permitted to do the work of the elders. Under the oversight of the elders, they were to serve.

When one studies closely the portrait of Christ's church, it is obvious to see that there were evangelists to preach the word. There were such men as Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Philip, Titus, and Timothy. Paul's charge to Timothy represents the work of an evangelist: *"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:1,2). This represented the work of an evangelist that he was called upon to do (2 Timothy 4:5). The evangelist did not serve as a pastor over a church as modern man does today. Even if he was chosen to serve as one of the elders or pastors, he was not "the pastor."

The organization became complete as various ones served as

teachers in the church (*Ephesians 4:11*). These gave their time to teaching the Word as they worked under the oversight of the elders.

When one allows Christ to be the head, the Word becomes the proper guide for the organization of the church. Any other organization does not represent the true portrait of Christ's church.

A Dedicated Membership

The portrait of Christ's church is further shown by a dedicated membership. Why were they so dedicated to each other and to save the world? Because they were followers of Christ. In fact, the name they wore suggested their way of life - they were called Christians. In (*Acts 11:26*), Luke informs us that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. When Paul and others preached the gospel of Christ, their aim was to convert sinners to Christianity. After Paul had taught King Agrippa, this man responded: *"You almost persuade me to become a Christian"* (*Acts 26:28*). This is exactly what Paul was trying to do - he wanted him to become a Christian. Following Christ was not a popular thing in the first century. Some were persecuted and suffered because they wore this great name. However, Peter encouraged them: *"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter"* (*1 Peter 4:16*).

It is amazing to study how they were willing to die for this name. Stephen did not back down from preaching Jesus even though his audience was made up of *"stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart"* Jews which were ready to murder him any moment (*Acts 7:51-60*). Before Paul's conversion, he actively led a time of great persecution against Christians. *"He made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison"* (*Acts 8:3*). Did this stop the spread of Christianity? Did they lose their dedication to Jesus? No, Luke tells us their reaction. *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word"* (*Acts 8:4*). Instead of persecution stopping the spread of Christianity, it helped spread it to other parts of the world. There is no way to stop this kind of dedication!

This portrait also shows a dedicated membership that continually exhorted each other. They exhorted one another not to forsake the assembly (*Hebrews 10:25*), and had a desire to be *"steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (*1 Corinthians 15:58*). Yes, they were human and became weary, but men like Paul exhorted them to hold on - to keep going! *"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart"* (*Galatians 6:9*).

The portrait of Christ's church shows a dedicated membership practicing pure religion. It is best defined in the words of James: *"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (*James 1:27*). They believed that when they were serving others, they were serving Christ (*Matthew 25:40*).

Conclusion:

The portrait of Christ's church is in the New Testament to help us imitate His church today, but it will be of value only if we are willing to use it. There are many churches that do not imitate this portrait, but they do not please God.

Have you obeyed Him? Have you become a penitent believer that confesses Christ to be the Son of God, and have you put Him on in baptism? (*Galatians 3:27*) Are you a member of His church because you allowed Him to add you?

(Acts 2:47). Are you faithful in His church as the portrait suggests? If not, shouldn't you get right now?

The Bitter-Sweet Cross

BITTER

SWEET

Left Heaven

2 COR. 8:9

Rejected

JOHN 1:11

Betrayed

PS. 41:9

Crucified

MT. 27:46

Obedience

PHIL. 2:8

Love

ROM. 5:8

Hope

ROM. 8:1

Joy

HEB. 12:2

The Bitter-Sweet Cross

Introduction:

- A. One Sunday while taking the Lord's Supper
 - 1. Fruit of the vine sweeter than usual
 - 2. Thought - Maybe should be bitter
 - 3. Realized - Cross both bitter and sweet.
- B. This thought motivated the sermon
 - 1. "The Bitter-Sweet Cross"

I. Bitter - Left Heaven

- A. Bitterness began here
- B. Vast difference between heaven and earth
 - 1. (2 Corinthians 8:9).
 - 2. Not saying: "Came to earth rich - then became poor"
 - 3. But: "Rich in heaven - came to earth poor"
- C. Jesus was physically poor on earth
 - 1. (Luke 9:58)
 - 2. (John 4:32-34)
- D. Paul asked Philippians to have the same attitude:
 - 1. (Philippians 2:6,7)
- E. Big step from heaven to earth!
- F. Think of how rich Jesus was compared to His poverty on earth!
 - 1. Created all things: (Colossians 1:16; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2)
- G. He makes us rich - joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17)
 - 1. Example: Man showing fields - Cottage woman has Christ
- H. Jesus missed the glory of His Father
 - 1. In His prayer: (John 17:5)

II. Bitter - Rejected

- A. Experienced rejection
 - 1. (John 1:11)
 - 2. Citizens hated Him: (Luke 19:14)
 - 3. Yet they could not deny miracles and the way He spoke
- B. Did not meet their expectations
 - 1. Wanted earthly Messiah
 - 2. Born of David? Yes, but they didn't know
 - 3. Can't come from Galilee they thought (John 7:41,42)

- C. Hatred and rejection grew - Said He possessed Beelzebub
 - 1. (Mark 3:22)
 - 2. They blasphemed the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:23-30)
- D. Got closer to the cross. . . Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled:
 - 1. (Isaiah 53:3)

III. Bitter - Betrayed

- A. Betrayed by one of the apostles - Judas
 - 1. Had been prophesied (Psalm 41:9)
- B. Tell how Judas gave a sign
- C. "Friend, why have you come?" (Matthew 26:48-50)
- D. Can sell Him today - material things become gods

IV. Bitter - Crucified

- A. All, so far, are steps to the cross
- B. Can't fully recognize the pain of the cross
- C. Can read of: (Sum up all steps to the cross)
- D. The cross had so much bitterness

V. Sweet - Obedience

- A. Same cross also brought much sweetness
 - 1. If bitterness ONLY, He failed!
- B. Submitted to the cross - Father's will
 - 1. (John 3:16; Hebrews 10:9; John 4:34; 6:38; Matthew 26:39)
- C. Paul described cross as an act of OBEDIENCE
 - 1. (Philippians 2:8)
 - 2. Obedience - Sweet odor to God
 - 3. A Joy to ascend back to the Father - obedient (Hebrews 12:2)

VI. Sweet - Love

- A. Like Jacob's ladder - love from heaven to earth
 - 1. (Romans 5:8; John 15:13; 1 John 4:8)

VII. Sweet - Hope

- A. Jesus often spoke of hope
- B. Crucifixion thought death ended all hope
 - 1. Opposite - brought hope
- C. Death a great victory - (1 Corinthians 15:57)

- D. Now there is NO condemnation (*Romans 8:1*)
- E. Redemption is found in Him (*Ephesians 1:7*)
- F. All spiritual blessings are in Him (*Ephesians 1:3*)

VIII. Sweet - Joy

- A. In spite of bitterness - Joy
- B. Joy was set before Him. . . (*Hebrews 12:2*)
- C. Also brings joy to the lost
 - 1. He brought Joy at birth, but cross needed
 - 2. (*Matthew 1:21*)
 - 3. (*John 4:14*)
- D. Joy extended to Judgment Day
 - 1. (*Matthew 25:34*)
 - 2. (*Matthew 25:21*)

Conclusion:

- A. The cross then has both bitter and sweet
- B. The next time you partake of the Lord's Supper
 - 1. Remember the bitter and the sweet.
- C. Have you obeyed the gospel?
 - 1. If not, will you obey now?

The Bitter-Sweet Cross

Introduction:

Recently while partaking of the Lord's supper, the fruit of the vine seemed sweeter than usual. The thought came to me, that maybe it should be bitter since the cross was so bitter for the Lord. Then it occurred to me that the cross of Jesus was both bitter and sweet, and this inspired me to write this sermon on: "THE BITTER-SWEET CROSS." Please observe some of these principles.

THE BITTER CROSS

Bitter - Left Heaven

There were many bitter things suffered by our Lord because of the cross, but it all began when He left His Father in heaven to come to earth. Can you imagine the vast difference between these two places? Even with the beauties of heaven described in the word, our minds cannot comprehend, since we have never seen it. Paul described the change that our Lord experienced: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He is not saying that Jesus came to earth, became rich and then gave it all up to become poor for our sakes! Rather, He was rich in heaven, and left these riches to spend His earthly years in deep poverty so that God's grace might be extended.

The poverty mentioned here is physical. While on earth, our Lord had only the bare necessities of life that kept Him alive. In His words: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). He sometimes went without food so long that His disciples became concerned, but Jesus consoled them by saying: "I have food to eat of which you do not know about. . . My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:32-34). Jesus accepted poverty as a way of life so that He might carry out His real purpose—to bring eternal life.

Paul called upon the Philippian Christians to have the same attitude of Jesus: "who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6,7). It was a big step from the throne of God to a servant! Especially when you consider that His mission for lost humanity would end with the cross. How bitter this must have been for the Lord.

The experience of leaving heaven becomes even more bitter when we consider just how rich our Lord Jesus was before making Himself of no reputation. Did you know that it was Jesus that created all things? "For by him all things were created

that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers—All things were created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2). Can one get any richer than to have all creation with its gold, silver, land, oceans, and resources at his command? Jesus was that rich, and yet He left it to make mankind rich.

Truly out of the bitter experience of our Lord comes to us the sweet. Those in Christ have everlasting riches, and are joint heirs with the Son of God (Romans 8:17).

"Do you see these extended fields?" said the owner of a vast plantation to a friend. "They are mine. All this is mine." "Do you see yonder cottage?" was the reply of the friend, as he directed his attention to the abode of a poor widow. "She has more than all this. She has Christ as her portion: and that is more than all." (Barnes).

Jesus must have missed the glory that He had experienced with His Father, and He mentioned this in His prayer: "And now, O Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (John 17:5). However, love motivated Him to experience the bitterness of coming to earth to bring down God's grace for the lost. Oh, how bitter was the cross!

Bitter - Rejected

The bitterness of the cross did not end with His leaving the glory of heaven to become poor, but grew worse day by day as He experienced rejection. "He came to his own, and his own did not receive him (John 1:11). Jesus' way of life and authoritative preaching moved the Jewish leaders to hate, envy, and rejection. "But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'we will not have this man to reign over us'" (Luke 19:14). The bitter rejection of Christ was not because He did not show Himself to be the Son of God, because He performed miracles that they could not honestly deny, and spoke as One having authority. (Matthew 7:29). When the chief priests and Pharisees were asked by the officers why they did not bring Jesus, they answered: "No man ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:44,46). They rejected Jesus because He did not meet their personal expectations: "Will the Christ come out of Galilee?" (John 7:41,42).

As His ministry progressed, the hatred and rejection increased. Every word He spoke and each miracle that He performed was questioned until finally the scribes said: "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons he casts out demons" (Mark 3:22). Jesus showed this not to be true because this would divide Satan and he would be fighting himself. Jesus considered this to be as low as they could go,

and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (*Mark 3:23-30*).

