

# RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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**GOSPEL  
BROADCASTING  
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## Acknowledgment and Preface

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad!

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie help as much as she could despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches. She moved into eternity on November 25, 2022.

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# LOYALTY

## I. INTRODUCTION.

### A. Loyalty is defined by Webster as follows:

1. The quality, state, or instance of being loyal; faithfulness to a person, a government, cause, or a duty.
2. Synonyms: allegiance, faithfulness, fidelity, devotion, constancy, fealty, homage, trustworthiness, integrity, attachment, trueness, sincerity, steadfastness, adherence, staunchness, stalwartness, dependability, devotedness, support, dedication, commitment, steadiness, single-heartedness, singleness of heart, bond, tie, group feeling, probity, uprightness, honor, reliability, good faith, faith, incorruptibility, scrupulousness, conscientiousness, single mindedness, inviolability, firmness, zeal, ardor, earnestness, resolution, obedience, duty, esprit de corps, solidarity.
3. **Loyalty** suggests a steadfast devotion of an unquestioning kind that one may feel for one's family, friends, or country; **allegiance** refers to the duty of a citizen to the government or a similarly felt obligation to support a cause or leader; **fidelity** implies strict adherence to an obligation or trust; **fealty**, now chiefly a literary word, suggests faithfulness that one has sworn to uphold; **homage** implies respect or honor rendered to a person because of rank or achievement, often accompanied by a sense of allegiance.

### B. Some relationships in which loyalty is needed.

1. Marriage.
2. Family.
3. Work.
4. Friendships.
5. Business partnerships.
6. Citizenship.
7. Spiritual realm.
8. Local congregation.

## II. DISCUSSION.

### A. Some of the demands of the Lord.

1. Matthew 10:34-39: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."
2. Luke 14:26-27: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."
3. Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
4. Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

### B. Why should I be loyal to God

1. Wayne Jackson told of a young woman who made the following harsh charge: "Suppose you could prove to me that there is a God. So what! Would that necessarily mean that I would be obligated to serve him? Your God must be on a super 'ego trip' if He expects everyone in the Universe to worship **Him.**" What response should be made to this flippant comment from an intelligent but confused college student?
    - a. The worship we offer to the Almighty cannot make him greater; even if the entire population of the earth were to serve him loyally, that service would not increase his greatness.
    - b. The purpose of our service and worship is not for his benefit, but for our own. The individual servant and worshiper is improved and strengthened, and becomes more like the one he serves and
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worships.

2. We should be loyal to God because he is infinite in knowledge, power, and wisdom.
3. We should be loyal to God because he is *the Great I Am*.
  - a. Exodus 3:13-14: "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."
  - b. Romans 1:20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
  - c. Psalms 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."
  - d. Hebrews 3:4: "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God."
  - e. Hebrews 11:3: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."
  - f. Psalms 90:2: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."
  - g. Psalms 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."
4. We should be loyal to God because he is the great Creator.
  - a. Nothing produces nothing. There must have been an eternal being or an eternal object since there is something in existence today.
  - b. But science has proved that matter is not eternal. The first and second laws of thermodynamics establish the fact that the universe is winding down and that matter has a limited life-span.
  - c. By all accounts, God is the creator of the universe, our world, and our lives.
5. Since God is a spirit, not a physical being, we ought to be loyal to him.
  - a. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
  - b. Luke 24:39: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."
  - c. Matthew 16:17: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."
  - d. Genesis 17:1: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."
  - e. Revelation 1:8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."
  - f. Job 42:2: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee."
  - g. God is a spiritual being who inhabits eternity; at the end of our earthly sojourn, our eternal spirits will enter eternity where God is; it is essential that we be the kind of persons he demands that we be; our loyalty to him in this life is crucial.
6. Because God is infinitely wise, we ought to be loyal to him.
  - a. Romans 11:33-36: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."
  - b. Because he is infinite in wisdom and knows what is best for us.
    - 1) Matthew 7:7-12: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

- 2) Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
  - 3) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
7. Because God has great love toward us, we ought to be loyal to him.
    - a. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
    - b. Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
    - c. 1 John 4:8: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."
    - d. Ephesians 2:4: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."
    - e. James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
    - f. 2 Corinthians 9:15: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."
  8. Because of his infinite goodness, we ought to be loyal to him.
    - a. Satan made some foul charges against God and Job:
      - 1) Job 1:8-11: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."
      - 2) Job 2:3-5: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."
    - b. Satan alleged that Job served God only because God had richly blessed him with material prosperity, and had given him good health. He asserted that if God should remove Job's wealth and health, Job would curse God to the face.
    - c. That Job continued to serve God loyally, after he had lost his wealth and health, shows that the grand patriarch knew that God was worth serving despite our worldly circumstances.
      - 1) Job 13:15: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."
      - 2) Job 23:10: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."
- C. The Creator is greater than the created.
1. God is the Creator:
    - a. Psalms 100:3: "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."
    - b. Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
    - c. Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."
    - d. Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."
    - e. Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up
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- with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”
- f. Romans 1:25: “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”
  - g. Psalms 96:5: “For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.”
  - h. Proverbs 14:31: “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.”
  - i. Isaiah 17:7: “At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.”
  - j. Hosea 8:14: “For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.”
  - k. Romans 9:21: “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”
  - l. Isaiah 29:16: “Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?”
  - m. Jeremiah 22:1-10: “Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city? Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them. Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.”
2. We need God.
    - a. He is the provided of our food, shelter, clothing, and protection.
      - 1) Acts 14:17: “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”
      - 2) James 1:17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”
    - b. Only God can furnish hope in his life, or in death, or beyond the grave.
      - 1) John 6:66-69: “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”
      - 2) Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
      - 3) 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
  3. Men have tried to find substitutes for God.
    - a. Evolutionists think they have found an explanation for the universe and life, but they leave man utterly without hope or reason to live. What a miserable condition we would have if evolution were true! We would be no better than the lowest animal or insect! We would have no future beyond this life, and no hope of an eternal reward! If everyone on earth believed and practice the basic premise
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of the theory of evolution, it would be a dog-eat-dog, everyone-for-himself, might-makes-right existence—truly a life of torment on earth!

- b. Humanism has developed a system which they think is superior to Christianity; it excludes God entirely; it is completely a human system; it can offer no hope beyond this life, and can only deceive its adherents that all is well.
- c. George Gaylord Simpson [an atheist, an evolutionist, and a humanist] describes his view of life: “Man stands alone in the universe, a unique product of a long, unconscious, impersonal material process with unique understanding and potentialities. These he owes to no one but himself, and it is to himself that he is responsible. He is not the creature of uncontrollable and undeterminable forces, but is his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny.”

D. Consider our mortal status.

1. The presence of evil in our world is universally acknowledged; this has ever been the case. There are many different standards by which men identify wickedness; every society recognizes something that they regard as *evil*. The only real standard of right and wrong is God’s word; it states that “evil men and seducers” will grow worse and worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves (cf. 2 Tim. 3:13). Significant quotations:
    - a. The Roman philosopher Seneca said: “We have all sinned, some more, and some less.”
    - b. A Chinese proverb states: “There are two good men: one is dead and the other is not yet born.”
    - c. Paul wrote: “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
    - d. John affirmed: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).
  2. How is this deplorable condition to be remedied? Man has never been able to concoct a solution. It is now alleged that secular education can provide the answer, but without spiritual values, education only makes more skillful criminals.
  3. Many who have offered psychology as the panacea for human woes have lived to see their theories discredited. One of their precepts is to deny that there is any such thing as sin and that guilt is really the fault of someone else. Denying sin and guilt does not remove sin and guilt; it only deceives.
  4. Many have tried to solve the problem of evil by escapism—alcohol, drugs, mysticism, entertainment; some have tried self-indulgence and an abandoned lifestyle. A recent news feature suggested that by the end of the next decade, the third leading cause of work-disability will be clinical depression.
  5. “Feel-good” religion is no solution to the human problem of sin and guilt. Presently in our modern society, these “feel-good” promoters are enjoying enormous success; their buildings are bulging with people, who are looking for a happy resolution to their emotional problems and a supply for their spiritual needs.
    - a. False doctrine cannot help a sin-sick soul; such help can only come from the truth of God’s word (cf. John 8:32).
    - b. Emotionalism is only a momentary help, and it deceives unfortunate souls into thinking that they have found the solution to their spiritual problems.
  6. Modern western civilization has more material wealth [and the supposed security that goes with it] than any previous generation; but our society is miserable and unhappy. Is there no help for the human family? Many have rejected religion, asserting that it has no answer for the problems we face; they think that Christianity has been unable to help, and it has been around for centuries. *Christianity* has been around for a long time, but it has not been put into practice by the majority in its pure form [as revealed in the New Testament]. If the pure Gospel were to be believed and practiced as it is intended, even our modern society would undergo a wondrous change for the better! There is no remedy to human problems apart from the divine plan of the Gospel. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). The claims of Jesus are not empty assertions; they are based on the solid evidence of inspiration! And no fact of history is better supported by evidence than the resurrection of Jesus! Upon the foundation of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, Christianity is securely set.
  7. There is no abiding contentment in a world without God. Out of a background of materialism, paganism, ignorance, and selfishness, Solomon proclaimed:
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- a. Proverbs 13:15: "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard."
  - b. Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."
8. Serving God is not all painful and sad.
- a. 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
  - b. Hebrews 11:24-26: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."
  - c. Luke 18:29-30: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."
  - d. Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
  - e. Matthew 5:3-10: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
  - f. Children of God can have the best this world has to offer, and the fullness of the eternal rewards which are reserved in heaven for the faithful.
- E. This life is at the gate of eternity.
1. One might get by in this life with crime and other sinful acts, for the best legal system on earth is imperfect. Judges and juries can be misled or bribed; police officers might look the other way; criminals may be able to conceal their crimes and sinners might be able to deceive others.
    - a. This "success" encourages further wickedness: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).
    - b. In every case, God's Judgment will be infinitely perfect; no sin (criminal or otherwise) will escape; every deviation will be exposed: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).
  2. One might laugh God to scorn here, but there will be a just reckoning: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psa. 2:4).
  3. Psalms 73:11-19: "And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors."
  4. Someone might be able to manipulate human laws, he might deceive human courts, but there is the Judgment to come, and from it there is no appeal.
- F. The promises we have been given are tremendous.
1. Forgiveness of all our past sins when we obey the gospel, and pardon from those sins we commit afterwards.
    - a. Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
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- b. 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
  2. The assurance of success as we labor for the Lord.
    - a. Romans 8:31: "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?"
    - b. Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
    - c. 1 John 5:4: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith."
  3. God's providential help as we face the challenges and difficulties of life.
    - a. Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
    - b. Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
    - c. Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
  4. Fellowship with the best people on earth.
    - a. Mark 10:30: "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
    - b. 1 Corinthians 12:25-26: "That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."
    - c. Philippians 4:3: "And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life."
  5. Privilege of prayer.
    - a. James 5:16: "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
    - b. 1 Peter 3:12: "For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil."
  6. A life of moral purity that can cause us no regrets.
    - a. Colossians 3:5-11: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all."
    - b. Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
  7. The blessing of contentment within ourselves and peace with God.
    - a. Philippians 4:11-12: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."
    - b. 1 Timothy 6:6-8: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."
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- c. Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- 8. We will be raised from the dead at the return of Christ and given a new, spiritual body.
  - a. John 5:28-29: Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
  - b. Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
- 9. We will be united with the redeemed of all ages.
  - a. Matthew 8:11: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."
  - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Hebrews 11:40: "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