While Jesus got closer to the cross, the bitterness of rejection was more strongly felt: *"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we did not esteem him"* (*Isaiah 53:3*).

Bitter - Betrayed

Next came the bitter betrayal by Judas. *"Even mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me"* (*Psalms 41:9*). Jesus identified this apostle as the one, but it was still a bitter experience when it happened. Judas walked up to Jesus and said, *"Greetings, Rabbi!"* and kissed Him. Try to imagine the pain in Jesus' words: *"Friend, why do you come?"* (*Matthew 26:48-50*). Judas was an enemy, but had pretended to be a friend, and this bought bitterness.

We can never literally walk in Judas' shoes; nevertheless, we can still sell Him and betray Jesus when we turn and betray Him to the world with materialism as our god! This betraying of Jesus became the first step to His trials, scourging, mockery, and finally the cross.

Bitter - Crucified

All the things discussed thus far with all their bitterness, were merely steps to the cross. There is no way that the human mind can fully recognize the bitterness of Christ's death on the cross. Yes, we can read of His trials surrounded by lies, deceit, pain, and scourging; the rejection felt when Barabbas, a notorious prisoner, was released rather than Jesus; the mocking scarlet robe; the painful crown of thorns; the reed used by the soldiers for humiliation; the spitting; the beating; the carrying of His cross, and the awful pain suffered at the place of a skull—Golgotha, but who can know what our Lord really felt? Can you begin to imagine the pain and agony of soul and spirit that He felt when He cried out: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

It is true, then, that the cross with all its sweetness and glory, also had much pain and bitterness for the Lord. As we partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine, we should always keep this bitterness in our minds.

SWEET

Sweet - Obedience

The same cross that brought bitterness also contained sweetness. If there had been bitterness ONLY, our Lord Jesus would have failed, but the sweet far out-weighed the bitter.

When the Christ submitted Himself to the cross, He was obeying the Father's will. Christ gave His life, but God the Father gave His Son (*John 3:16*). Jesus came to do His Father's will: *"Then he said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God'"* (*Hebrews 10:9*). Again: *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me"* (*John 4:34*). *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me"* (*John 6:38*).

When Jesus faced the bitter cup of the cross, He agonized over it in Gethsemane. While three of His disciples slept, He: *"fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will'"* (*Matthew 26:39*). In some way the Father let His Son know that the bitter cup must be experienced, and out of the bitterness came the sweetness of obedience.

Note Paul's description: *"And being found in appearance as a*

man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross" (*Philippians 2:8*). What a sweet odor of incense must have reached the throne of God when Christ, the obedient Son, endured the cross! It was so bitter to the Christ, but the fact that He was obeying His Father brought to Him joy and sweetness. *"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (*Hebrews 12:2*). What a joy for Jesus to ascend back to the Father as an obedient Son; and remember, the Father loves the obedience of His children in all ages!

Sweet - Love

There was sweetness in the cross also, because of the great love of the One dying. Just as Jacob of old saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, when we read of the cross of Calvary, there is also a ladder of love from the Father to the Son: *"But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (*Romans 5:8*), *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"* (*John 15:13*), *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love"* (*1 John 4:8*). Nothing else other than love was strong enough to bring Jesus from heaven to suffer on earth, and only love is the true motive to lead us to respond to His great love in obedience and service. This is a sweetness of the cross that should be remembered as we partake of the Lord's supper in remembrance of His death.

Sweet - Hope

Another sweetness that comes down to us from the cross is hope. All through Jesus' ministry He spoke of hope, but those that crucified Him thought they had ended hope forever. However, just the opposite was true. The death that they thought would end hope, made it become a reality. By His death He was able to set forth an atonement for sin, and by His resurrection He was able to show that death is the loser. To the crucifiers, they thought that death was a defeat, but to Christ it was His greatest victory: *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (*1 Corinthians 15:57*). Mankind was without hope and lost in sin, but: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"* (*Romans 8:1*). *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace"* (*Ephesians 1:7*), and God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: *"has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (*Ephesians 1:3*).

Therefore, the cross had sweetness because of this eternal hope. Those that refuse the forgiveness of the cross, give up hope! They become hopelessly lost upon the sea of eternity without an anchor. However, with the shed blood of Jesus: *"this hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. . ."* (*Hebrews 6:19*).

Sweet - Joy

With all the bitterness of the cross, it may be difficult to see the joy, but it was present, and the Son of God recognized it. The Hebrew writer calls upon his readers to fix their eyes on Jesus: *"the Author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (*Hebrews 12:2*). In spite of the bitterness, Jesus felt the joy and returned home to His Father a faithful Son.

Not only was the cross joy to Jesus, but it brought joy to the lost. Remember, the joy that Jesus brought to the world

at His birth would not have been joy without the cross. He was born to save the lost: *“And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name JESUS, for he will save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). His mission to earth was to seek and to save the lost, and because of the cross, He was able to offer the water of eternal life to those that would drink. *“But whoever drinks of this water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4:14).

Because of the cross, Jesus was able to open the joys of everlasting life to the obedient and faithful to be received after the great judgment day. To those on His right hand He will say: *“Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matthew 25:34). To the faithful ones in the parable of the talents, Jesus said, *“Well done, good and faithful servants; . . . Enter into the joy of your lord”* (Matthew 25:21).

Conclusion:

Therefore, the cross has both bitter and sweet, and the next time you partake of the fruit of the vine and taste some bitterness and sweetness, remember the bitter-sweet cross of our Lord Jesus.

Have you obeyed the gospel that brings you to the cross? If not, are you willing to be a penitent believer that submits to baptism? Jesus paid it all, will you obey Him now?

PRAYER WITH POWER

**MUST BE
SINCERE**

PS. 69:13-17

**MUST HAVE
FAITH**

LK. 11:5-10; 18:3-8

**GOD ANSWERS
PRAYERS**

JNO. 15:16



**JESUS GAVE
A MODEL**

LK. 11:1-4

**MUST HAVE
HUMILITY**

LK. 11:10-14

**PRAY FOR
RIGHT THINGS**

JAS. 4:3

Prayer With Power

Introduction:

- A. One of most beautiful things in Christian's life - prayer
 - 1. "A spiritual child talking to his heavenly Father through the name of Jesus."
- B. Bible teaches that prayer is associated with Power
 - 1. (*Matthew 7:7; John 14:13,14*)
 - 2. Jesus speaking of prayers in proper way - God's will
- C. Wish to study important requirements to turn on power of prayer:

I. Prayer Must Be Sincere

- A. Many have prayed without sincerity, but God did not hear
- B. David, a man after God's own heart (*Acts 13:22*) sinned
 - 1. How did he return? Sincere prayer!
 - 2. Read from Bible (*Psalms 69:13-17*) David's prayer
 - 3. Each word suggests sincerity
- C. Example: Man that made promises to God while drowning
 - 1. Many use same type of insincerity today
 - 2. Jesus condemned hypocrites of His day for insincerity
 - 3. Therefore, no POWER without sincerity!

II. Must Pray With Faith

- A. Fastest way to remove power from prayer - lack of faith
 - 1. (*James 1:6,7*)
- B. Many pray today while doubting
 - 1. Example: Lady praying for stump to be removed
- C. Jesus illustrated how one needs to continue praying and believing that the Lord will answer
 - 1. (*Luke 11:5-10; 18:3-8*)
 - 2. Jesus wanted His disciples to keep on asking by faith

III. God Answers Prayers

- A. For power, must believe that God answers all prayers of His children
 - 1. He does not always say "yes," but still

answers

- 2. He may say: "yes," "no," or "wait a while"
- 3. Like a good parent, answers what is best!
- B. Paul got a "no" when asked three times for thorn to be removed
 - 1. (*2 Corinthians 12:7-9*)
 - 2. It was best for him to keep the thorn
- C. Jesus got a "no" when prayed for cup to pass if the Father's will
 - 1. (*Matthew 26:39*)
 - 2. It was best to drink it for the sake of the lost
- D. We should always pray through the name of Jesus with a desire for God's will to be done (*John 15:16*)

IV. Jesus Gave A Model Prayer

- A. Power in prayer can be turned on easier by studying model prayer
 - 1. May memorize it, but do you know principles?
 - 2. These principles will help us to pray (*Matthew 6:9-13*)
- B. His prayer begins by addressing and honoring His Father
 - 1. Our prayers should be through Jesus name to the Father
 - 2. Some in error pray TO Jesus instead of THROUGH Him to Father
- C. He prayed for the kingdom to come
 - 1. When prayer was given, Jesus was preparing for His kingdom
 - 2. He promised that some in His audience would see kingdom (*Matthew 16:28*)
 - 3. He promised to build His church or kingdom (*Matthew 16:17-19*)
 - 4. It came (*Acts 2*), but we can still pray for its spread
- D. He prayed for daily bread
 - 1. We need to work and pray for daily bread
 - 2. God will take care of His children (*Matthew 6:25-34*)
- E. He asked them to pray for forgiveness while

forgiving others

- F. Then He turned to the dangers of temptations requesting God's deliverance
- G. This prayer covers the basic needs of Christians
 - 1. We must ask through the name of Jesus

V. Pray With Humility

- A. Must remove haughtiness and pray with humility
 - 1. "If you want to bring back water from the spring, you must take an empty bucket."
 - 2. Have you ever prayed as though God owes you?
 - 3. Jesus always prayed with humility to Father
- B. Jesus' life also reflected humility
 - 1. Washed disciples feet; wanted them to do same (*John 13:5*)
- C. Taught importance of humility in prayer: Pharisee and Tax Collector (*Matthew 23:23-28*)
- D. Example: Boys dropping water balloons.
 - 1. Don't we pray for wrong things because of selfishness?
- E. Some ask God's blessings so they can live sinful life!
 - 1. (*James 4:3*)
 - 2. Wrong motives close prayer doors to heaven
 - 3. Right motives, according to His will, He will answer

Conclusion:

- A. Therefore, prayer requirements are important
- B. Every Christian has responsibility to pray:
 - 1. With sincerity
 - 2. With faith, believing that God will answer
 - 3. The basic principles of the model prayer
 - 4. In humility for the right things
- C. To be able to pray, one of greatest incentives for new birth
 - 1. If you're not a faithful Christian, will you come?

Prayer With Power

Introduction:

One of the most beautiful things in the Christian life is prayer. Prayer can be defined as “a spiritual child talking to his heavenly Father through the name of Jesus.” When one studies the Bible about prayer, he cannot help from observing that prayer is associated with power. Jesus taught, “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*” (Matthew 7:7). Again Jesus promised, “*And whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it*” (John 14:13,14). As Jesus made this promise, He was speaking of prayers prayed in the proper way, and in accordance with God’s will. In fact, one cannot ask in Christ’s name without submitting to the Lord’s will. Please notice some of the important requirements in God’s will that will turn on power with prayer.