### III. CONCLUSION.

#### A. Our responsibilities are not severe.

1. Micah 6:8: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
2. Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
3. Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."
4. Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
5. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

#### B. Our blessings are manifold.

1. The privilege of having the peace of God and peace with God.
  - a. Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
  - b. Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."
  - c. Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."
  - d. Many are thoroughly miserable because they have no peace of mind.
  - e. Many have died with regret and anguish.
    - 1) Voltaire: "I am abandoned by God and man; I shall go to hell; O Christ, O Jesus Christ."
    - 2) Thomas Paine: "I would give worlds if I had them that the *Age of Reason* had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ help me. Send even a child to stay with me, for it is hell to be alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one.!"
    - 3) Robert Ingersoll: "O what shall become of my poor soul!"
  - f. Two men were dying in a hospital many years ago; one was a faithful gospel preacher, the other was a man who had spent his life in wickedness. The Gospel Preacher died in a peaceful state of

- mind. The sinful man spent his last hours cursing God one moment and praying for help the next.
2. We have the blessing of facing death and the Judgment with confidence.
    - a. Romans 8:18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”
    - b. Revelation 14:13: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”
    - c. 1 John 4:17-18: “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”
- C. We serve a compassionate Lord.
1. Matthew 9:36: “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”
  2. Matthew 14:14: “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”
  3. Matthew 11:28-30: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
  4. Hebrews 8:12: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”
- D. Loyalty is therefore a logical and rewarding practice.
1. We owe it to our Creator and to our Savior.
  2. We owe it to our family.
  3. We owe it to our nation.
  4. We owe it to our neighbor.
  5. We owe it to ourselves.
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# What About Attendance?

Hebrews 10:23-31

## I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. The Christian life is the greatest way to live ever known in our world.
  1. It has the greatest blessings ever made available to any human being.
  2. It is the best way to live; it keeps us from harmful words, deeds and attitudes.
  3. It makes great demands of us; we have awesome obligations, which we cheerfully discharge.
- B. We need to be encouraged in living the Christian life.
  1. We tend to overlook or forget the great blessings we have.
  2. We may let sinful words, actions and dispositions to cause us to rebel against God, to our own hurt.
  3. We must be reminded of our obligations and urged to fulfill our duty.
- C. One of the greatest obvious problems we have relates to our attendance.
  1. It is one of the plainest ways by which we show our faithfulness or unfaithfulness; our presence at the assemblies shows the world where our heart is; our absence also declares what we treasure most.
  2. Every Christians is apt to neglect attendance on some occasion, sometime during his lifetime.
  3. Every congregation has those who do not attend at all, or only attend infrequently, or who do not attend as they ought; every conceivable excuse is offered, including:
    - a. Family reunions.
    - b. Company (present or expected).
    - c. Exaggerated ailments.
    - d. Household chores.
    - e. Perceived offenses (evil surmises—1 Tim. 6:4).
    - f. Sick puppy.
    - g. Visiting relatives, knowing that the trip will make worship impossible.
    - h. Making travel plans which render worship impossible.
  4. Therefore, there is a great need for preachers and teachers to present lessons on the very important subject of attendance.

## II. DISCUSSION.

- A. There are some problems which arise when we fail to attend as we ought.
  1. We become a source of discouragement to those who attend faithfully.
    - a. Our absence declares that we have little or no real interest in the progress of the church, the worship of the Almighty, the edification of the saints, or the salvation of souls.
    - b. The greatest cause on earth suffers at our hands when we willfully absent ourselves from the services of the Lord's church.
  2. We tell the world that attendance is unnecessary and unimportant.
    - a. But God never planned any unnecessary item; he planned for the assemblies!
    - b. God gave certain ordinances that are to be observed in the assemblies; therefore, attending every service of the church we are able to attend is greatly important.
    - c. Non-attendance says to the world that obeying God is not important.
      - 1) We glorify God in the church (assemblies). "Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).
      - 2) God says to attend (Heb. 10:25); if we willfully miss, we are willfully disobedient.
      - 3) We show that we love God less than we love the world by willfull absences. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).
  3. We tell the world by our failure to attend that we do not want to go to heaven.
    - a. Generally, the world thinks of attenders as being heaven-bound, and non-attenders are not thought of as heaven-bound.
    - b. Non-attenders are not generally thought of as faithful Christians.
    - c. When we willfully absent ourselves from the assemblies, we give the world cause to doubt that we

- are serious about going to heaven.
4. We tell the world that we think we can be saved by our own works.
    - a. We say by our actions, "I don't need to attend; I don't need to worship; I can do just as well by being somewhere else."
    - b. But we cannot save ourselves, either as an alien sinner or as a Christian.
      - 1) Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
      - 2) Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."
      - 3) Romans 5:9: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."
      - 4) Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
      - 5) Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
      - 6) Hebrews 5:9: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
  5. We hinder the work by not giving, when we willfully miss the Lord's day assemblies.
    - a. The church may still do a great work, but with our help it could do more.
    - b. Many good works have to be turned down because of a lack of funds or a lack of workers.
  6. We tell the world that the Bible is not important.
    - a. In the assemblies, faithful saints study and follow the Bible; God's word and the assemblies are inseparably connected.
    - b. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."
    - c. When we willfully absent ourselves from the assemblies, we show disrespect for God's word.
  7. We tell the world that honoring Christ is not important.
    - a. He died to bring the gospel and the church into existence.
    - b. We honor Christ by obedience, which includes assembling with the saints.
  8. We tell the world that preaching is foolishness.
    - a. But preaching is God's way to save the lost: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).
    - b. Preaching instructs, encourages, edifies, and motivates the members. We miss these features of preaching when we fail to be present and attentive in worship.
    - c. Preaching and learning God's word is an important part of worship. The preacher (or teacher) is not the only one worshipping when he preaches the Bible in the assemblies; each one in the assembly who is faithful will meditate on the truths being presented and thereby worship God.
    - d. When we willfully absent ourselves from the services, we vote against preaching and teaching the word of God by our absence.
  9. We make it impossible for us to teach our children and neighbors the importance of the church and obedience to the truth.
    - a. The world is quite able to perceive our inconsistency when we say that the Lord's church is his spiritual body, and the Bible is his inspired word, and do not demonstrate our claims by being faithful in attendance.
    - b. Paul denounced the Jewish unbelievers who were inconsistent: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" (Rom. 2:21).
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B. When we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss certain important matters.

1. If we willfully miss, we miss eating the Lord's Supper.
    - a. Acts 2:42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
    - b. Acts 20:7: "And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."
    - c. 1 Corinthians 11:24-30: "And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."
    - d. A 3-fold reason is given to attend and eat the Lord's Supper:
      - 1) We are commanded to do so.
      - 2) We have examples of our brethren in the first century doing so.
      - 3) And a penalty is given for failing to do so.
  2. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss singing praise to God with our brethren.
    - a. Plain Bible statements:
      - 1) Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
      - 2) Hebrews 13:15: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name."
    - b. We are commanded to sing, it is a privilege to sing, and it is beneficial to our souls to sing.
    - c. It is for our own good to attend and sing; it gives encouragement and strength.
      - 1) "Never Grow Old."
      - 2) "I Know My Redeemer Lives."
      - 3) "How Great Thou Art!"
  3. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss praying with the saints.
    - a. Prayer is especially influential with God when united with others.
      - 1) Matthew 18:19-20: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
      - 2) James 5:16 "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Because of Abraham's request, God spared Lot when he destroyed Sodom (Gen. 18-19).
    - b. Prayer is a vital part of our faithfulness, in both private and public settings.
      - 1) Luke 18:1: "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."
      - 2) 1 Timothy 2:8: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."
  4. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss giving to God as he has prospered us.
    - a. There are very few non-attending members who send their contributions. They may go for many years without having given a penny to the cause of Christ.
    - b. It is a direct command that we give, it is for our own benefit that we give, and it is a privilege to give.
      - 1) Acts 20:35: "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."
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- 2) 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."
  - 3) 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."
  - c. Giving helps us to develop a sacrificial disposition, without which we are babes in Christ, to say the least. "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. 4:17).
    - 1) In his statement of this verse, Paul took care to state that he did not seek for the gift. Instead, his main praise for the gift was for the good it did for the giver. "He did not want the Philippians to remotely draw any conclusion that he was a money-grubber, whose interest in the gospel was to feather his own nest. In no way did he deny the usefulness of the support given him by the grace of God through his brethren, making it possible for him to preach the gospel. But he did insist that his interest in such support involved no self-seeking or selfishness" (Tolle, p.76).
    - 2) That he was grateful to receive the gift is clear; he was in great need of it. But he was more interested in the benefits they derived from giving it.
    - 3) By giving to Paul as they did, they were laying up great treasures in heaven for themselves.
      - a) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
      - b) Acts 20:35: "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."
      - c) 1 Timothy 6:17-19: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
      - d) 2 Corinthians 9:6-8: "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work."
    - d. Sincere, scriptural giving will develop within us the spirit of sacrifice so necessary to gain spiritual maturity. It helps us to overcome selfishness, the chief cause of sin and trouble in the world. It also is an expression of love for God and others. Giving primarily benefits the giver! "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"
  5. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss being a good influence on others, which is one of our many obligations and privileges.
    - a. Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
    - b. 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
  6. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss learning more of God's word.
    - a. The way to God is the way of knowledge.
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- 1) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (ASV).
- 2) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
- 3) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
- 4) 2 Peter 1:3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."
- 5) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
- 6) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
- b. Being ignorant of God's word opens the door to sin and error of all kinds.
  - 1) Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
  - 2) 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not...."
  - 3) Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."
  - 4) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
7. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we miss exhorting our brethren to faithfulness, and miss being exhorted to faithfulness ourselves.
  - a. Hebrews 10:24-26: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."
    - 1) The command of the passage is stated positively and negatively: we are told to provoke one another unto love and good works; we are told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, which would make it impossible for us to provoke and exhort this faithfulness.
    - 2) We are required to provoke unto love and good works; we are forbidden to miss the assemblies wherein this is done.
    - 3) We do the provoking in the assemblies!
  - b. If we do not attend, we have let our brethren down; they might fall into sin without this help.
  - c. By attending and worshipping in spirit and in truth, we encourage our brethren to follow our example and practice.
8. If we willfully miss the assemblies, we have failed to keep the appointment to meet with the Lord at his designated place and situation.
  - a. The Lord made an appointment with the apostles to meet them in Galilee following his death and resurrection from the dead.
    - 1) Matthew 26:32: "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."
    - 2) Matthew 28:10: "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."
    - 3) Matthew 28:16: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."
    - 4) He had identified the place (Matt. 28:16), and maybe even the occasion, of this meeting. He referred to the eleven disciples as "my brethren." This term of endearment would have the happy effect of uplifting the apostles by showing that the Lord bore them no ill will for having forsaken him in the garden. [Matthew's report does not preclude any earlier meetings with the



eleven]. The Lord looked forward to this happy meeting; the gladness of the meeting was no doubt happily anticipated by the eleven.

- 5) By calling their attention to the appointment he had made with them prior to his arrest and crucifixion, the Lord reminded them that he had predicted that he would rise from the dead. The appointment had been made in the upper room when he had instituted the Lord's supper, hence only the apostles were present when the appointment was made. By referring to this appointment, they could glean additional evidence that the Lord was raised up from the dead even before they personally saw him. In point of fact, the Lord appeared several times to them and others prior to the appearance in Galilee.
  - b. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). This passage deals with the case of a few brethren deciding to meet for the purpose of praying for some specific need or problem; the Lord promises to be in their midst, to hear their petition. Since he does this, we may likewise be sure that his presence is in the regular assemblies of the saints, where many of his followers are present.
- C. There are some things which the absence of a Christian from the assemblies cannot do.
1. He cannot pray for the success of the local church without being a hypocrite.
  2. He cannot say that he puts Christ first in his life.
  3. He cannot say that he has been made stronger by his absence.
  4. He cannot say he has glorified God by his failure to attend.
  5. He cannot blame anyone else over problems that may develop in the congregation.
  6. He cannot criticize the church for its failure to grow.
  7. He cannot say that God is pleased with his absence.
- D. There are some things which our presence or our absence does.
1. Our absence:
    - a. Will cause others to question the reality of our faith.
    - b. Will show that we have little regard for the welfare of our souls.
    - c. Will proclaim that we have little concern over the ultimate destiny of our children.
    - d. Will declare the weakness of our faith.
  2. Our presence:
    - a. Will cause others to have an interest in cultivating spiritual strength.
    - b. Will show others that we regard our soul's welfare to be of great concern to us.
    - c. Will proclaim that we have great concern over the ultimate destiny of our children.
    - d. Will declare the strength of our faith.
- E. How do Christians fall away?
1. Some fall away immediately and deliberately. This is not the usual case.
  2. More often, the fall is gradual and unintended. Usually, the fall commences with an occasional absence from a service, often one of the Bible study sessions or evening meeting.
    - a. Hebrews 2:1-3: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."
    - b. Hebrews 3:12-13: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
  3. Before long, the individual is back in the world, having few regrets, but lost:
    - a. Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death...."
    - b. James 1:15: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."
    - c. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way
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of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

- d. Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”
- e. Hebrews 10:23-31: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

### III. CONCLUSION.

- A. In view of the foregoing, it is manifest that those who are unfaithful in attendance are in great peril.
  1. They are lukewarm, as were the Laodiceans: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16).
  2. They transgress God's will by not eating the Supper, not giving, nor singing, and not joining their brethren in the other acts of prescribed worship.
  3. They have failed to put the Lord first.
    - a. Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
    - b. Matthew 8:19-22: "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."
  4. Their conduct shows a disregard for God's word, unconcern about the growth of the Lord's church, and indifference toward lost souls.
  5. Their influence is hindering the work and progress of the church.
  6. They are a hindrance to the whole cause of Christ.
- B. There are other precepts of the gospel which affect attendance.
  1. These show that every Christian who sincerely desires to be all he can become, and do all that he can do, and serve Christ with all his being, will be present at every service he is capable of attending; and only the most pressing of reasons will keep him from the assemblies of the saints. These factors include:
  2. A desire to obey every command, adhere to every precept, and respect every warning given in the word of God, will motivate us to attend every service.
    - a. Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
    - b. Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
    - c. Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
    - d. James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."

- e. Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
3. Love for God and our precious Savior will provoke us to earnestly desire to be present at every service, for we know the Lord will be present, and wants us to be there.
  - a. Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
  - b. Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
  - c. 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
4. A desire to have the very best influence on all of those around us, especially members of our own family, will create in us an undeniable aspiration to be present at every service. Others are watching us; our influence can promote or hinder their obedience and faithfulness.
  - a. Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
  - b. Philippians 2:15-16: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
  - c. It is highly unlikely that we can go to either heaven or to hell without influencing others to accompany us.
5. An abiding desire to pay homage to God by worshiping him in spirit and truth will motivate us to be present at every service.
  - a. Psalms 42:1-2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"
  - b. Psalms 122:1: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."
  - c. Matthew 4:10: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
  - d. John 4:23-24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
6. A strong commitment to do all in our power to serve and honor him will keep us from the sin of omission. To fail to do God's will is to commit sin.
  - a. James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin."
  - b. Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."
7. A dread of developing a hard heart will insure our presence at every possible service. Hearts can be hardened gradually by neglect and omission of duty. The first time a Christian misses a service he could have attended, his conscience bothers him; the second absence produces less pain in the conscience; finally, there is no feeling of guilt at all—the voice of the conscience has been effectively silenced!
  - a. Romans 2:15: "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."
  - b. Ephesians 4:18-19: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God

through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

c. 1 Timothy 4:2: "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

8. It is admitted by everyone who respects the authority and integrity of the Scriptures that to forsake assembling with the saints is sinful. Some think that an occasional absence (for purely personal reasons) from the Sunday morning worship service is permissible; many will maintain that there is no sin if we regularly miss the Bible study hour on Sunday morning, the Sunday evening service, the mid-week Bible study, and gospel meeting services. At what point, from the first willful absence to the time when the individual ceases attending altogether, does sin commence? After missing 25 times? After missing 50 services? After 100? Exactly when does sin begin? If it is sinful to miss 100 services, it is sinful to miss willfully one service! If not, why not?

C. Let each of us ask ourself these questions:

1. Am I willing to honestly examine my own heart? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).
2. Do I willfully miss?
3. Since my heart is where my treasure is, where is my real treasure? "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).
4. Have I left my first love? "Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:4-5).
5. Do I need to be restored?

D. Do you need to obey the gospel?

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## Priorities—Putting First Things First

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. Air Traffic Control situations requires setting priorities—putting first things first.

1. Many planes, little space; someone has to be given priority; this is settled usually by “first come, first served.
2. In VFR flight, the least maneuverable aircraft have priority over the more maneuverable; thus, regular aircraft and helicopters must give way to balloons and airships.
3. An aircraft with an emergency has priority over those aircraft which are in normal flight.

#### B. There are priorities that must be set in other affairs of life.

1. Earning a living takes precedence over recreation.
2. Schoolwork takes precedence over sports.
3. In dispensing medical treatment in a disaster or battlefield situation, those with the most serious injuries that can be treated are given priority.

#### C. As we shall see, there are certain priorities which apply in the spiritual arena of life.

### II. DISCUSSION.

#### A. Matthew 6:33.

1. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This is the key verse in the context of Matthew six. If one wants to have the essentials just named in the above verses, let him meet the requirements of this verse.
2. *Seek* denotes an active, diligent search and inquiry, which is required of both alien and saint.
  - a. This disposition and commitment characterized our Lord.
    - 1) Matthew 26:39: “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”
    - 2) John 4:34: “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”
    - 3) John 9:4: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”
    - 4) Hebrews 10:9-10: “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
  - b. Christianity is a taught religion; one cannot be born by the natural birth into it; a process of teaching and learning is necessary in order for one to become a Christian.
    - 1) Matthew 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
    - 2) Mark 16:15-16: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
    - 3) Luke 24:47: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
    - 4) Acts 8:4: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.
  - c. To practice the religion of Christ, one must put forth diligent effort.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
    - 2) Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
    - 3) Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

- 4) Luke 14:26-27: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."
- 5) Matthew 10:37-38: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."
- d. The effort of living the Christian life is illustrated by several well-known activities.
  - 1) It is depicted as waging a spiritual war.
    - a) 2 Timothy 2:3-4: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."
    - b) 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."
    - c) Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
    - d) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
    - e) 2 Corinthians 10:4: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."
  - 2) It is pictured as running in a foot-race.
    - a) 1 Corinthians 9:25-27: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
    - b) Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with 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, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
    - c) 2 Timothy 2:5: "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."
- e. Determination is required to live the Christian life successfully.
  - 1) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
  - 2) Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
  - 3) Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
3. The *object* of our search is plainly stated.
  - a. Many seek for the wrong things—money, material goods, fame, position, worldly honor.
  - b. We are told to seek the kingdom of God.
    - 1) John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
    - 2) Luke 17:20-21: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."
    - 3) No one can stumble into the kingdom; it must be sought: "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but is shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8).

- 4) We are to seek to obtain the benefits it offers and for the privileges it bestows.
- c. We are told to seek the righteousness of God.
  - 1) Psalms 119:172: “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”
  - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”
  - 3) 1 John 2:29: “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”
  - 4) 1 John 3:7: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”
  - 5) Romans 6:16-18: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”
  - 6) Romans 10:1-3: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”
  - 7) Acts 10:34-35: “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”
  - 8) We obtain the righteousness which God bestows on us when we obey the conditions stated in the plan by which he makes us righteous—we obey the Gospel of Christ! “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:16-17).
4. The order of our search is stated: we are to seek the God’s kingdom and righteousness *First*.
  - a. Above all things, that which Christ here identifies are to be preeminent in our activities of life. Nothing is to equal or to surpass in importance the items he names; these are to be first in importance and in the order of our searching.
  - b. The kingdom of God is the church of Christ (Matt. 16:16-19; Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2; Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 1:3; Eph. 5). The common notion of modern religious men is that the church is unimportant. They fail to see that the church and the kingdom are one and the same. If they could learn this truth, then the Lord's statement would become as meaningful to them as it is to us. It is of such great importance that it must be placed first in our priorities. If one puts the church first:
    - 1) Will he stay away from the assemblies?
    - 2) Will he refuse to give?
    - 3) Will he work for the church?
  - c. God's righteousness is placed on the same plane as the kingdom. They are joined by the conjunction *and*. It is in the church that we are able to work righteousness and be fully obedient to the will of God. To seek righteousness is to do those things which result in obtaining the righteousness of God.
  - d. In cases where we have a choice between an act of obedience [worship or service] or some worldly entertainment, which is more important to us? [We understand, of course, that recreation is an essential part of life].
    - 1) If we could be in a Wednesday night Bible class, but we choose to attend a ball game or go fishing, which have we shown is more important to us? Which have we placed first?
    - 2) If we could attend a service in a gospel meeting being conducted by the local congregation, but we choose to go camping, or attend some secular function, or take a trip, which have we shown is more important to us? Which have we placed first?