Prayer Must Be Sincere

There have always been those that pray without sincerity, but God has not heard such prayers. It is the sincere heart that concerns God. In the Old Testament we read of David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). There was a time in his life when he got involved in sin, but later made all efforts to return to God. How did he reach God? It was through sincere prayer. Listen to one of his prayers: “*But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of your mercy, hear me in the truth of your salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me. Hear me, O Lord, for your loving kindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of your tender mercies. And do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in trouble; Hear me speedily*” (Psalm 69:13-17). Each of his words suggests sincerity.

The story is told of a man that was very wealthy, and one day while wading out into the ocean a large wave caught him and swept him out into the deep. He began to struggle to save his life, but all efforts seemed to fail. When it looked like he had no chance of survival, he prayed, “Lord, if you will save my life, I will give you one half of all my money.” A few moments later, he had struggled a little closer to being saved and he prayed, “Remember, Lord, I promised you twenty five percent of all my money if you will save my life.” Moments later, his safety was still questionable, but it looked more hopeful and he prayed, “Lord, keep up the good work, just a little more help and I’ll be safe. Don’t forsake me now, remember my promise of ten percent of all my money if you

will save me from drowning.” The next few moments found the man able to touch bottom and he began walking to safety. He prayed, “Thank You Lord for saving my life, and don’t forget my promise to you, if you ever need anything, I’ll sure give serious thought to sharing some of my money.”

We just might be surprised how often this type of insincerity is practiced among many today. Jesus told the hypocrites of His time that their prayers would be heard only by men and not God. Why? Because they were not sincere. Therefore, for prayer to have power, it must be sincere.

Must Pray With Faith

One of the fastest ways to remove power from prayer is to pray without faith. When James wrote the brethren to ask God for wisdom, he warned: “*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord*” (James 1:6,7). How many times do we pray for something and do not believe the Lord will answer? Do we doubt Him?

Once a lady had a large stump just outside her window, and one night before going to bed she decided to pray that the Lord would remove the stump. The next morning she ran to the window, and the stump was still there. She said, “Lord, I knew you couldn’t do it!” Yes, she was praying for the wrong thing, but the point is, she was also praying without faith. Even if she had been praying within God’s will, He would not have heard her prayer, because she prayed without faith.

In Luke 11:5-10, immediately after giving His disciples a model prayer, Jesus gave an illustration. He told of a man that had unexpected company come in late and he was without bread. He went to a friend’s house to borrow some, but his friend (with his children) were already in bed. His friend told him, “*I cannot rise and give to you.*” Jesus continued, “*I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs*” (Luke 11:8). Then Jesus applied this little parable by calling upon His disciples to ask, seek, and knock believing that God will give. Jesus also told a similar parable in Luke 18:3-8 to teach the importance of continuing to pray with faith.

God Answers Prayers

For prayer to have power, one must believe that God answers all prayers of His children. This is not to say that He always answers prayers in the way we want, because God does not always say yes! It seems that there are three ways that God answers prayers. He may answer “yes,” He may answer

“no,” or He may answer “wait a while.” Out of these three, He chooses what is best for His children. Don’t we respond the same way today as parents? Do we say “yes” to every request of our children? When they ask for something harmful, don’t we respond with a “no?”

The apostle Paul was a faithful, praying Christian, but God did not always answer his prayers with a “yes.” Paul had a thorn in the flesh which he wanted removed. We don’t know what it was, but it must have been very disturbing. In fact, Paul prayed three times that the Lord would remove it, but the Lord refused. He said, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Paul needed that thorn, and God gave him grace to bear it. God answered his prayer, but He said “no.”

When Jesus was in the shadow of the cross, He prayed in Gethsemane that the bitter cup might pass. *“O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”* (Matthew 26:39). In some way the Father answered, “no,” because the cup did not pass from Him. Did you notice that He prayed in such a way that the Father could answer “yes” or “no?” When we pray in Jesus’ name, we should also want His will to be done (John 15:16).

Jesus Gave A Model Prayer

To be able to turn on power with prayer, it is helpful to study the model prayer given by Jesus (Matthew 6:9-13). Most of you are familiar with the words of this prayer, and may have memorized it, but have you studied closely its principles that will help you in your prayers? The prayer begins by addressing the Father and honoring His name. Remember, prayer is a spiritual child talking to his heavenly Father in the name of Christ! Then Jesus spoke of the kingdom by saying, *“Your kingdom come.”* When Jesus gave this model prayer, He was making preparation for the coming of His kingdom or church. He said to His apostles, *“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom”* (Matthew 16:28). Earlier in this same chapter He had promised to build His church and to give Peter the keys to His kingdom or church (vs. 17-19). Now He wants His apostles to pray for the coming of His kingdom. Even though the kingdom came more than nineteen hundred years ago (Acts 2), we can still pray today that His kingdom will spread throughout the world.

In this model prayer, Jesus asked them to pray for daily bread. When Christians work with their own hands to provide for the necessities of life, the Lord has promised to provide physical needs. Jesus taught that if the Father takes care of the grasses and lilies of the fields, and the birds of the air, then He will take care of His children (Matthew 6:25-34). Next in the prayer, Jesus instructs His apostles to ask for forgiveness of sins, and pray that they will forgive others. He then turns to the dangers of temptations, and asks God’s help in avoiding temptation as well as giving deliverance.

Therefore, it is easy to see that this model prayer covers the basic needs of those that follow Jesus, and these principles should be included in our prayers today as we pray through the name of Jesus.

Pray With Humility

Another very important requirement for prayer with power is to pray with humility. The haughty in spirit never receive anything from the Lord. The old saying applies, “If you want to bring back water from the spring, you must take an empty bucket.” Have you ever prayed and said by your actions,

“Lord, you owe me!” If so, nothing was received. Jesus is the Son of God and never committed a sin, and yet when He talked to His Father it was with deep humility.

Jesus instructed that those who follow Him must do so in humility. In all of His greatness, the Lord still was humble enough to wash the disciples feet (John 13:5), and He taught His disciples to do the same.

Jesus taught humility in prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. These two men went up to pray, but there was a basic difference between them. The Pharisee was full of pride and arrogance, but the tax collector came in all humility. The Pharisee came to remind God just how great he (the law abiding Pharisee) was, but the tax collector came to ask God to be merciful to him as a sinner. The man of pride left with nothing, but the man of humility received justification (Luke 18:9-14).

Pray For Right Things

If prayer is to be acceptable, one must also pray for the right things. Some get the mistaken idea that they can ask anything (with no restrictions) and receive it. This is not true, because God’s will must be considered. As we have found, God will answer His children’s prayers, but it must be done within His will. Even the “no” that Jesus received in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-45), was within the Father’s will.

The story is told of some boys in college that would fill balloons with water and drop them from the third floor of the dorm on those walking below. One night when this was in progress, just as they dropped a balloon, it was discovered that their target was a policeman. With fear they waited to see what would happen, and one of them suggested that they pray. Instead of asking God to forgive them and confessing that they had done wrong, they prayed that the policeman would not find them.

Isn’t it true that we often fail to pray for the right things because we are selfish? We may even be guilty of asking God’s blessings so that we can live a life of sin. James addressed this problem: *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasure”* (James 4:3). Be assured that God will not hear our prayers when we have the wrong motives and pray for the wrong things. However, when our prayers reflect things that are right and within His will, He will answer.

Conclusion:

Yes, there are requirements set forth in God’s word for those that pray, and every Christian has a responsibility to pray with a sincere faith, to believe that God answers prayers, to utilize the basic principles of the model prayer, to pray with humility, and to pray for the right things.

Remember, one of the great incentives for being born into God’s family is prayer. Don’t you want to be forgiven of your past sins through obedience to the gospel, and then have the privilege of talking daily to God in prayer?



HOPE

*FOR FORGIVENESS
OF SINS*

EPH. 1:7

*TO BE
RESURRECTED*

JOHN 11:25

*TO LIVE IN
HEAVEN*

JOHN 4:14

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.

Hope

1 Corinthians 13:13

Introduction:

- A. Since sin by Adam and Eve, great need for Hope
- B. All hope was gone after sin, but God lighted the pathway of hope
 - 1. (*Genesis 3:15*)
- C. Most of Old Testament relates plans through a nation to bring this hope
- D. This was accomplished when the Son of God came and died
- E. Paul classifies hope with lasting virtues (*1 Corinthians 13:13*)
 - 1. Faith and hope placed in company of the greatest - love
 - 2. Paul stated in beginning of chapter, can have faith at its greatest, but without love, nothing
 - 3. Faith is associated with hope (*Hebrews 11:1*)
 - 4. Where would hope be without love, or love without hope?
- F. Therefore, let us look at "For what do we hope?"

I. For Forgiveness Of Sins

- A. We hope that Christ has power to forgive sins
 - 1. Without forgiveness, death (*Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:8*)
- B. May have many earthly hopes, but without Christ all is limited to this life (*1 Corinthians 15:19*)
- C. Hope makes for a better life now, and after death
- D. Hope is based on the power in Jesus' blood
 - 1. (*Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14*)
 - 2. Gentiles brought nigh by His blood (*Ephesians 2:13*)
 - 3. Priests of Old Testament took animal blood, Jesus took His own blood (*Hebrews 9:12; 13:12*)
 - 4. Redeemed with this blood (*1 Peter 1:19a*)
- E. Only Jesus with His powerful blood can make us attractive to God
 - 1. Sin is ugly to God until forgiven
 - 2. Example: Ugly ink spot on handkerchief
- F. Forgiveness through Christ is complete

- 1. Some question His power to forgive them
- 2. Even Chief of sinners forgiven
- 3. Example: Dying girl needed assurance

II. To Be Resurrected

- A. Blood of Jesus brings hope because resurrected
 - 1. He is resurrection and the life (*John 11:25*)
 - 2. Promises: (1) His resurrection
(2) The faithful will be raised
- B. The apostles and others saw Him after resurrection
 - 1. (*Acts 2:32; 4:33*)
- C. Our hope either rises or falls with the resurrection
 - 1. If don't believe He was resurrected, no hope of being resurrected (*1 Corinthians 15:13,14*)
 - 2. Paul wanted to be resurrected (*Philippians 3:11*)
- D. The new birth brings hope of resurrection
 - 1. (*John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3*)
- E. Example: Dr. W. B. Hinson had hope of resurrection in face of death
- F. Poem: "The stars shine over the earth,
The stars shine over the sea;/ The stars look up to the mighty God,
The stars look down on me./ The stars shall live for a million years,
A million years and a day;/ But God and I will live and love/
When the stars have passed away" (Earl G. Hamlett).

III. To Live In Heaven

- A. Great to hope for life in heaven
- B. Jesus did not come just to make life easier on earth
 - 1. Following Him may make life here more difficult
- C. Peter realized Jesus only one with eternal life (*John 6:68*)
- D. All must decide how we will sow in life
 - 1. (*Galatians 6:8*)
- E. Only Jesus has the water of life to offer (*John 4:14*)
 - 1. It will not be a fleshly life, but spiritual
 - 2. Will be like Him (*1 John 3:2*)

3. Will have a new body
(1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

- F. Yes, this is all a mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51,52)
1. We know that the lost will receive sting of death, but those saved victory
(1 Corinthians 15:57)
- G. Our hope at His appearing will be sight
(Romans 8:24)

Conclusion:

- A. May we appreciate and be filled with hope
1. (Romans 5:13; Colossians 1:5)
- B. This is the only anchor that will hold
(Hebrews 6:19)
- C. Remember, this hope comes only through obedience and faithfulness
- D. If you are not right with God, will you obey Him now?

Hope

1 Corinthians 13:13

Introduction:

From the moment that sin was committed by Adam and Eve, there has been a pressing need for hope. In fact, at the very moment of sin, all hope for mankind was gone, but when God called the guilty parties together to pass sentence, He lighted the pathway of hope into the future with these words: *"I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He (seed of woman) shall bruise your head, and you (the serpent) shall bruise his heel"* (Genesis 3:15). Most of the Old Testament relates to establishing, keeping, and guiding a special nation from the seed of Abraham to bring this Messiah (the Hope of mankind) into the world. This was all accomplished when the Son of God was born, lived, and finally died upon the cross for sinful man, and because of this sacrifice, hope today is among our greatest possessions.

Even though all principles and virtues which are found in the Word of God are important, there are three which are classified by Paul as lasting longer. They are: faith, hope, and love. Paul closed his great love chapter by saying: *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love"* (1 Corinthians 13:13). Notice that faith and hope are placed in the company of the greatest - love. These three are separate virtues, but they are also related. For faith to be genuine, it must be motivated by love. As Paul states in the previous verses of this chapter, one can have all faith to remove mountains, but without love he is nothing. Faith and love are also related, because when the Hebrew writer defined faith, he used the great principle of hope: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). Where would hope be without love, or love without hope? Love from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ gave so much in order that hope could come alive in the hearts of the saved.

Therefore, let us look at hope, one of the three lasting virtues, that means so much to Christians. May we learn why Paul singled hope out along with faith and love to outlast all others.

Let us begin by asking the question, "For what do we hope?"

For Forgiveness Of Sins

We have hope, first of all, that Christ has the power to forgive sins; for without this there is no hope. Sin is a fatal disease which (if unforgiven) brings death. In *Romans 6:23*, Paul cuts through to the bottom line and says: *"For the wages of sin is death."* To the Galatians he wrote: *"For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit*

will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Galatians 6:8). Therefore, without forgiveness there is no hope of life, joy, or peace after this life ends! We may hope to receive an education, to get a high paying job, to marry, and to have a family, but hope, without Christ, is limited only to this life. This kind of hope is good, and has its place, but it is not enough. This life is short, and eternity long, and thus we become losers without hope in Christ Jesus. Paul expressed it this way: *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19). Living for Christ while on this earth certainly adds to our hope of a richer life, because regardless of the many promises of sin, those that follow such destroy their hope for better things. However, hope in Christ finds the better way, as the hope of a Christian extends beyond this life into eternity with God.

The Christian's hope is based upon the fact that there is power in Jesus' blood to forgive sins, and to deny this is to deny the word of God. Paul says of Jesus: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). Gentiles were brought to salvation by His blood: *"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ"* (Ephesians 2:13). When the priests of the law of Moses sought forgiveness for the people, they took animal blood to the holy place, but Jesus took His own blood: *"Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."* (Hebrews 9:12). Jesus suffered outside the gate: *"... that he might sanctify the people with his own blood"* (Hebrews 13:12). The apostle Peter wrote that his Christian readers were not redeemed by corruptible things: *"But with the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Peter 1:19a).

Only Jesus with His powerful blood can change our lives and make us into something attractive to our heavenly Father. When God sees sin, He sees guilt, ugliness, and death, but when He sees one cleansed by His Son's blood, He sees something of beauty.

"A friend once showed John Ruskin a costly handkerchief on which a blot of ink had been made. 'Nothing can be done with it now,' said the owner. 'It is absolutely worthless.'

Ruskin made no reply but carried it away with him. After a time he sent it back, to the great surprise of his friend, who could scarcely believe his eyes. In a most artistic way Ruskin had made a design in India ink, using the ugly blot as a center for the design.

A blotted life is not necessarily a useless life. Jesus

can make a life beautiful if it is yielded to Him.”

—Moody Monthly

When it comes to being forgiven of sins, our hope is complete for Jesus forgives all of our sins. Some may feel that they have gone so deeply into sin that there is no hope, but not so! The same forgiveness granted the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus, can be received by others.

“Sister,” said a dying girl, “please get the Bible and read for me that passage about the Blood which cleanseth from sin. I fear some of my sins are too great to be forgiven. Look whether it says ‘all sin’ or only ‘sin’, for I do not remember.” “Yes,” replied the sister, “these are the exact words, ‘The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.’” “Oh, how sweet!” said the girl whose fire of life was almost out. “Now there is pardon for all my sins.”

—Gospel Herald

Yes, because of this complete forgiveness through His blood we can all have hope.

To Be Resurrected

The blood of our Lord is powerful because He did not remain dead, but broke forth the shackles of death that had bound Him, to come forth in His glorious resurrection. Even before this marvelous experience occurred, Jesus said to Martha: *‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live.’* (John 11:25). In this passage, Jesus promises two things. (1) He will be resurrected. (2) Those that believe on Him will be resurrected. The apostles, as well as many others, saw Him after He came out of the grave. Peter declared in his great sermon on Pentecost: *‘This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses’* (Acts 2:32). Peter was joined by the other apostles: *‘And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus’* (Acts 4:33).

Therefore, our hope either rises or falls on the resurrection of Jesus. Those that do not believe that He was resurrected, have no hope of being resurrected. Paul put it this way: *‘But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain’* (1 Corinthians 15:13,14). Paul also told the Philippian brethren that he wanted to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection: *‘if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead’* (Philippians 3:11). The resurrection represented Paul’s hope, and the same must be true with all today.

When one experiences the new birth (John 3:5), hope comes to life within this new creation. Peter blessed God because He had: *‘. . . begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’* (1 Peter 1:3). Hope in the resurrection brings life, but when this hope disappears, death reigns in its place.

Dr. W. B. Hinson stepped into the pulpit and made the following declaration:

“I remember a year ago when a man in this city said, ‘You have got to go to your death.’ I walked out to where I live, five miles out of this city, and I looked across at that mountain that I love, and I looked at the river in which I rejoice, and I looked at the stately trees that are always God’s own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps, and I said: ‘I may not see you many more times, but, Mountain, I shall be alive when you are gone; and,

River, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea; and, Stars, I shall be alive when you have fallen from your sockets in the great down-pulling of the material universe!’ ”

This kind of statement of hope can be made only by those that believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul listed hope as one of the trio that will abide after other things have passed away.

In the words of Earl G. Hamlett:

“The stars shine over the earth,
The stars shine over the sea;
The stars look up to the mighty God,
The stars look down on me.
The stars shall live for a million years,
A million years and a day;
But God and I will live and love
When the stars have passed away.”

To Live In Heaven

It is certainly a marvel just to hope for life, but such hope becomes even more glorious when we can hope for a new spiritual life with God in heaven. Jesus did not come to make life on this earth easier. In fact, He often made it more difficult. Over and over in the New Testament it is declared that He has made eternal life possible. When the multitude in John 6, turned away and followed Him no more, Jesus asked His apostles if they were leaving also. Peter gave this reason for staying: *‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’* (John 6:68).

Every accountable soul must decide how he sows in life, either to the flesh or to the Spirit. How can this be decided? One of the ways is by the fruit that one wishes to reap! Those that choose the flesh will reap corruption, but with hope, those that sow to the Spirit will reap “life everlasting” (Galatians 6:8). Only Jesus, the Son of God has this eternal life to offer. He described it to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well: *‘But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life’* (John 4:14).

There may be many questions that we ponder about that eternal bliss, but all can agree that it will not be a fleshly life, but rather one that is spiritual. We can’t know how we will be, but we can know that we will be like the One that gave us life. The apostle John said it in these words: *‘Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’* (1 John 3:2). Paul declared that all the saved will have a new body: *‘So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body’* (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Even though our physical bodies will decay, God has the power to resurrect them to life, and to change them into spiritual bodies. Yes, there are many mysteries that surround this great hope and from a human standpoint it would be impossible to accomplish such. From a scientific standpoint it would also be impossible, but with God all things are possible. Paul, by the guidance of the Spirit, was able to get a preview of this great event, and has shared it in the Word: *‘Behold, I tell you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed’* (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

He further in this chapter showed that those lost will experience the sting of death, but the hope of the Christian will be victory: *“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).*

When we shall experience the coming of the Lord, and receive the new spiritual body, our hope will be fulfilled and changed into sight. Paul wrote: *“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” (Romans 8:24).*

Conclusion:

It is my prayer, in the words of Paul that: *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).* And that you will have that *“. . . hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (Colossians 1:5), “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil” (Hebrews 6:19).* And if you do not have this hope that comes only through obedience and faithfulness to Christ that you will seek it now while it can be obtained.

**GOD'S
HONEYCOMB...**

**...HOW
SWEET IT IS!**

The
Law
Testimony
Statutes
Command-
ment
Fear
Judgments

O
F
T
H
E
L
O
R
D

is perfect
is sure
are right

is pure
is clean
are true

God's Honeycomb — How Sweet It Is!

Psalm 19:7-10

Introduction:

- A. The Psalmist declares the Word sweeter than honey and the honeycomb
 - 1. Is it sweet today? Yes, if preached properly
 - 2. Sour if preached unconcerned, unprepared, etc.
 - 3. Example: Same type food prepared different ways
- B. The goal of every preacher and teacher - make the Word sweet
 - 1. Increase appetite of listeners
(1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 5:6)
- C. How can we serve the Word so it will taste sweet?
 - 1. Our text tells us:

I. "The Law Of The Lord Is Perfect, Converting The Soul"

- A. First of all, the teacher of the Word must be converted
 - 1. Must have been born of the Word
(1 Peter 1:23)
 - 2. Must have obeyed the living Word
(Hebrews 4:12)
 - 3. Must have obeyed the gospel
(Romans 1:16; 6:17)
- B. Once we have tasted this sweetness, can tell others

II. "The Testimony Of The Lord Is Sure, Making Wise The Simple"

- A. Every teacher or preacher needs the wisdom of God
 - 1. God is the source of all true wisdom
(James 1:5)
 - 2. Need to pray daily for wisdom from above
- B. In weakness, may wish to lean on our own strength
 - 1. This causes us to teach our own wisdom
- C. When this happens, meditate on (Proverbs 3:5)

III. "The Testimony Of The Lord Is Right, Rejoicing The Heart"

- A. Mixture of Word and doctrines of men - destroy sweetness

- B. Happy when preaching the Word,
"rejoices the heart"
 - 1. When heart is full of the Word, we pass it on
- C. Beautiful feeling for listeners to leave feeling what they studied was right with God
 - 1. They leave with a sweet taste in their mouth
- D. A weekly diet of the sweet Word provides proper environment
 - 1. For adults and children to grow

IV. "The Commandment Of The Lord Is Pure, Enlightening The Eyes"

- A. Purity when Word is taught, because one teaches God
 - 1. (Matthew 5:8)
- B. Theme of every Bible message:
"Purer in heart, O God, help me to be."
 - 1. The source of this purity - Commandment of the Lord
- C. Impure mixtures, man-made doctrines, contaminate the Word
 - 1. But the pure Word purifies
- D. Only the pure Word is sweet and enlightens the eyes

V. "The Fear Of The Lord Is Clean, Enduring Forever"

- A. Fleshly things are so temporary - even our bodies
 - 1. (1 Peter 1:24,25)
- B. Fear of the Lord is clean because it lifts us above fleshly lusts of the world (1 John 2:15-17)
- C. This reverential fear of the Lord comes from feasting on the sweet honeycomb
- D. Preaching the pure Word is the only way we can teach how to live forever (Matthew 24:35)

VI. "The Judgments Of The Lord Are True and Righteous Altogether"

- A. When teaching the Word, teaching right that can't be wrong!
- B. May be tempted at times to feel that God's Word is wrong
 - 1. Must feel like Paul (Romans 3:4)

- C. The honeycomb is sweet because it is righteous through and through
 - 1. Error binds the listeners in sin
 - 2. The truth of God's Word sets them free
(John 8:32)

Conclusion:

- A. Therefore, may every instructor of God's Word be dripping with the sweetness of God's honeycomb
- B. Have you obeyed the teachings of God's Word?
- C. Have you allowed the sweetness of God's Word to lead you?
- D. If not, why not obey now?