- e. Many attend only one service weekly, when it would be possible for them to attend all of them.
    - 1) If every other member attended only once weekly [when they could be at all], what would become of the local congregation?
    - 2) If all attended every service possible, how greatly would the church prosper!
  - f. Some give only a token amount to the Lord, while spending a great portion of their income on their selfish pleasures. If all did that, what would become of the local congregation?
5. If we put the kingdom and righteousness of God first, then all *these things* (food, clothing, etc.) will be thrown in as an added blessing. The primary blessings are spiritual; these material essentials are given *to boot*.
- B. Are you willing to pay the price required by the gospel?
1. The price for pardon was great.
    - a. Although salvation is free to us (Rev. 22:17), yet it cost the Father, the Son, the Lord's apostles, and our first century brethren more than can be estimated.
    - b. To receive pardon brings upon us a heavy price; it might cost us some of our family and friends; it will cost us a great deal of our time and effort.
  2. The price for knowledge is great.
    - a. Ecclesiastes 12:12: "...Much study is a weariness of the flesh."
    - b. Much effort is required to learn, but the reward is greater!
  3. The price for spiritual strength is great.
    - a. As physical strength requires exercise and time, so spiritual strength demands time, effort and activity.
    - b. 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
  4. The price of reaching Heaven is great.
    - a. We are required to imitate the life of our Lord—not an easy prospect.
      - 1) Matthew 8:20: "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."
      - 2) John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
      - 3) Matthew 26:39: "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."
    - b. We are to abide in Christ (John 15:6).
    - c. We are to die in Christ (Rev. 14:13).
    - d. To obtain Heaven, we must give up the world; to have the world, we forfeit Heaven.
- C. Are you ready to do the will of God?
1. Are you ready and able to give a reason for your hope? "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).
  2. Are you ready and able to teach the lost and weak brethren?
    - a. Matthew 28:19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
    - b. Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
  3. Are you ready and able to support every good work? (Tit. 3:1).
  4. Are you ready and willing into die for the Lord? "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).
  5. Are you ready for the Lord's return?
    - a. Matthew 24:42-44: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would
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have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

- b. Matthew 25:1-13: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

D. Are you continuing steadfastly?

1. Are you steadfast in the apostles’ doctrine? (Acts 2:42).
2. Are you steadfast in the fellowship of the saints? (Acts 2:42).
3. Are you steadfast in the breaking of bread? (Worship—Lord’s Supper: Acts 2:42)
4. Are you steadfast in prayer? (Acts 2:42).

E. If any man will, he can partake of the water of life freely.

1. Passages:
  - a. Luke 9:23: “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
  - b. Revelation 22:17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
2. The final choice is up to the individual (Luke 9:23; Rev. 22:17).
3. Are you following Christ?
4. Are you exercising self-denial?
5. Do you daily bear his cross?

III. **CONCLUSION.**

A. We are now living in the time of probation.

1. We can pick and choose what we wish to do.
2. We are free to exercise our free moral agency; God respects our right to choose; he gave us this right.
3. Will you elect this day to seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God?
4. If you have not, will you begin now to put the Lord FIRST?

B. How much does the Lord mean to you?

1. With your life providing the answer, what is most important to you?
  2. Do you love him with the entirety of your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
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# The Unending Influence of a Christian Life

## I. INTRODUCTION.

### A. Consider these Biblical Statements:

1. Philippians 2:14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
2. Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

### B. There is no way we can evaluate the full effect of our influence.

1. Peer pressure among young people is obviously very powerful.
2. It is likewise of great impact among those of use who are older.
3. Very few people like to be excluded from their peers; we all like to be accepted and considered a part of the group.

### C. Our influence can have a potent effect whether we are aware of it or not.

1. Influence can either have a positive or negative impact—it can promote good or evil.
2. The influence of a Christian is seen of men and known by the Lord.
3. Our influence may live for many years after we pass from earthly scenes. That is one reason that the Judgment will not be held until the Last Day—the full effect of our lifelong influence may not be fully expressed until the end of time.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFLUENCE ILLUSTRATED

### A. In prominent Passages:

1. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16).
  2. Parallel accounts:
    - a. Mark 9:50: "Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."
    - b. Luke 14:34: "Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"
  3. Man can live without many things, but not without light, water, bread, and salt. The Lord referred to himself as the light of the world, the bread of life, and the giver of everlasting water; he here described his faithful followers as the salt of the earth.
    - a. Salt has hundreds of uses. It is used in the home, on the farm, in construction, in making glass, in soap, and in food processing. Wars have been fought over salt.
    - b. Roman soldiers were paid in salt. The Latin word *salarium* (salt) gives our English word *salary*. "Not worth his salt" was an expression used by the Greeks to describe a slave who had been bought with a measure of salt.
    - c. There is an unbelievable amount of salt in the world: about three-eighths of a pound of salt is dissolved in a gallon of sea water. It has been estimated that if the seas were evaporated, there would remain about 4.4 million cubic miles of rock salt, enough to cover the land areas of earth to a depth of 500 feet.
  4. Jesus used salt, with its significant characteristics, to aptly describe his faithful followers.
    - a. **Salt preserves.** It is used on meat to prevent spoilage; it is used in pickling for the same purpose; it is used in the cells of the body to facilitate healing. God's faithful people have a preserving
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- effect on society (Prov. 14:34). If more *salt* had been found in Sodom, it would not have been destroyed (Gen. 18). The 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal kept their nation from destruction (1 Kings 19:18). When Israel left God, God gave them up. Our own country owes its preservation to the saints who live here. Its continuation depends, not merely on military might, but on the righteousness of its citizens.
- b. **Salt gives flavor.** Many recipes call for salt; its absence is quickly detected. What salt is to food, Christians are to the world. Without the godly flavoring of the saints, this world would be a most unsavory place. Our presence makes the world to be more flavorful to God. “(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:38). Cf. Enoch and Elijah.
  - c. **Salt has a purifying effect.** Ordinary bacteria cannot live in salt. Salt is used as a mouthwash, a gargling solution, and to brush teeth. Christians often have a *disinfecting effect* on society. Some people will clean up their speech when a Christian is present. Through our influence in teaching the gospel, many clean up their lives by obeying the gospel. Where there has been no impact of the gospel, ignorance, poverty, oppression, natural disasters, and immorality predominate.
  - d. **Salt is a positive force.** If it is in coffee or ice cream, its presence cannot be concealed. Its absence from other food is also noted.
  - e. **Salt has a permeating effect.** When a ham is packed in salt, the salt permeates and preserves; but the salt must make contact with the ham. Christian influence can permeate society with its preserving and flavoring characteristics, if saints make contact with society. Christians are not like a sponge which soaks up what is around it; a sponge takes up but does not “put out” unless it is squeezed. We are not to scatter salt as we journey through life, rather we are the salt—as we live among men, the influence of the gospel in our lives will have its proper effect on those around us.
  - f. **Salt is enduring.** The flavor of salt is not lost by age or severe tests. Mines which are thousands of years old still produce good salt. If salt is dissolved in water and heated to a high temperature, it still retains its qualities. The followers of Christ have this enduring quality. Trials will not destroy us (Heb. 10:31-35); time does not sap our strength (Heb. 10:36-39; 2 Pet. 3:18). We lose our strength only if we are contaminated by worldliness (sin; error; indifference).
  - g. **Salt is precious.** Life would not be pleasant without it. The oceans would soon stagnate; food would spoil; disease would spread. Salt is essential to life, thus is precious. The blessings and influence of one Christian is powerful, thus it is precious to the world. One individual obeys the gospel and influences others to obey.
5. If our country suddenly lost all or even most of Christianity's saving influences, think of the horrible consequences that would quickly develop. All of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) would increase to the fullest degree. There would be no reason extant for God to preserve the nation.
- a. Psalms 9:17: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”
  - b. Isaiah 60:12: “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”
  - c. 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”
  - d. Deuteronomy 9:3-5: “Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”
  - e. 2 Kings 17:13-18: “Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my
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- statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.”
- f. Jeremiah 18:7-10: “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”
  - g. Jeremiah 51:49: “As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.”
  - h. Jeremiah 51:53: “Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.”
  - i. Jeremiah 51:54-56: “A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite.”
  - j. Jeremiah 51:58: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.”
6. Where the influence of Christianity is not found, "the living conditions for the masses are wretched; a few rich masters rule with a ruthless and iron hand. Liberties are crushed; little value is placed on human life; living conditions are squalid; and opportunities for betterment are few" (Marlin, J.T., *The Sermon on the Mount*, Spiritual Sword Lectures, p.62).
    - a. This condition began with religious apostasy which in turn began with the individual Christians turning back to the world. Political leaders are corrupted, and society as a whole degenerates spiritually and morally. Finally, there is nothing left of the nation worth saving. This state might develop when the citizens are offered opportunities to obey the gospel, but refuse it.
    - b. "In every age of the world when the forces of righteousness have become sufficiently suppressed, tragedy for that people has been the inevitable result. The dissolution of all people has followed an undeviating course" (ibid.).
    - c. There is no way that any nation can long continue without the preserving, uplifting influence of godliness. Christianity is the only hope for a happy future for our nation or any other nation.
  7. Therefore, if Christians (the salt) lose their savor, with what shall society be flavored and preserved? There would be no hope. And the verse illustrates the utterly worthless state of an apostate Christian! He is represented as adulterated salt which has no flavoring or preserving quality. Corrupted salt cannot be thrown on the fields for it still has power to destroy good crops; it can only be thrown on the footpaths and roads where it is trodden underfoot. Such a Christian is good for nothing! This teaches the supreme importance of remaining completely unadulterated by the world. It is significant that salt does not lose its special qualities unless it becomes adulterated from without. Left pure, salt retains its qualities. But saints, like salt, can become contaminated and thus lose their special properties which make them valuable and useful to the Lord.
  8. We must remain pure in doctrine, for if our belief and practices are corrupted with human doctrines,
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our worship will be unacceptable (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7, 13; 2 John 9-11; Gal. 2:4-5; 2 Cor. 2:15-17; Jude 3; 1 Pet. 4:11; John 4:24). Those who teach error on the plan of salvation, on the identity of the church, on the nature of the kingdom, on the Bible doctrine of final things, on godly living, (on any one or all of these or other such things) are following the commandments of men; therefore they cannot offer worship that is acceptable to God! And we would be wrong to extend our fellowship to them or to try to worship with them (1 John 1:6-7; 2 John 9-11). We must remain pure in life, sincerely following the truth (Phil. 1:27; Tit. 2:3; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:1-2; Matt. 5:8; Col. 3; Eph. 5:1-17; 1 Pet. 2:5,9).