God's Honeycomb – How Sweet It Is!

Psalm 19:7-10

Introduction:

In referring to the law and the Word of the Lord, the Psalmist declares that it is “*sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*” (Psalm 19:10b). Is the Word of the Lord still sweet today, or has it lost its sweetness? Be assured that the sweetness is still there, but unless it is taught and preached in the right way those listening will not taste its sweetness. In fact, an unprepared, unconcerned, and unenthusiastic preacher or teacher will give the Word a sour taste. This should not be shocking since we experience this often with physical food. Two cooks may prepare the same type dish, and one be delicious while the other (due to improper ingredients) is repulsive. Therefore, the goal of every preacher and teacher should be to prepare the Word so that each listener will taste its sweetness, and “*as newborn babes,*” will “*desire the pure milk of the word*” (1 Peter 2:2), and will “*hunger and thirst for righteousness*” (Matthew 5:6).

How can the Word be served in such a way that it will taste sweet? In the same psalm we are told that the Word is “*sweeter than honey and the honeycomb,*” we find the answer.

(1) “The law of the LORD is PERFECT, converting the soul.”

First of all, we must be converted by the Word. Before we can teach the sweetness of the Word to convert the soul, we must have been converted. As Peter wrote: “*having been born again, not of corruptible seed by incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever*” (1 Peter 1:23). The living, powerful, and sharp Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), the gospel of Jesus Christ “*the power of God to salvation*” (Romans 1:16), must have been obeyed by the preacher or teacher (Romans 6:17). Once we are truly converted and have tasted this spiritual honeycomb, we can then sell others on its sweetness.

(2) “The testimony of the LORD is SURE, making wise the simple”

Every leader that stands before precious souls to teach needs the wisdom of God. Remember, God is the source of all true wisdom (James 1:5), and the one that prays for wisdom and allows God's Word to permeate his or her heart will be able to serve this sweetness to others. There may be times during our weakness that we want to lean on our own strength and understanding, and are tempted to teach our own wisdom. When this happens, we should meditate on these words: “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding*” (Proverbs 3:5).

(3) “The testimony of the LORD is RIGHT, rejoicing the heart”

If we mix the doctrines and commandments of men with the Word, it will lose its sweetness. The happiest preachers and teachers on earth are those that are teaching the pure Word, for it alone “*rejoices the heart.*” When our hearts are full of the Word, it will be passed on to those we teach! At the end of every sermon or Bible class, our hearers will leave feeling that what they have studied is “*right,*” and this brings sweetness and happiness to their lives. A heart made happy weekly from God's Word is a beautiful environment where adults, as well as our children, can grow.

(4) “The commandment of the LORD is PURE, enlightening the eyes”

There is purity when God's Word is taught because those hearing are taught of God who is ALL pure. Jesus taught: “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8). The theme of every Bible messenger should be: “*Purer in heart, O God, help me to be*” as he or she strives to make the ones being taught pure! The source that makes purity is “*the commandment of the LORD*”. Impure mixtures, the world with all its fleshly ways, and man-made doctrines contaminate, but the Word of the LORD purifies. Remember, God's honeycomb is sweet only in its purity, and is then able to enlighten the eyes of those that eat.

(5) “The fear of the LORD is CLEAN, enduring forever”

The fleshly things on earth are so temporary. Even our fleshly bodies that we consider so valuable are temporary. The apostle Peter wrote: “*All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever*” (1 Peter 1:24,25). “*The fear of the LORD is clean*” because it lifts us above the fleshly lusts of this world (1 John 2:15-17). The reverential fear of the LORD that all hearers need comes from feasting on the honeycomb. Teaching obedience to the Word is the only way we can show our precious listeners how to live and endure forever. Jesus taught: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away*” (Matthew 24:35).

(6) “The judgments of the LORD are TRUE and RIGHTEOUS altogether”

Isn't it wonderful to know that when we teach God's Word that we are teaching those things that are right and cannot be wrong? There may be times when we are tempted to feel that man's doctrines are right and that God is mistaken. However, we must say with the apostle Paul: “*let God be true but every man a liar*” (Romans 3:4). One of the things that makes the honeycomb so sweet is that it is righteous through

and through! Error and lies bind the lives and souls, but God's truth will set them free (*John 8:32*).

Conclusion:

Therefore, may every preacher that enters the pulpit to preach, and every teacher that enters the classroom to teach, be dripping with the sweetness of God's honey and the honeycomb, and both you and the ones you teach will be richly blessed.

Have you obeyed the teaching of God's Word to become a Christian? Have you allowed the sweetness of God's Word to lead your life? If you must answer, "no," why not respond now?

Questions About Marriage & Divorce

IS MARRIAGE A LEGAL OR SPIRITUAL CONTRACT?

CAN A CHRISTIAN RIGHTFULLY SAY: "WHAT I DO WITH MY MARRIAGE IS MY OWN BUSINESS?"

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE & DIVORCE?

WHAT DID PAUL TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE & DIVORCE?

WHAT IS THE GREATEST DANGER CAUSING CHRISTIANS TO GO WRONG IN DIVORCE?

Questions About Marriage And Divorce

Introduction:

- A. Want to speak on a very serious subject
 - 1. "Questions About Marriage and Divorce"
- B. Concerned about attitudes in church on this subject
 - 1. Feel like Jeremiah toward Israel
(*Jeremiah 9:1*)
- C. More and more the world is leading the church
 - 1. Must teach against this happening
 - 2. Jesus often taught by questions and answers
 - 3. Therefore let us consider the questions:

I. Is Marriage A Legal Or Spiritual Contract?

- A. Marriage in God's eyes is both
- B. Always been some type of legal contract
 - 1. Parental selection, feast, broom, ceremony
- C. Always been the spiritual, God designed marriage
 - 1. (*Genesis 2:24*)
 - 2. Three things: (1) Leave (2) Be joined (3) One flesh
 - 3. Does not give a way out for God, or man and woman!
 - 4. Jesus quoted this law and added conclusion (*Matthew 19:6*)
- D. God formed nation through Abraham to bring Messiah
 - 1. His feelings toward marriage had not changed
 - 2. Might ask with Pharisees, "Why did Moses give a certificate of divorce?"
 - 3. Jesus answered: (*Matthew 19:8*)
 - 4. Don't blame God, blame man's HARD heart
 - 5. Legalizing divorce did not Scripturalize it!
- E. Move on to last prophet, Malachi, God still had not changed
 - 1. Malachi cried out (*Malachi 2:14-16*)
- F. What has happened to nation and church today?
 - 1. Turned to legal without scripture!
 - 2. Legal: "Marriage is a contract between two individuals, which can be dissolved if there is SUFFICIENT CAUSE"

- 3. Thousands are divorcing for ANY CAUSE. (Not in God's eyes)
- 4. World is publicizing through TV, books, Magazines, etc.
- 5. World can't change God or His Word

II. What Did Jesus Teach About Divorce And Remarriage?

- A. He divided the subject into three periods:
 - 1. a. beginning b. Moses' time c. His teaching
 - 2. Already looked at first two, now look at His teaching
 - B. (*Matthew 19:9*)
 - 1. Could not be plainer. . . One exception - Sexual Immorality
 - 2. Long way from. . . any cause
 - 3. Unscripturally divorced man or woman. . . when they marry, they are contaminated
 - 4. Example: Man with AIDS, marries healthy woman (both die)
 - 5. Adultery same way: Both will die spiritually!
 - C. Adultery is listed as number one on WORKS OF THE FLESH!
 - 1. Can't inherit the kingdom of God (*Galatians 5:21*)
 - 2. Time to realize - can lose soul over unscriptural marriages
 - D. Jesus carried teaching further in Sermon on Mount
 - 1. (*Matthew 5:32*)
 - 2. Three people can be guilty:
 - a. The husband that divorces
 - b. The wife he divorces
 - c. The one that marries the divorced wife
 - E. Therefore, divorce is a deadly sin. . . affects the lives of many
- ## III. What Did Paul Teach About Divorce And Remarriage?
- A. Thus far, looked at what Jesus taught while preparing for kingdom
 - B. Paul taught on the subject after the church was established

- C. Mentions DEATH as the only reason:
 1. (*Romans 7:2,3*)
- D. Even if husband is dead, still mentions a restriction:
 1. (*1 Corinthians 7:39*)
- E. To Christian married couples at Corinth he wrote:
 1. (*1 Corinthians 7:10,11*)
- F. Paul offers them three choices
 1. Do not leave
 2. Leave and remain single
 3. Be reconciled to the same mate
- G. No exceptions given!
- H. To Christians married to unbelievers (*1 Corinthians 7:12-14*)
 1. Remain with them if they will stay
 2. If they leave, you will not be blamed
 3. Does not mention they are free to remarry (man teaches this)
- I. Christ's teaching plus Paul's teaching equals:
 1. SEXUAL IMMORALITY and DEATH only two things that break apart a marriage

IV. Can A Christian Rightfully Say: "What I Do With My Marriage Is My Own Business?"

- A. This is what the devil wants us to say
- B. This is a lie, because others are affected
- C. Must reckon with God
 1. If one thinks he or she can go to heaven living in adultery, deceived (*1 Corinthians 6:9,10*)
- D. Must consider spiritual welfare of mate
 1. Will your leaving cause him/her to commit adultery?
 2. Will you cause him/her to be lost?
- E. Must consider spiritual welfare of children
 1. Unhappiness now, in future their marriages may suffer
 2. Example: 'If mom and dad can divorce, so can we'
 3. Your divorce may cause them to lose their souls!
- F. The man or woman you marry will be affected
 1. If you are not free, you'll spiritually contaminate
 2. This is the biggest stakes in gambling
- G. Church is affected
 1. You represent one of the "living stones" (*1 Peter 2:5*)
 2. You'll bring reproach on the church
 3. World is looking for something to speak against the church
- H. Elders and church have the right to be concerned
 1. As shepherds. . . must oversee souls (*Acts 20:28*)
 2. As Christians, must obey them

(*Hebrews 13:17*)

- 3. If they stand by and do nothing. . . like a shepherd allowing a wolf to destroy sheep.