9. In order for salt to be effective, it must come in direct contact with that which it is intended to affect. A fresh ham will not be preserved if it and the salt do not make direct, continual contact.
  - a. A saint cannot do his best in flavoring and preserving society unless contact exists between him and members of society. In this passage, therefore, Christ condemns monasticism and isolationism. A saint is not of the world (John 17:16; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 6:14), but he lives in the world (John 17:15; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 5:9-10).
  - b. We are able to do our proper work of influencing the world to obey the gospel, live godly lives, worship and serve God, only if we contact those in the world.
- B. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14)."
  1. This statement is one that should make us lift up our heads with happiness! It shows us how glorious it is to be a Christian. Faithful Christians (members of the church of Christ) are the centerpiece of God's creation! We are the only ones the world has for examples of godly conduct. But with this glorious privilege comes the heaviest of obligations: we must live exemplary lives so that people of the world can look at any one of us and know that this is what God expects all to be (1 Tim. 4:12; Phil 2:14-15; 1 Pet.2:12.)
    - a. None of us can be the same perfect example as Christ was, but we should not use our human weakness as an excuse to relieve us of our obligations to live holy lives. We should not treat lightly any hurtful or idle word we might speak, or any harmful or evil deed we may do, or any wrongful disposition we might show.
    - b. Each Christian will stumble into sin occasionally (John 1:8, 10); but if he will truly repent (Acts 8: 22; 2 Cor 7:10; 1 Tim. 1:13-15), confess his sins before God openly and contritely (1 John 1:9; Jas. 5:16), and ask for pardon (Jas. 5:16; Acts 8:22), forgiveness will be forthcoming from the Almighty.
    - c. But if we take sin lightly, how can we genuinely repent? Repentance can only come from godly sorrow (2 Cor.7:10; cf. Lk.15:11ff). We must sincerely walk in the light (1 Jn 1:6-7), honestly trying never to offend in thought, motive, word, deed, or omission of duty. When we occasionally transgress, sorrow will immediately be felt, genuine penitence follows, and we will strive never to fall into that offense anymore.
  2. "Our solar system is so arranged that all our planets revolve around the sun as its center. From what astounding and incomprehensible mass of burning matter they receive and reflect their luminosity. The earth and the other planets not only receive light directly from the sun, but they also reflect the same. The earth receives light directly from the sun and reflectively from the moon, and the moon in turn receives light from the sun and reflectively from the earth!" (Marlin, *ibid.*, p.67). The Christian system is divinely arranged after this likeness. Christ is the light of the world; we are to reflect that glorious light to the people in darkness.
    - a. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life" ( John 8:12).
    - b. "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings"(Mal. 4:2).
    - c. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).
    - d. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).
    - e. "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9).
    - f. "For ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day, we are not of the night, nor of the darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5).

3. The verse under consideration implies that the world is in a state of darkness. This is the first plank in the Christian's platform. If the world was not in trouble, our great mission would be meaningless (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eccl. 7:10; 1 John 5:19; Luke 19:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 2:1-12).
    - a. The first step in bringing a lost soul into Christ where light and salvation are found, is to get him to see that he is lost. This is difficult enough in heathen societies where nothing is known about the gospel. But it is more difficult in cases where people have accepted a counterfeit gospel and think they are saved. Before the truth can be profitably planted in such hearts, their error must be shown. Often they allow their prejudices to keep them from the truth.
    - b. The world is in darkness but boasts of its great enlightenment. People in the industrialized nations are better educated in secular knowledge than ever before. During the 18th century, an age of so called "enlightenment" began with the emergence of skepticism, which began pressing grievous attacks against the Bible. A very great many scholars, preachers, priests, rabbis, men of medicine and science, and other well-educated men and women, have accepted human philosophies and theories which stand in opposition to the Bible. If the Bible appears to contradict some precept of modern philosophy or theory, the Bible is deemed to be wrong. Those who are highly educated in worldly wisdom are nevertheless in darkness and need the gospel! (Rom. 3:23; Eph 2:12; Rom 1:16-17; Heb.4:12).
    - c. Worldly knowledge pertains to that which is material, mechanical, biological, and therefore temporary. It is a one-sided education, and even much of that is wrong because it stands on man's prejudiced theories instead of truth. Many people have been willingly convinced that they are just another form of animal life, thus have begun to live out their convictions! Why is there so much crime, strife, and moral decadence? It is because many do not know, believe, or follow the absolute standard of the Bible. Possessing knowledge of genuine earthly truth is good, but that only enlightens in matters of an earthly nature. God's spiritual truth governs the affairs of the soul, of human relationships, of moral behavior, and of preparing for death and eternity. A secular education is at best incomplete. The best education is that which incorporates sufficient secular information to enable one to get along well in this world, and enough information about the Bible to bring him into Christ, cause him to loyally serve the Savior, and thus be prepared for his real goal—eternal life in heaven!
  4. Faithful Christians are the only ones who can really give light to the world (and this is the reflected light of Christ!). The world of the first century was in utter darkness as is shown by the crime, strife and sin which were so prevalent. The great Greek philosophers (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle) had given their wisdom and influence to the world but the world was still steeped in spiritual darkness.
    - a. In the face of the failure of the earth's great men (philosophers, political and military leaders, religionists, *et al*), the Lord announced in this passage that those lowly Jewish disciples (fishermen, tax collectors, etc.) would be the world's hope for light! The great thinkers have been baffled by this.
    - b. The ordinary Christian who knows little or nothing about philosophy and other human wisdom, knows and understands more about life than the greatest worldly experts. This is possible because he knows the Book, which gives us all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet.1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12; Acts 20:32; John 10:10; Matt. 5:1-12; 5:13-7:29).
    - c. "The world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, ASV). About 35 years after the Lord's church was established, Tacitus (the Roman historian), wrote with astonishment: "This pestilent superstition, thou checked for the time being, broke out afresh, not only in Juda, where the mischief started, but also at Rome, where all manner of horrible and loathsome things pour in and become fashionable" (see Marlin, p.69). This unbelieving scholar could not understand how the flame of Christianity could go on burning. God's truth is not based on worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1:26-29).
  5. Light dispels darkness; the two can not occupy the same space at the same time; where light goes, darkness vanishes. God is light; Christ is light; Christians are light; the gospel is light; truth is light (1 John 1:5; John 8:12; Ph. 2:15; Eph. 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:4-5; John 8:32; 17:17). Light is good:
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- a. Because it makes visibility possible; the light of the gospel makes it possible for us to see: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).
  - b. Because it is pure; light does not get dirty; it is the one element on earth that cannot be contaminated. The gospel is pure; no one can contaminate it or is allowed to change it. It will be pure when we face it in Judgment (cf. Jn. 12:48; Ps. 19:8; 12:6; Jas. 3:17).
  - c. Because of its healing propensities: cf. The rays of the sun, ultra-violet (Mal. 4:2).
  - d. Because it protects from evil: crime and evil usually occur in darkness; we put up security lights to give protection (Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:7).
  - e. Because it makes life possible: without the sun's light, plants cannot grow and live. Without the light of the gospel, there would be no spiritual life possible for us.
6. The darkness that is to be dispelled by the light of Christians includes that of vice, ignorance, unbelief, religious error. The Jews were aloof from the world; their idea of their duty to God was to keep separate from the Gentiles; an idea they had towards the Gentiles was that they were created to burn in torment. They were to keep separated from the evil of the unbelieving world of the Old Testament; but they were intended to be an encouragement to godly living. Under Christ, we have the obligation to shine forth, passively and actively, so that as many as possible will obey the Lord. Many sin because of ignorance (Acts 3:17; Eph. 4:17-19; Hos. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 17:23).
  7. Many are in darkness because of religious error (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 Jn. 4:1; Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Th. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15).
    - a. One major religious error lies in the misguided efforts of men to depopulate hell: Catholics do so in their invention of purgatory; Watchtower Witnesses, Adventists, Universalists, and others do so by denying the existence of hell; Calvinists do so by denying that a Christian can so-sin as to be lost there.
    - b. Another major religious error is the claim of additional revelation: Joseph Smith claimed to have received such; Ellen White claimed to have been caught up to the third heaven and God placed a halo around the 4th Commandment and sent her back to the earth to tell everyone to keep the Sabbath; Mary B.G.P. Eddy claimed to have received additional revelation which caused her to establish the false "Christian Scientist" movement; Oral Roberts and many other modern hucksters make the claim of additional revelations; myriads of deceived folks think that God has given them special revelations in dreams, visions, events, and feelings; the Pentecostal movement rests heavily on this false notion of modern revelations; the "Crossroads", "discipling" movement claims special revelations in the "quiet time" (pray and God answers back; read the Bible and the Holy Spirit will give you a personal, special message). We can know that God gives no revelations today: 1 Corinthians 13:8-11; Ephesians 4:11-14; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Revelation 22:18-19; Galatians 1:6-12. Without exception, those who claim to have received a special revelation will teach error on one or more vital subjects: by their fruits ye shall know them (Mt. 7:15-20; 1 Jn. 4:1; cf. Isa. 8:20; Deut. 18:15-22; 2 Th. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-17).
    - c. Many are in sin because they follow their fleshly impulses (Gal. 5:19-21).
    - d. Many are in spiritual darkness because of unbelief; they have rejected the truth without proper investigation or interest (John 3:19). Evolution is accepted and proclaimed as fact; no other evidence or information will be considered by many; those who believe the Bible are denounced as ill-informed, backward, religious cranks who will not believe "science."
  8. Evolution is unproved and unprovable, indeed, the evidence disproves evolution and the postulates upon which it rests. "But on closer examination these critics are most unscientific when it comes to handling evidence. In our courts throughout this land every day the testimony of witnesses who say they saw things, heard words and sounds, handled objects, smelled odors, and tasted substance is admitted in court. But, when Bible witnesses say they heard, saw and handled Jesus Christ, this is not admissible! The Apostle John testified, 'That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hand handled concerning the word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifest unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you' (1 Jn. 1:1-3)" (Marlin, *ibid.*, p.73).
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- a. With the single exception of John, these other apostles, according to the New Testament or secular history, suffered and died because of their firm belief in that which they preached. "Now the fact that they died in attestation of their testimony does not prove them right, but it does prove them sincere. And if that for which they sincerely died is attested by good eyes, good ears and unimpaired sense of touch, their senses prove them right and accurate in their testimony, and their voluntary dying in support of it proves them sincere. Now if you cannot believe these Bible witnesses, then there is no way to prove beyond question or cavil, a single historical event. Our knowledge must be limited to what we have seen with our own eyes, heard with our own ears and felt with our own hands! And if we refuse to accept the testimony of others, we cannot expect them to accept ours! Then, there is no such thing as a true history in the world! We don't know there was ever an Alexander the Great, Cleopatra, Caesar, Napoleon or a George Washington! But, if we cannot believe Bible historians, there is not only not a true history in the world, but there has never been a sincere martyr! All through the ages those who have willingly laid down their lives for a cause have been hypocrites and liars! Which is the more difficult to accept, those absurdities or the theory of evolution?" (Marlin, p.73).
  - b. It is far more reasonable to believe the testimony of unimpeachable and sincere witnesses than to accept a theory that is unproved and unprovable. And the Bible has the added benefit of its scientific, medical, historical statements made long before these truths were discovered by men, and the many cases of fulfilled prophecies! Unbelief is absurd.
- C. "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (Matt. 5:15).
1. "Possibly Jesus had in mind the comparison between a city on a hill and a group or church of his disciples; their influence cannot be ignored in the world. There is no greater light for God than the church that is filling its mission in a community" (Boles, p.128).
  2. In this verse the Lord shows from the common experience that a candle is not lighted in order to be placed under a bushel. "The word 'bushel' is from the Latin term 'modius,' which was about equal to a peck; it was used for measuring grain and was a common article. The lamps then were of earthenware or of metal in the shape of a saucer, turned up on one side to hold the wick; olive oil was used to burn in them" (Boles, p.128).
  3. To give its greatest light, the lamp was placed on a stand. For a Christian (or congregation of Christians) to fulfill his role properly, it is necessary that his good works (obedience, character, benevolence, faith) be seen. This cannot be done if he lives as a hermit, or is not a proper example of a follower of Christ.
  4. As lights, we are to do certain things: Expose the darkness and the things that belong to darkness (cf. 1 Thess. 5:4-7). This we do by the way we live and by the truth we teach (cf. Acts 2:37). We show the cause of darkness (Jn. 3:19; Rom. 3:23), and show the way out of darkness (2 Cor. 5:17; 4:3,4). Christians can hide their good influence (light) under various *bushels*:
    - a. Bushel of ignorance (Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Tim. 1:13; Hos. 4:6; Jas. 4:17).
    - b. Bushel of indifference (Rev. 3:15-17; cf. 1 Cor. 5:6; Jas. 4:17). How concerned were the Laodiceans about the lost? How much light were the aliens in their city getting from the church members?
    - c. Bushel of indulgence (Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). How much influence would a preacher have if he was also a bootlegger? Or a drug dealer? Or a drunkard?
    - d. Bushel of religious error (2 John 9-11; 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:32; Gal. 1:8-9; 2:4-5).
  5. Light is active, enables us to see, cheers and comforts, is pure, is essential to plant life and thus to all life, does its work quietly, is like love in that it is a compound thing, and light awakens. (Marlin).
- D. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16)."
1. Let: not forced; obedience must be done willingly, lovingly (Rom. 6:16-17).
  2. Your light: each is responsible for own actions and influence. Your light is the power of your life to influence others. Each is to brighten, not bring gloom and discouragement.
  3. So shine before men: So shine as verses 14-15 direct. "So" is adverb of manner. We are to shine for the benefit of others, not for self-glory.
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4. Shine: continual radiant glowing, not a flash in the pan. A bright flash gives a strong light for a short time but leaves those who see it in greater darkness after it fades suddenly away. A Christian who is a "flash in the pan" does more harm than good.
5. That they may see: see, not merely hear speculation about, or hear claims about. Professing good works is not enough; words come easy. But let your influence speak for itself through the good works each one can do.
6. See your good works: good works can be seen and appreciated by men. Evil works also are seen and often speak louder to some than good works. Good works are those things which God requires or permits, acts of kindness and love, helpful acts and pure words. They are good words because they are morally and scripturally right, beautiful, orderly, harmonious, and productive. Christians are to have an impact on others by the influence of their godly lives and by their teaching the gospel.
7. Glorify your Father which is in heaven: not for the purpose of glory and honor for the individual Christian, but that others might be encouraged to also bring glory to the Father (Mt. 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 2:12). This is the supreme purpose of man (1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Rom. 15:5-6; Eph. 5:21; Eccl. 12:13).