V. What Is The Greatest Danger Causing Christians To Go Wrong In Divorce?

- A. To be influenced by this modern age
 1. TV, books, unchristian counselors
 2. Feel it is all right since everyone is doing it!
 3. Listening to friends and others that have divorced
 4. Turning your back on God's Word (Like Israel)
- B. Failing to consider the seriousness of marriage
 1. Some don't commit for life - When the going gets rough - they get going!
 2. Some rush into marriage without knowing their partner
 3. Example: Later learn of a previous marriage

Conclusion:

- A. I come to you as a spokesman of God
- B. I come to you because I love you and your soul
- C. Work to keep your marriage together
- D. If you miss eternal life, you have missed EVERYTHING!
- E. Should you not be right with God, please respond and obey His will.

Questions About Marriage And Divorce

Introduction:

As I think about the attitudes and actions of many in the church across the land in regard to marriage and divorce, I wish to cry out as did Jeremiah in the long ago to Israel, *"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night"* (Jeremiah 9:1). More and more, the world is leading the way for Christians instead of Christians showing the world the way of Christ, and unless there is a change, many will lose their souls. What can be done to restore the teaching of God's word? The pulpits need to come through forcefully on the subject; however, this is not enough! Teachers, in all Bible classes need to turn our backs on the thinking of the world, and even our brethren that are teaching contrary to God's Word on the subject, and teach it like it is! It is past time that biblical facts be taught sincerely to those we guide spiritually.

Therefore, in this sermon, please consider prayerfully the following questions on marriage and divorce. Remember, the best way to avoid divorce is to teach and practice God's way!

Is Marriage A Legal Or Spiritual Contract?

Marriage in the eyes of God is both. In all generations there has been some type of legal commitment associated with marriage. It may have been parental selection, a marriage feast, the giving of a dowry, jumping a broom or a ceremony, but the legal has always been important. As to the spiritual, marriage came from God as He brought the first couple together and gave the laws to bind marriage. Moses records them in *Genesis 2:24*, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* Here you will notice that God commanded a man to "leave" father and mother, "be joined to his wife," and "to be one flesh." This spiritual contract of marriage is so binding that God does not give a way out. He could have provided a way for Himself (God) to dissolve a marriage, or He could have provided a way for man or woman to put each other away, but He didn't! When Jesus quoted this original law, He added: *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate"* (Matthew 19:6).

After this law was given, centuries passed and God formed a special nation through the seed of Abraham to bring the Messiah into the world. However, the passing of years did not change God's feelings about "putting away!" One might ask, as did the Pharisees to Jesus: *"Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put away?"* (Matthew 19:7). His answer, *"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so"* (verse 8). Jesus is saying, "don't blame God for divorce,

but place the blame on the hard hearts of the people!" They were able to legalize divorce, but failed to scripturalize it.

By the time we get to the last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi, we can learn that God still had not changed His mind. Israel's offerings were not being accepted by the Lord, and they were asking, "For what reason?" Malachi answers: *"Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did he not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce, for it covers one's garments with violence"* (Malachi 2:14-16).

What has happened to our nation today which includes many in the church? We have turned to the legal without the spiritual. The legal states: "Marriage is a contract between two individuals, which can be dissolved if there is SUFFICIENT CAUSE. Therefore, thousands are legally divorced for ANY CAUSE, but the marriages are not "put away" acceptably in God's eyes! The world has not only ignored the spiritual, but through television, movies, books, magazines, and unchristian counselors has publicized (in a graphic and colorful way) their sinful actions. Remember, the world has never been able to change God and His laws, but it has been able to persuade many to leave God and lose their eternal souls.

What Did Jesus Teach About Divorce And Remarriage?

Jesus divided the subject into three periods of time: (1) In the beginning (2) During Moses' time (3) At the time of His teaching. Since we have already looked at the first two, let us look at what Jesus taught. *"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery"* (Matthew 19:9). Could it be written any plainer? Only ONE exception is given - SEXUAL IMMORALITY, and this is a long way from "any cause"! Notice that Jesus is not just speaking of "putting away," but "putting away and remarriage."

An unscripturally divorced man or woman contemplating marriage is spiritually contaminated to the point that he/she will be living in adultery, and any innocent person they may marry will be living in adultery. Suppose a man has the terrible, highly contagious disease 'AIDS', and asks a healthy woman to marry him. From this intimate relationship, both would die from AIDS! Adultery is a deadly spiritual condi-

tion, listed as 'number one' on the list of the works of the flesh (*Galatians 5:19*), and "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21).

As we consider Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage, He carries this teaching a step further in His sermon on the mountain. "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery (*Matthew 5:32*). Did you catch the chain reaction? Three people can be guilty: (1) The husband that divorces causes her to commit adultery. (2) The wife he divorces commits adultery. (3) The one that marries the divorced wife commits adultery. Therefore, adultery is a deadly, contagious sin that affects the lives of others, and Jesus strongly opposes it.

What Did Paul Teach About Divorce And Remarriage?

Thus far we have looked at what Jesus taught about divorce and remarriage as He prepared for the coming of His church. As we consider Paul's teaching, we are studying what was taught after the church was established. When Paul wrote on the subject, he mentioned death as the only exception. "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man she will be called an adulteress" (*Romans 7:2-3*). Even if her husband is dead, Paul gives a restriction: "A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord" (*1 Corinthians 7:39*).

To the Christian married couples at Corinth, he wrote: "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife" (*1 Corinthians 7:10, 11*). Here, Paul offers obviously three choices: (1) DO NOT LEAVE. (2) LEAVE AND REMAIN SINGLE. (3) BE RECONCILED TO THE SAME MATE. No exceptions are mentioned.

Even Christians married to unbelievers were commanded to remain with their mates, unless their unbelieving mates chose to leave. In such cases, the Christians would not be blamed for their leaving, but Paul does not say that they would be free to remarry! (*1 Corinthians 7:12-14*). Man in recent years has taught this, but not Paul.

When you join the teaching of Christ and Paul, you have only two things that break apart the one flesh in a marriage: (1) SEXUAL IMMORALITY (2) DEATH. Any honest person can see that marriage is a serious union in God's eyes, and all should make every possible sacrifice to avoid divorce!

Can A Christian Rightfully Say: "What I Do With My Marriage Is My Own Business?"

This is what the devil wants us to say, but, no, this is not true. For you see, when we decide to break up our marriage, others are affected.

(1) First of all, we must reckon with God. If we think we can live in adultery and still go to heaven, we are deceived. Paul asked: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (*1 Corinthians 6:9,10*). Before

choosing a life of adultery, we should ask, "Is this worth my eternal soul?"

(2) In the second place, we must consider our mates. Will our leaving cause them to commit adultery? Will this awful experience drive our mates from the Lord?

(3) Then, our children will be affected. There will be unhappiness now, and in the future their marriages may suffer. When the going gets rough, (it usually does) they may say: "If mom and dad can divorce, so can we." Our influence could cause our children to lose their souls because of adultery.

(4) The man or woman we marry will be affected to the point of becoming an adulterer or adulteress, if we are not free (*Matthew 5:32*). To gamble on our souls, and the souls of others is the highest stakes possible.

(5) Finally, the church is affected, because as Christians, we represent the living stones (*1 Peter 2:5*) that makes up God's spiritual temple - the church. When we conduct ourselves as the world, we bring reproach on His temple and defile it. When we keep our bodies pure, we bring honor to His Holy Temple.

Therefore, the elders of the church have the right to be concerned for the sake of the church and for our individual souls. As shepherds, they are charged to oversee the flock of God (*Acts 20:28*), and to keep each member pure: We are commanded to: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account" (*Hebrews 13:17*). For them to stand by and watch members divorce and enter adulterous relationships would be like a shepherd allowing wolves to destroy precious sheep.

What Is The Greatest Danger Causing Christians To Go Wrong In Divorce?

The greatest danger is to allow the pressures and influences of this modern age to set our standards on marriage and divorce instead of the Word of God. Most of us have a daily dose of television crying out that divorce is the proper course to follow. Most newspapers contain a daily list of filed divorces, and many authors of books and magazines suggest divorce as the right way out in certain cases. We may reach the point where we feel that everyone is doing it, and it must be all right. Even our friends and neighbors may encourage us to divorce, and consequently, thousands have been led from the strictness of God's Word. The same thing that happened to Israel and brought warnings from God's prophets, is happening to us. With the same urgency and love of the Old Testament prophets, I cry out to you - don't listen to the world! Don't let the way of the devil destroy your soul. Put God and His word first in your life and marriage, and your reward will be precious both in this life and in heaven!

Conclusion:

Is your life right with God? Have you obeyed His will and allowed the power of the gospel to save you? If already a Christian, have you allowed the world to lead you from God? If you are not right, why not respond now?

CONDEMNED

IN:

IS

HOMOSEXUALITY

A SIN?

OLD TESTAMENT
BEFORE
LAW OF MOSES

THE
NEW TESTAMENT
AGE

THE
LAW OF MOSES

Is Homosexuality A Sin?

Introduction:

- A. In early 80's, news featured a program on the gay movement
 - 1. Facts were presented in all areas except Bible
 - 2. Even the preacher interviewed did not quote a scripture
 - 3. His failure may have encouraged many to think it okay
 - 4. Gay side was presented, but not God's side!
- B. Some say: "Ignore the problem; it will go away!" (WRONG)
 - 1. Kinsey report in past revealed:
 - 2. 10% of nation's population homosexual
 - 3. 25% San Francisco, California is gay - 200,000
 - 4. Increasing each year - not going away
 - 5. Made inroads into business, governments, and churches
- C. It is time New Testament Christians cried out from God's Word
 - 1. Therefore, let us ask: "Is Homosexuality A Sin?"
 - 2. Want to answer from the Word of God
- D. Condemned in three Ages:
 - 1. Before written law
 - 2. When Law of Moses was given
 - 3. Christian Age

I. Before Written Law

- A. In Genesis, God made man heterosexual (desiring opposite sex)
- B. Later, man changed this to homosexual (Sexual activity when both parties are of the same sex)
- C. First mention of this sin (*Genesis 18:10*)
 - 1. Relate: Angels visited Abraham (50 righteous down to ten could not be found in Sodom)
 - 2. Men (angels) spent night at Lot's house - Men tried to get in - blinded, but still became weary trying to get in (*Genesis 19:11*)
 - 3. Lord rained down fire and brimstone

(*Genesis 19:24,25*)

- 4. Cities destroyed, some think Dead Sea covers those cities today.
- D. Peter referred back to these cities: "making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly" (*2 Peter 2:6*)
 - 1. Peter says sodomy or homosexuality "ungodly"
 - 2. Thus, this sin is condemned before the written law.

II. Condemned In The Law Of Moses

- A. Written law contained the ten commandments plus detailed description
 - 1. (*Leviticus 18:22*)
 - 2. ABOMINATION: "unlawful, hateful, odious, offensive, unclean"
 - 3. Context suggests that God hated such
- B. Two chapters later:
 - 1. (*Leviticus 20:13*)
- C. Even though we are not living under this law, shows how God felt
 - 1. Lays foundation and example for New Testament
 - 2. How could anyone read these passages and say God approves?

III. Condemned In New Testament Age

- A. When turn to New Testament, homosexuality is considered a sin just as in the Old Testament
 - 1. (*1 Timothy 1:9,10*)
- B. Planted within this horrible list of sins is SODOMITES
 - 1. These are the homosexuals!
 - 2. Paul classified them as: lawless, ungodly, sinners and murderers!
 - 3. How could there be any doubts in Christian's mind?
- C. Paul attacked this awful sin in (*Romans 1*), describing the heathen: (*v. 18*)
 - 1. "professing to be wise, they became fools" (*v. 22*)
 - 2. He showed how God feels (*v. 24*)
 - 3. How did they lust? (*vs. 26,27*)

- D. Who are these homosexuals Paul described?
 - 1. The ones that God had revealed His wrath against
 - 2. The ones that God had given up to lust and dishonor their bodies
- E. How can any person refuse to believe God and not take a stand?

IV. Can The Sin Of Homosexuality Be Forgiven?

- A. YES, just as other sins when Jesus' blood is allowed through obedience!
- B. Paul wrote to Christians at Corinth:
(*1 Corinthians 6:9,10*).
 - 1. Here Paul said they (along with other sins) will be lost
 - 2. Can this be changed?
 - 3. Yes (*v. 11*).
 - 4. When homosexuals obey gospel (*Romans 1:16*), they are saved

Conclusion:

- A. Time to recognize Homosexuality as a sin, not a body or mind disorder!
- B. God approves heterosexuality in marriage (*Hebrews 13:4*) man cannot change God's will and still please Him
- C. Try to convert the homosexual, but if they refuse, let God's Word condemn
- D. "CHOOSE for yourselves this day whom you will serve, . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (*Joshua 24:15*)

Is Homosexuality A Sin?

Introduction:

In the early 80's there was featured on one of the evening news programs a series on the gay movement in our nation. An effort was made to give all the facets of this movement, but very little was shown to inform the viewers the teaching of the Bible, and even the preacher they chose to interview would not take a stand. He claimed to be a minister of the word, but he did not give a single scripture. In fact, his failing to take a stand for the truth may have caused many to accept homosexuality as being right with God and society. Only one side (the gay's side) was fully presented, but be assured that God has the truth on this subject which must be considered. Remember, when God condemns something, even if all society approves, it is still wrong.

Some have said: "Just ignore this problem and it will soon go away since only a few in this nation are involved." Those that feel this way are mistaken. According to one report by Kinsey, 10% of our nation's population is believed to be homosexual, and 25% of the population of San Francisco, California is gay. This means that 200,000 in this California city are gay. Since these figures are increasing yearly, does the problem seem to be diminishing?

This sinful movement has boldly made inroads into business, governments, and churches, and it is time for New Testament Christians to stop hiding our heads in the sand, and begin teaching God's Word. Be assured that as Christians we do not have to be on the fence, because the Bible makes it plain that homosexuality is a SIN! It was condemned in the Old Testament, and the same is true in the New. Let us turn our attention to what the Bible says about homosexuality.

Condemned In Old Testament Before Law Of Moses

The word homosexuality is defined as: "Sexual activity when both parties are of the same sex." First of all, notice that this was condemned in the Old Testament. The first mention of this being practiced was in the days of Abraham before the written law of Moses was given. Angels appeared to Abraham in the form of men to announce that he and Sarah would have a son (*Genesis 18:10*). One of these angels represented the Lord, and as they looked toward the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord said that the cry of their sin is very grievous. Abraham talked with the Lord and asked Him to save the cities if fifty righteous could be found. The Lord agreed, but fifty could not be found. Abraham moved the number to forty five, forty, thirty, twenty, and finally ten, and the Lord agreed to save the cities if only ten righteous could be found. However, ten righteous could not

be found, and therefore, the cities must be destroyed.

Two angels came to visit Lot (Abraham's nephew) at Sodom, and Lot insisted that they spend the night at his house. Before they laid down that night to sleep, the men of Sodom (both young and old) came to Lot's house calling for the men, and desiring a sexual relationship with them (*Genesis 19:5*). Lot had two daughters, but they didn't want them because these men were homosexuals and desired their own sex. Therefore, they pressed Lot to let them in even to the point of breaking down the door. Thus, the two men (Lot's guests) put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house and shut the door (*v. 10*). Then to stop the lustful men of Sodom, Lot's guests used God's power to make them blind. Did this stop them? It kept them out, but the Bible says: "*they became weary trying to find the door*" (*Genesis 19:11*).

At this point, the men of God made this announcement: "*For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it*" (*v. 13*). Next we read: "*Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. So he overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground*" (*vs. 24, 25*). Today, these cities are unknown and some believe that the Dead Sea stands with all of its deadness and corruption as a reminder of how God felt about the sin of sodomy and homosexuality.

The apostle Peter refers to these cities: "*making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly*" (*2 Peter 2:6*). The practice of homosexuality (according to Peter) is ungodly, and God condemned it in the first part of the Old Testament.

Condemned In The Law Of Moses

When God gave Israel their written law through Moses, He gave the Ten Commandments, plus a detailed description of the laws. In *Leviticus 18:22*, God gave this commandment to men: "*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.*" The word abomination not only suggests unlawful, but can be defined as hateful, odious, offensive, unclean, and the context suggests that God hated such practices. Two chapters later, the subject is mentioned again along with the punishment: "*if a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them*" (*Leviticus 20:13*).

Even though we are not living under this law of Moses today, it gives us a history of how God felt in the past, and lays the foundation for the way He feels under the Christian age.

How could anyone read these scriptures and believe that the practice of homosexuality is not a sin?

Condemned In New Testament Age

When we turn our attention to the age of Christ, the same teaching of the Old Testament on the sin of homosexuality is found. When Paul referred back to the law, he wrote: *“knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers. . . .”* (1 Timothy 1:9,10). Planted securely within this list of horrible sins is “sodomites.” These are the homosexuals! Paul classifies the homosexuals with the lawless, ungodly, sinners, and even murderers! How could any person claiming to believe the Bible be in doubt as to what is right or wrong in regard to homosexuality?

The apostle Paul also makes a strong attack against this sin in *Romans 1*. In *verse 18*, he begins his description of the corruption of the heathen world: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”* He said that these evil people were: *“professing to be wise, they became fools”* (v. 22). Then he shows how God felt about them: *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves”* (v. 24). How did they lust and dishonor their bodies? *“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due”* (vs. 26,27). These words are written so plainly that Paul leaves NO DOUBT!

Who are these homosexuals that Paul is describing? They are the ones that God has revealed His wrath against. They are the ones that God has given up to uncleanness, lust, and to dishonor their bodies. How can any Christian uphold this sin? How can any MAN or WOMAN practice such and believe that they can serve God? We might also ask, how can any person claim to be a child of God and refuse to take a stand?

Can The Sin Of Homosexuality Be Forgiven?

Can the sin of homosexuality be forgiven? Yes, just as other sins of the flesh can be forgiven. When one allows the blood of Christ to forgive, and turns away from such in obedience, there is forgiveness. To the church at Corinth Paul wrote: *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Here Paul has declared that homosexuals and sodomites (along with other evils) will not be saved if they continue in their sins. The important question is, can they be saved? Paul answers this in the next verse: *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (v. 11). When these homosexuals of the past, obeyed the Gospel (*Romans 1:16*), and gave up this and other sins, they became clean and saved.

Conclusion:

Therefore, it is time to recognize that homosexuality is a SIN, not a SICKNESS or body and mind disorder. God

made man and woman heterosexual (to desire the opposite sex), and giving in to homosexuality changes His will. What if they are born with this desire? Some people seem to be born with a weakness to harm others, and may even later desire to commit murder, but does this justify the sin of murder? All the publicity, the approval of the majority, and even acceptance by major religions, DO NOT change God’s Word. Try to convert the homosexuals to the Lord, but if they refuse, allow God’s Word to stand and condemn this and all other sins of the flesh.

In the famous words of Joshua: *“CHOOSE for yourselves this day whom you will serve, . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Joshua 24:15).

WHAT HINDERS ME FROM BEING BAPTIZED

ACTS 8:36

Unbelief

Heb. 11:6

Impenitent

Lk. 13:3

Wrong Purpose

Acts 2:38

Wrong Act

Rom. 6:4

Wrong Subjects

Mk. 16:16

**Rejects God's
Council**

Lk. 7:30

Procastination

Acts 24:25

What Hinders Me From Being Baptized?

Introduction:

- A. Ethiopian eunuch asked this question after taught about Jesus
 - 1. (*Acts 8:36*)
- B. Over the years, thousands hindered by various reasons
 - 1. Want to study some biblical things that hinder:

I. Because They Don't Believe

- A. When the eunuch asked "what hinders me?"
Answer: "If you believe, you may"
- B. Believe in what?
 - 1. In God? Yes (*Hebrews 11:6*)
 - 2. Also must believe that Jesus is the Son of God
- C. Notice instructions to apostles from Jesus when sent to world
 - 1. (*Mark 16:15,16*) Must first believe, then baptism
 - 2. Had to believe the gospel - death, burial and resurrection
- D. Those who do not believe in Jesus are hindered and condemned

II. From Lack Of Repentance

- A. Let us first define repentance
 - 1. "To change one's mind, heart and will which is followed by a change of actions"
 - 2. A sinner decides to stop following sin and to follow Jesus
- B. Jesus gives an illustration of repentance (*Matthew 21:28,29*)
- C. In *Acts 2*, Peter's first step - to make believers
- D. When they became believers, "cut to the heart"
 - 1. Asked what to do to be saved (*v. 37*)
 - 2. Peter's answer (*v. 38*)
- E. In (*Acts 3:19*), Peter told another audience to repent
 - 1. There can be no baptism without repentance
- F. Jesus taught that it is either repentance or perish (*Luke 13:3*)
- G. Paul taught its importance on Mars Hill

(*Acts 17:30*)