### III. SOME AREAS IN WHICH OUR CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE MUST BE EXPRESSED.

#### A. The way we talk.

1. The Bible does not forbid humor.
  - a. Proverbs 17:22: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."
  - b. But course jesting is wrong: "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4).
2. The Bible does prohibit vulgar language.
  - a. Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
  - b. Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
3. The Bible does prohibit profanity.
  - a. Exodus 20:7: "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."
  - b. Leviticus 19:12: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD."
  - c. Matthew 5:33-37: "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."
4. The Bible does prohibit idle words.
  - a. Matthew 12:36-37: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
  - b. The *idle words* the Lord had in mind are like those the Pharisees has spoken, when they charged Jesus with casting out demons by the power of Satan (12:22). This was a foolish argument, which the Lord exposed. Errorists make many senseless, gainsaying assertions; these fall under Christ's condemnation as stated in verses 36-37.

#### B. The way we dress.

1. Modest apparel is required of all Christians.
    - a. 1 Timothy 2:9: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."
    - b. 1 Peter 3:3-4: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."
  2. The example of the virtuous woman: "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her
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household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple” (Prov. 31:21-22).

3. Amish folks are known for their distinctive clothing; although their clothing “covers the subject” [there is nothing vulgar or indecent about it], yet their garb calls attention to them. Instead of showing humility, it suggests a measure of pride—it suggests that they think themselves better than others.

C. The entertainment we enjoy.

1. There are some movies which are unfit for human observation.
  - a. A mature Christian does not like to have his mind polluted by the evil speech, the sinful scenes, or the extreme violence of some movies.
  - b. Of these three categories, only the violence is pretended; the vulgar and profane words are real; and the nudity is real.
2. There is some music which can corrupt the soul—by the uncouth words that are used, by the sinful practice that are promoted, and perhaps even by the sheer volume and “jungle beat” of the tune.
3. We are told by those who claim to know such things, that whatever is recorded on our subconscious minds will be with us forever. If we do not allow evil words, actions, and scenes to penetrate our hearts, we will not have to fight a battle to remove or suppress them.
  - a. It is impossible to separate ourselves completely from the sinful words of others, since we live in a sin-filled world.
  - b. But we can protect ourselves to a good degree by keeping away from as much of the filth as we can.

IV. **THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON OUR WORLD.**

A. The world into which Christianity was first introduced was indeed vile and wicked.

1. Romans 1:19-25: “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”
2. Romans 1:26-32: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

B. The Gospel was able to have a strong influence of that evil society.

1. Matthew 13:33: “Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”
  2. Infanticide [exposing babies to the elements, or killing them outright] was a common practice in the first century. That evil practice was virtually eliminated as a prominent procedure [until the modern pagans instituted abortion on a world-wide scale].
  3. Paganism was uprooted over a period of time.
  4. Slavery was likewise undermined.
  5. The status of woman was enhanced by the gospel.
  6. The gladiator contests were overturned.
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7. Crucifixion was ended.
8. Honesty and truth were brought on the scene in a wider practice.

## V. THE INFLUENCE OF RIGHTEOUS ABEL.

### A. Abel is one of the most influential men his ancient time.

1. Hebrews 11:4: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”
2. Genesis 4:3-5: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”
3. He was murdered by his brother Cain, early in human history. We do not know how old he was at the time, but evidently he was still a young man.
4. Although he was the first of the human family to die (as far as the divine record reveals), his influence has lasted even to our time. He still speaks.

### B. There are many things the blood of Abel still speaks.

1. It tells us that God will avenge all injustices—his murderer was punished.
2. It tells us that the righteous are hated without a cause—Cain resented being rejected by God while Abel was accepted. The difference was in the fact that Abel made his acceptable sacrifice by faith, which means he followed God’s instructions (Rom. 10:17), while Cain did not.
3. It tells us that it does make a difference how men worship God—faith is the key.
4. It tells us that the only righteousness is that which comes by obeying God’s word.
  - a. Psalms 119:172: “my tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”
  - b. Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
  - c. Acts 10:34-35: “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”
  - d. 1 John 3:7: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”

## VI. THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICA ON THE WORLD.

### A. What made America Great?

1. Europeans came to America seeking religious, political, and personal freedom.
  - a. They were harassed and persecuted because of their religious views.
  - b. They were hampered in the political arena by a well-entrenched system that denied certain rights to the common man.
  - c. The government, the aristocracy and the wealthy owned the land, and forbade the common man the right to hunt for game on their property. There were other freedoms not vouchsafed to the average person or family.
2. America had vast natural resources, which made her virtually independent of foreign lands.
3. America had the natural boundaries of two oceans to protect her from invasion.
4. Americans had a willingness to defend their freedom.
5. The American Constitution was unique, a very special document providing for our continued freedom, happiness, and prosperity.
6. America was founded by Bible-believing people; in the writings of the founding fathers are many references to their faith in God.
7. Principles from the Bible lie at the heart of our nation.

### B. America is the site of the greatest Restoration Movement since the time of Josiah [600 B.C.].

1. In our nation were many great and good men, believers in the Bible, who saw the evil of sectarianism; they sought, not a reformation, but a restoration—a complete return to the pure gospel as given by Christ and his apostles.

2. Their work resulted in the obedience of a very great number of sincere and honest souls.
  3. The church of our Lord was restored in its original purity and completeness!
  4. Where but in America was such a great work possible!
- C. Because of the great Restoration Movement, the pure Gospel was spread far and wide.
1. During the 1850s, sectarianism was on the retreat; it appeared to many who understood the conditions of the time that the church might gain such a standing that the majority might become obedient, and that sectarianism might even vanish.
  2. But the War Between the States arose, disrupting the work of spreading the gospel as nothing else could have.
  3. Following the war, an apostasy within the ranks of the church in the northern part of the country began. It took about forty years for this falling away to be complete [1906].
  4. But faithful brethren worked diligently to regain the ground lost by the apostasy. Since then, the gospel has been taken to many places around the world. Millions have obeyed the gospel in India and Africa.
  5. America's influence for good has been especially seen in being the springboard from which the truth could be launched throughout the world.

## VII. CONCLUSION.

- A. How much influence is the church having today on our world?
1. We are not having the number of converts as once was true.
  2. One great reason for the lack of growth is the worldliness of many people in our society.
  3. Another important reason for the lack of growth is the competition we face from the entertainment and sensationalism offered by many prominent religious groups. It is more exciting and desirable for worldly-minded people to accept this cheap, sensational religion.
  4. Furthermore, Americans have become permeated by a desire to be entertained; truth and self-control are far from the minds of the average person. The pure Gospel does not find many receptive ears.
  5. Another significant reason is the evil influence exerted in communities by weak, wayward brethren.
- B. Flavil Nichols wrote the following article which illustrates the point of our study:
1. "During the War Between the States, a young woman learned the truth and obeyed the Gospel. Her sweetheart, J.H. Halbrook, was a Confederate soldier. He was captured by the Union Army and kept a prisoner in Michigan until the war was over. He was given a ticket to Nashville and \$2.50; and from there he returned to Centerville, Tennessee, and found what was left of his home and family. He was reunited with his girlfriend. Then, they were married.
  2. "Mr. Halbrook's new wife studied the Bible with him, and he soon became a Christian. He thought the truth was so good and so simple that he began to preach, but he recognized his need for more training, so he enrolled in Mars Hill Bible School and was taught and trained by T.B. Larimore.
  3. "Upon completing his studies at Mars Hill, Mr. Halbrook and his wife chose to move farther south rather than going back to Tennessee, and they went into the counties of Walker, Marion, Fayette, and Lamar counties in Alabama. One of his many converts were Charley Alexander Wheeler and his wife. Mr. Wheeler, after obeying the Gospel, soon began preaching to others. He started more than 100 congregations, and he baptized more than 6,000 people. But wait—the story does not end here! One of those 6,000 baptisms was my father, the late Gus Nichols. And under my father's preaching, 12,000 people were converted to Christ!
  4. "And how many of those 12,000 began to preach 'the glorious Gospel of Christ?' No one can know the exact number, but I personally know several who did. I am one whom he baptized and whom he encouraged to preach. Under my preaching about 3,000 have been baptized. Among that number a few have gone on to preach the Gospel.
  5. "Only eternity will reveal the total results of the teaching of that one girl nearly 150 years ago. But at least 21,000 people have already become Christians through this single thread in the fabric of her influence.
  6. "'Go, and do likewise' (Luke 10:37), for YOU are important too! Dear reader, if you go to heaven, others probably will be saved because of you! 'What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?' (1 Corinthians 7:16).
  7. "'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (Matthew 6:16). ONE can be very influential."
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- C. Our influence for good could be increased many-fold.
    - 1. By living the best Christian life possible—thus indirectly affecting our neighbors for the better.
    - 2. By actively seeking for individuals who can be taught the Gospel.
    - 3. By cultivating friendship with non-Christians, gaining their confidence and enabling us to teach them.
  - D. Will you resolve with me right now:
    - 1. To walk in the light of the Gospel better than we ever have?
    - 2. Do all within our power to influence others to obey the gospel—directly and indirectly?
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## Decently and Orderly

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. God has always done things orderly.

1. His creation of the universe and life on earth followed an orderly arrangement.
  - a. He created the earth as part of a highly-organized whole, including the galaxies, the stars, our sun, the planets that pertain to our solar system, the earth and its moon.
  - b. He prepared the earth for man by separating the land from the water, by creating light, by creating the vegetable kingdom, the creeping life-forms, birds, fish, and beasts.
  - c. He prepared the Garden Paradise of Eden in which he placed Adam and Eve.
  - d. Everything was created and organized so that life on earth could continue on its own, without supernatural intervention.
2. God's revelation to man [the Bible] is an orderly product.
  - a. It contains all that is necessary, and it reveals nothing that is unnecessary.
  - b. It tells us what and who we are, how we originated, and what the Creator requires of us.
  - c. It contains nothing that is hurtful.
  - d. It tells us where we are going—Eternity.
    - 1) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
    - 2) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
    - 3) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
    - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

#### B. God created his offspring after his likeness.

1. We have been given the ability to comprehend.
2. He gave us the ability to reason and evaluate.
3. He gave us the ability to solve problems.
4. He gave us the ability to foresee difficulties and dangers.

#### C. God expects us to conduct ourselves in an orderly and decent fashion.

1. In order to function correctly, we must operate in an orderly manner. If we reason irrationally, we will warp our thinking about other matters. What would we think of a man who believes your Cadillac was made when a tornado ripped through a junkyard? What would we think of a man who believes that the universe, the earth, and life just happened through the blind actions of nature? His thinking is irrational; his thoughts are warped.
  - a. If one has accepted a false theory of how we originated, or follows a false standard of morality, or believes false religious doctrines, his mind is clouded; he will not be able to see the truth. If, in the face of the truth, we accept some false standard, knowing or doubting its rightness, we defile our ability to think orderly or to act decently.
  - b. Psalms 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."
  - c. Romans 1:20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
2. In order to be pleasing to God, we must also operate decently. There is a standard of conduct to which we will be held accountable.
  - a. Micah 6:8: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee,

but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

- b. John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

## II. DISCUSSION.

### A. Consider the prime passage addressing this subject:

1. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).
  - a. The setting for this statement is one in which spiritual gifts were being exercised by our first century brethren. The principles involved have application to our worship activities today.
  - b. For worship to be pleasing to God and be a source of strength to the worshiper, it must be offered to God, in accordance with the truth of God's word, and originate in a sincere and loving heart: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).
2. The Corinthian Christians had abused their spiritual gifts. They needed to be orderly and decent in the worship. Worship should be offered with the proper motives, not haphazardly. But they had allowed their services to degenerate into confusion, in direct opposition to God's plan: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33).
  - a. 1 Corinthians 14:23-31: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."
  - b. "They must do nothing that was manifestly childish (v. 20), or that would give occasion to say they were mad (v. 23), nor must they act so as to breed confusion, v. 33. This would be utterly indecent; it would make a tumult and mob of a Christian assembly. But they were to do things in order; they were to speak one after another, and not all at once; take their turns, and not interrupt one another. To do otherwise was to destroy the end of a Christians ministry, and all assemblies for Christian worship. Note, Manifest indecencies and disorders are to be carefully kept out of...every part of divine worship. They should have nothing in them that is childish, absurd, ridiculous, wild, or tumultuous; but all parts of divine worship should be carried on in a manly, grave, rational, composed, and orderly manner. God is not to be dishonoured, nor his worship disgraced, by our unbecoming and disorderly performance of it and attendance at it" (Matthew Henry).
3. This verse [14:40] summarizes all that the apostle has said in the context. Paul applied the principle to their use of spiritual gifts, but the principle applies to our worship. In an atmosphere of confusion or discord, it is not possible for God to be glorified or for the saints to be edified. Worship that is edifying to the worshipers and glorifying to God must be orderly and decently done.
4. "Let all things be done in an 'appropriate' and 'becoming' manner; 'decorously,' as becomes the worship of God. Let all be done in 'order, regularly;' without confusion, discord, tumult. The word used here *kata* (NT:2596) *taxin* (NT:5010) is properly a military term, and denotes the order and regularity with which an army is drawn up. This is a general rule, which was to guide them. It was simple, and easily applied" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by BibleSoft].
5. As a youngster, this scribe attended the services of Pentecostal groups. When the preachers got some in the audience "stirred-up," bedlam was the result. Perhaps half the audience would begin to shout and pray and to weep and wail. Confusion and disorder prevailed—but God demands order and decency in worship. Acceptable worship comes from orderly, faith-filled hearts, and is sincerely offered with deep reverence. Each worship act must also be in accordance with the truth.
6. To worship "decently" means that we operate with suitable reverence, with composure and gravity. To do something "orderly" is have everything in its proper place.

- a. **Decently:** *euschemonos* NT:2156 denotes “gracefully, becomingly, in a seemly manner” (*eu*, “well,” *schema*, “a form, figure”); “honestly,” in Rom 13:13 (marg., “decently”), in contrast to the shamefulfulness of Gentile social life; in 1 Thess 4:12, the contrast is to idleness and its concomitant evils and the resulting bad testimony to unbelievers; in 1 Cor 14:40, “decently,” where the contrast is to disorder...in the churches. [Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers].
  - b. **In Order:** *taxis* NT:5010, “an arranging, arrangement, order” (akin to *tasso*, “to arrange, draw up in order”), is used in Luke 1:8 of the fixed succession of the course of the priests; of due “order,” in contrast to confusion, in the gatherings of a local church, 1 Cor 14:40; of the general condition of such, Col 2:5 (some give it a military significance here); of the divinely appointed character or nature of a priesthood, of Melchizedek, as foreshadowing that of Christ, Heb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11 (where also the character of the Aaronic priesthood is set in contrast).... [Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers].
- B. We are to be orderly in the many affairs of life.
1. Without order, civil affairs would be in chaos.
    - a. Without operating orderly, food stores could not stock the items demanded by consumers. One of the great failures of the Russian Communist state was its inability to supply the goods and services required to have a functioning society.
    - b. In a democracy, we follow an orderly plan to elect leaders; these leaders follow an orderly plan in enacting and enforcing laws.
    - c. Local government operates orderly in providing water, electricity, telephone service, and other such essentials, and has an orderly system for the flow of traffic.
    - d. The Air Traffic Control system is designed to ensure the “safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of air traffic.”
  2. Without order in the judicial system, chaos would reign in society.
    - a. Our American judicial system still administers justice in the majority of cases (although in many instances, it appears far too lenient); in many cases, however, the rich and wealthy get away with murder and other significant crimes.
    - b. Federal judges, with outrageous rulings, have undermined the public’s confidence in the system. Some notable examples from Wayne Jackson [*America—A Nation Out of Control*:
      - 1) On Christmas Eve of 1968, ten-year-old Pamela Powers was attending an event with her parents at the YMCA in Des Moines, Iowa. She went to the rest room and was never seen alive again. A few days afterward, a car was discovered in Davenport (160 miles away) containing some of her clothes. Two days later, Robert Williams, owner of the car, surrendered to Davenport police. Officials in Des Moines dispatched two policemen to transport Williams back to the site of the abduction. They were strictly charged not to question him en route. Along the way, one of the officers commented that it was Christmas time, and it would be wonderful if the Powers family could at least recover the body of Pamela and give it a “Christian burial.” Sometime later Williams spoke up: “Okay, let me take you to the body.” He directed the officers to the place where he had buried little Pamela in a ditch. Subsequent tests revealed that she had been raped and smothered to death. Robert Williams was convicted of murder. However, the conviction was overturned in federal court. When the U.S. Supreme court finally ruled on the matter, the majority opinion, written by Justice Potter Stewart, stated that Williams’ “rights” had been violated by the police officer’s “Christian burial” speech.
      - 2) At 2 a.m. on November 20, 1990, Leonardo Turriago was pulled over by two state troopers for speeding. The officers asked if they could look into his van; Turriago said they could. Inside, the troopers saw a trunk and asked Turriago about it. He sprang open its lock, then ran away. Opening the trunk, the troopers found the body of a man shot five times. Turriago was caught quickly. In his apartment, police found eleven pounds of cocaine and guns. The suspect told them where to find the murder weapon. Turriago was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to forty-five years to life. The defense appealed, arguing that the troopers had no right to search the van. On June 6, 1996, Turriago’s conviction was overturned. A New York appellate court ruled that the police search had been coercive.