- H. Learned thus far, no baptism without believing and repenting

III. Because Of Wrong Purpose

- A. Many hindered because they don't understand the purpose of baptism
 - 1. This has been a "hot" controversy for many years
 - 2. Why? Is it because the Bible is not clear?
 - 3. Let the Bible speak for itself
- B. Whole religious world divided into two beliefs:
 - 1. Baptism is NOT essential
 - 2. Baptism IS essential
- C. Both can't be right - opposite extremes, and the Bible does not contradict itself
- D. Let us read and compare three important scriptures:
 - 1. (*Acts 2:38*); (*Acts 22:10-16*); (*Mark 16:16*)
 - 2. Summed up: Salvation from the remission of sins
 - 3. Way of reaching blood and new birth (*John 3:5*)
- E. Therefore, those teaching not essential - teaching error
 - 1. Hindering the lost from baptism
- F. Did not say: "Believe, saved, and then be baptized to join a denomination!"
 - 1. But, believe, be baptized, and saved. (*Mark 16:16*)

IV. Because Of The Wrong Act

- A. New Testament writers wrote only of immersion
 - 1. Word for baptize means: "to dip, immerse, sink, to overwhelm"
 - 2. First time sprinkling added, third century - called "clinical baptism"
 - 3. 753 A.D. first law for sprinkling issued
 - 4. Bible has never taught it!
- B. Biblical example - went down into the water (*Acts 8:38,39*)
- C. Baptism is a burial (*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*)
- D. To teach wrong act, is to hinder proper baptism

V. Because Of Wrong Subjects

- A. Not a single command or example to baptize infants
 - 1. This practice began about 160-250 A.D.
- B. Does the Bible give an exact age to baptize?
 - 1. No, gives principles that rule out infants
- C. Subjects must be able to hear and believe gospel (*Mark 16:16*)
- D. Baptism is for remission of sins - Infants have no sins
 - 1. (*Matthew 18:3*)
- E. When reach age to sin, must be baptized
- F. Infant baptism hinders many from being scripturally baptized

VI. Rejects God's Council

- A. During Jesus's ministry, Pharisees and Lawyers hindered from John's baptism
 - 1. What hindered them from being baptized?
 - 2. "*rejected the counsel of God for themselves*" (*Luke 7:30*)
- B. This is usually the foundation for all other hindrances
 - 1. To refuse baptism is to refuse the word of God
- C. Those that don't want baptism essential, reject the counsel of God

VII. Because Of Procrastination

- A. "Procastination" means to "put off"
 - 1. May study baptism and agree that it is essential, but put off obeying
 - 2. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."
- B. Paul fervently preached the gospel to Felix
 - 1. Reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come
 - 2. Fearful, but sent him away for a convenient time (*Acts 24:22-25*)
 - 3. No record in Bible or history that he ever obeyed
 - 4. This hindrance cost Felix his soul!

Conclusion:

- A. In this study, have looked at seven hindrances that keep people from being baptized
 - 1. This is a serious matter - involves disobeying God!
- B. If you have not been baptized as a penitent believer for the remission of sins, which of these have hindered you?
 - 1. Doctrines of men drive one from God (*2 John 9*)
 - 2. Why not come now?

What Hinders Me From Being Baptized?

Introduction:

In Acts 8:36, after an Ethiopian eunuch had been taught about Jesus by Philip the evangelist, he asked: “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

For many years, thousands have been hindered from being baptized by various reasons. You are invited to study with me some of the things mentioned in the Bible that will hinder one from being baptized.

Because They Don’t Believe

When the eunuch asked, “*what hinders me,*” Philip answered, “*If you believe, you may.*” To baptize an unbeliever would be wasting time. Believe in what? Believe in God the Father? Yes, because Hebrews 11:6 says, “*But without faith it is impossible to please him.*” However, one must also believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Notice the instructions Jesus gave to His apostles when He sent them to preach to the sinful world: “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15,16).*” Before baptism, the sinner had to believe the gospel - the good news of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Thus, those that do not believe in Jesus the Son of God, are hindered from baptism, and will be condemned.

From Lack Of Repentance

Some are hindered by lack of repentance. Before we talk about the importance of repentance, let us define it. Repentance means to change one’s mind, heart and will which is followed by a change of actions. The sinner decides to stop following the devil and to begin following Jesus. Let us consider Jesus’ illustration of repentance:

“*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not;’ but afterward HE REPENTED, and went*” (Matthew 21:28,29).

In Acts 2, Peter convinced his audience to believe that Jesus was the Christ. At one time they were disbelievers to the point that they crucified Jesus. Now they are “cut to the heart” and ask, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” (v. 37). They are already believers, so Peter commands: “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (v. 38). If they had refused to repent and turn, they would have been hindered from being baptized!

In chapter 3 of Acts, Peter tells another audience to: “*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*” (v. 19a). There can be no baptism, there can be no remission

of sins, and there can be no sins blotted out without repentance.

Jesus was told of some Galileans that had suffered by the hand of Pilate. Jesus answered: “*I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3). Paul later told the Athenians who worshipped false gods: “*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30).

What have we learned thus far? First of all, those that do not believe Jesus to be the Christ, are hindered from being baptized. Secondly, those that will not repent and turn cannot be baptized. What else hinders people from being baptized?

Because Of Wrong Purpose

Many are hindered from being baptized because they do not understand the purpose of baptism. The purpose of baptism has been a “hot” controversy for many years. Why is the purpose of baptism a problem? Is it because the Bible doesn’t make its purpose clear? Let us see!

The whole religious world is divided into two beliefs as to the purpose of baptism. (1) Baptism is NOT essential for salvation, and (2) Baptism IS essential for salvation. Can both of these extremes be correct? Does the Bible approve both?

Please observe that these two purposes of baptism are opposite extremes. To say that both are correct would make the Bible contradict itself. Since the Bible doesn’t contradict itself, this means that mankind has caused the contradiction. Therefore, we need to know which purpose God (in His Word) approves.

Let us read three verses on the purpose of baptism, and resolve to honestly accept whatever they teach regardless of what we wish to believe or whatever religions of today may teach. This is the only way we can know and accept God’s purpose of baptism.

The first scripture refers us to what Peter told the lost crucifiers on the birthday of Christ’s church. “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Notice the purpose for baptism, *for the remission of sins!* “Remission of sins” means “In order to the forgiveness of sins.”

When the “chief of sinners,” Saul of Tarsus, met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he became a believer in Jesus and asked, “*What shall I do, Lord?*” (Acts 22:10). He was instructed to go into Damascus where he would be told what to do. After three days in Damascus, Ananias (a preacher) told him: “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord*” (v. 16). Here, the

purpose of baptism was *“to wash away sins.”*

Let us now ask Jesus, *“what is the purpose of baptism?”* When Jesus sent the apostles to the world to preach, He gave His purpose of baptism: *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).* Jesus taught that the purpose of baptism is to be saved. Now, let us sum up the purpose of baptism taught by these three scriptures:

It is for: *“the remission of sins,”* This is the Lord’s way for a penitent believer to reach the saving blood of Jesus. Only the birth of WATER and the SPIRIT (*John 3:5*) will please God. Any other purpose of baptism will hinder!

Therefore, those who teach that baptism is NOT essential for salvation are teaching error, and are guilty of hindering honest souls from obeying Jesus to be saved. Always remember, Jesus did not say, *“He who believes is saved and then baptized to join a denomination,”* but He said, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).*

Because Of The Wrong Act

The New Testament writers wrote only of immersion as the act of baptism. In fact, the word for baptize means: *“to dip, immerse, sink, to overwhelm.”* The first time that man added sprinkling was in the 3rd century, and then it was used only as *“clinical baptism.”* Only those in hospitals with special permission were sprinkled. It was not until 753 A.D. that the first law for sprinkling was issued. Remember, man has approved it, but God has never approved it! Notice that the Bible teaches ONLY immersion:

When Philip baptized the eunuch, we read the following description: *“And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water . . . he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38,39).* Very simply, they went into the water, he was baptized when in the water, and they both came out of the water. This is immersion! Baptism is a burial (*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*).

Because Of Wrong Subjects

There is not a single example or command to baptize infants. The practice of baptizing infants was not practiced until about 160 - 250 A.D. Does the Bible give an exact age to be baptized? No, but it gives principles to be met that rule out infants. Jesus taught His apostles to baptize those that they taught and those who believed the gospel (*Mark 16:16*). An infant cannot be taught or made to believe the gospel.

Baptism, as we have found, is *“for the remission of sins,”* and infants do not have sins. Jesus taught, *“unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).* When infants grow to the age to commit sin, and can be taught to believe and repent, they are subjects for baptism. Some who were baptized as infants are hindered from baptism when older because they feel that their baptism is acceptable.

Rejects God’s Council

During the ministry of Christ we find an example of the Pharisees and Lawyers hindered from being baptized with John’s baptism. What hindered them? *“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him” (Luke 7:30).* The same is true with Jesus’ baptism!

After all hindrances are considered, this one is usually the foundation of all others. The Word of God makes it crystal clear that baptism is one of the essential commands to be

obeyed to be saved, but millions do not want it to be essential, and therefore reject the counsel of God. What a serious hindrance!

Because Of Procrastination

The word *“procrastination”* means to *“put off,”* and this has hindered many from baptism. They may study baptism and recognize its importance, but decide to wait until a future day to obey. Good intentions that are not carried out bring failure. *“The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”*

The apostle Paul preached fervently the gospel to a ruler named Felix. He reasoned to this ruler about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. What was Felix’s response? In fear he said: *“Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you” (Acts 24:22-25).* As far as we know, this convenient time never came, and this hindrance cost Felix his soul!

Conclusion:

In this study, we have looked at seven things that often hinder people from obeying God in baptism. Some are hindered because they don’t believe, they won’t repent, they don’t understand the purpose or act of baptism, are confused as to who should be baptized, they reject the counsel of God, and procrastinate. This is a serious matter that involves obeying God and reaching the blood of Jesus for forgiveness of sins.

If you have not been baptized as a penitent believer for the remission of sins, which of these have hindered you? Any teaching other than the Word of God is a doctrine of man, and drives one away from God. John wrote: *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).*

Would you give this serious consideration, and obey Him now?

Sermons to See and Hear

Benny B. Bristow

*Sermons & Charts
to be used with
overhead projectors*



About the Author

Benny B. Bristow has been preaching and teaching adult and high school Bible classes for over 20 years. He attended Harding University and Louisiana Tech, majoring in Bible and education. He is also the author of **Calm Out of the Storms, Ten Commandments for Husbands, Ten Commandments for Wives, From Kneepants to Romance** and **Charts and Sermons**, all from Quality Publications.

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Sermons To See And Hear provides sermons that are illustrated with charts, outlines and additional material with which to effectively preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This book contains a wide variety of topics for a well-balanced spiritual diet essential for each Christian. Each sermon is based on many scriptures and includes subjects related to the cross, the church, leadership, marriage and the home, moral issues, the value of life, God's Word, baptism and prayer.

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QUALITY PUBLICATIONS
P.O. BOX 1060
ABILENE, TEXAS 79604
(915) 677-6262

ISBN: 0-89137-624-0