3. Without order in the family, chaos will rule.
    - a. The father must be in charge; the mother must be supportive. In the case where there is no father present, the mother must bear a huge burden. One of the great problems in America is due to the absence of a father in so many families.
    - b. If God's order for marriage is not followed, untold harm results, especially to the souls of those involved. God's arrangement for marriage is one man, one woman, for life. The only exception is in the case where one mate is sexually unfaithful to the other mate: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9).
  4. Without order at work and in business, chaos will reign. Adam Clarke wrote:
    - a. "Let all things be done decently and in order, is a direction of infinite moment in all the concerns of religion, and of no small consequence in all the concerns of life. How much pain, confusion, and loss would be prevented, were this rule followed! There is scarcely an embarrassment in civil or domestic life that does not originate in a neglect of this precept. No business, trade, art, or science, can be carried on to any advantage or comfort, unless peculiar attention be paid to it.
    - b. "And as to religion, there can be absolutely none without it. Where decency and order are not observed in every part of the worship of God, no spiritual worship can be performed. The manner of doing a thing is always of as much consequence as the act itself."
  5. Without order in the schools, chaos, crime, and ignorance will rule.
    - a. Some high school graduates cannot read their diplomas—the orderly transmission of knowledge was not followed in such a case. The teacher must present the necessary information clearly and the student must receive the instruction willingly before knowledge is imparted.
    - b. Many public classrooms dispense more liberal propaganda than real learning.
  6. Without order, the local church will degenerate into chaos.
    - a. Elders must be in charge; and where there are no elders, the men must take care of the affairs of the church by obtaining a consensus.
    - b. If the elders do their work, and if the deacons perform their functions, and the Bible teachers do their part, and if the preacher preaches the word, and if the rest of the members operate as they ought, then the church can be prosperous and thriving for the Lord's Cause.
  7. Without order, the worship services will be without benefit to the participants, and will bring no glory to God. This is the very point of our text [1 Cor. 14:40].
- C. We must operate decently in all of our affairs of life.
1. To do something decently is to act in a **seemly manner**, to act **appropriately**, to act **honestly**. Decency applies with equal force to our words, thoughts, and motives, as well as to our deeds.
    - a. DECENTLY: "Only once is this word found in our English Bible (1 Cor 14:40). It is in the last verse of that remarkable chapter on the proper use of spiritual gifts in the church and the proper conduct of public worship. It does not refer here to absence of impurity or obscenity. It rather refers to good order in the conduct of public worship. All things that are done and said in public worship are to be in harmony with that becoming and reverent spirit and tone that befit the true worshippers of God" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
    - b. Since we are to conduct ourselves during the worship services in an orderly fashion as determined by God's word, so we must conduct ourselves decently as determined by God's word. Anything that is out of harmony with the direct commands and instructions of the Bible are to be avoided; anything that is out of harmony with the principles of the Bible is to be avoided; anything that is out of harmony with the examples given in the Bible is to be avoided.
  2. If decency is absent from the various segments of society, our society itself will be indecent.
    - a. Decency [seemliness, appropriateness, honesty] is necessary in civil affairs, but is often missing today.
    - b. Decency [seemliness, appropriateness, honesty] is necessary in social affairs, but we often see the opposite.
    - c. Decency [seemliness, appropriateness, honesty] is necessary in the family, but is not always present.
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- d. Decency is necessary in the school, at work, and in business, but are frequently missing.
  - e. Decency is essential in all church functions, and especially so in worship activities. How can a congregation deem itself as pleasing to God when indecency is apparent in the way its members dress, talk, and conduct themselves in the services?
- D. We must always be orderly and decent in our worship of the Almighty.
- 1. In the acts of worship we offer to him:
    - a. Praying—not to impress men, but to address God.
      - 1) Acts 2:42: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
      - 2) 1 Timothy 2:8: “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”
    - b. Singing—not to entertain others with our vocal expertise, but to glorify God and edify others.
      - 1) Ephesians 5:18-19: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”
      - 2) Colossians 3:16-17: “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. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”
    - c. Studying his word—not to show our knowledge, but to obtain more information.
      - 1) Acts 2:42: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
      - 2) Acts 20:7: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
    - d. Giving of our means—not to be praised for our generosity, but develop greater spirituality.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”
      - 2) 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”
    - e. Eating the Lord’s Supper—not to make it the prime act of worship, but to express love for Christ.
      - 1) Acts 2:42: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
      - 2) Acts 20:7: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
  - 2. In the way we dress for this grand occasion.
    - a. Compare:
      - 1) Ecclesiastes 5:1-2: “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”
      - 2) 2 Samuel 24:24: “And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.”
    - b. Some strange and unbecoming sights are frequently observed:
      - 1) During the Lord’s Supper in a large congregation at Memphis many years ago, the comely wife of the local preacher was seated on a front pew; she was wearing a mini-skirt. I had turn my head to avoid this indecent sight, as I served the Lord’s Supper.
      - 2) In Florida on numerous occasions, members of the church who were on vacation in the area would come to the services in all kinds of uncouth and inappropriate attire.
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- 3) Some folks will wear work clothes to worship, and then change into very nice attire to attend a funeral visitation or a funeral service; but return to their outside clothing for the evening worship.
- 4) One ought to dress for the occasion he is attending. We would not wear ragged overalls to a presidential party; we would not wear a tuxedo to work in the garden. We ought to show God at least as much respect by our dress as we would show to a family who has lost a loved one.
- c. Heavenly beings made great impressions on those in the Bible who saw them or their supernatural work:
  - 1) Daniel 5:5-6: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that **the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.**"
  - 2) Matthew 28:2-4: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And **for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.**"
  - 3) Numbers 22:23-33: "And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and **he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.** And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive."
  - 4) Romans 14:10-12: "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The knees will be bowed out of terror and reverence for the Almighty!
- d. God deserves and demands the greatest of respect and reverence.
  - 1) Psalms 89:7: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."
  - 2) Hebrews 12:9: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"
  - 3) 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."
  - 4) Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."
  - 5) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
  - 6) Ephesians 5:21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."
  - 7) Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and

- became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”
- 8) Revelation 14:7: “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”
- 9) Revelation 19:5: “And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”
3. In the attitude with which we participate in worship.
- We are not the audience—God is.
  - We are not present to be entertained, but to offer praise to the Almighty.
  - We are not there to sleep, play with children, write out our shopping list, clip nails, or converse with our neighbors, during the worship activities.
  - We are not there to make fun of the preacher when he misspeaks or says something with which we do not agree. During the sermon, the preacher is not the only one who is worshipping; each one in the assembly is a worshiper; the preacher is merely leading the study.
4. Our purpose is to glorify God! This can only be done if we offer our worship from a pure and sincere heart, and offer only those acts of worship which are authorized.
- Mark 7:7-13: “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”
  - Colossians 3:16-17: “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. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”
  - Hebrews 10:28-29: “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”
  - 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”
5. We are to make sure our Christian lives are characterized by decency and orderliness.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”
  - Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”
  - 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
  - Hebrews 12:14: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”
  - 1 John 3:1-3: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”
  - 2 Peter 1:5-11: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of
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- our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”
- g. 1 Corinthians 9:27: “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”
  - h. Revelation 21:27: “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”
6. We must be orderly in various areas pertaining to the church of our Lord.
- a. In its organization.
    - 1) Philippians 1:1: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”
    - 2) Acts 14:23: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”
    - 3) Titus 1:5: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”
  - b. In the work it does.
    - 1) Ephesians 4:12: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (ASV).
    - 2) James 1:27: “Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (ASV).
    - 3) James 5:16-20: “Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins” (ASV).
  - c. In the way we interpret and teach the Scriptures.
    - 1) Nehemiah 8:8: “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”
    - 2) 2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
    - 3) Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
7. In all areas of Christian living, we must operate decently and orderly.
- a. In spreading the gospel.
  - b. As we deal with each other.
  - c. As we cooperate with other congregations.
  - d. These principles must be present within our own hearts, and not mere external displays.

### III. CONCLUSION.

#### A. Let each of us look into our own hearts.

1. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5).
  2. Are you, as a Christian, operating in the Kingdom of Christ, in a decent and orderly manner?
  3. Is your worship what it ought to be?
    - a. Are you depriving yourself of the necessary spiritual nourishment that is available through sincere, scriptural worship?
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- b. Are you denying to God the devout worship he deserves to receive from the sincere spiritual sacrifices of your heart?
  4. Is your life what it ought to be in the sight of God? Look deeply and honestly into your own heart. Only you and God can know what is truly within the innermost recesses of your soul. "...all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:23).
- B. Are you a genuine Christian, after the New Testament order
1. One is a Christian only if God says you are a Christian. The only way he speaks to us today is through his inspired word, the Bible.
  2. Is the religious organization to which you belong, the one which the Lord established?
    - a. Psalms 127:1: "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."
    - b. Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
    - c. Matthew 15:13: "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."
    - d. Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
    - e. Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  3. What does the Lord require of an alien sinner in order to become a member of His church?
    - a. He requires that we believe that he is truly the Son of the Living God:
      - 1) John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
      - 2) Acts 8:36-37: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
    - b. He requires that we repent and turn away from all sins of our past.
      - 1) Luke 24:47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
      - 2) Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
      - 3) Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
    - c. He requires that we confess his name before God and man.
      - 1) Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."
      - 2) Romans 10:9-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
      - 3) Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
    - d. He requires that we be baptized [immersed] into his spiritual body, the church, for the remission of our past sins.
      - 1) Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
      - 2) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
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- 3) Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
  4. What does he require of you as a erring member of the Lord’s church? He requires that we sincerely repent of our offenses, confess our faults to God, and pray for forgiveness.
    - a. Acts 8:22: “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”
    - b. James 5:16: “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
    - c. 1 John 1:7-10: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
  5. What does he require of you as a faithful member of his church? That you continue to be faithful!
    - a. Matthew 10:22: “...He that endureth to the end shall be saved.”
    - b. Revelation 2:10: “...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”
    - c. 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
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## Dedication To The Cause of Christ

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. Consider these verses:

1. Luke 9:23: “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
2. Luke 13:24: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”
3. Acts 2:42: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
4. Mark 12:29-31: “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”
5. Luke 14:26-27: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”
6. Matthew 10:37-38: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”
7. Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

#### B. From these passages it is clear that a dedicated effort is necessary if we are to please Christ.

1. Pleasing Christ is essential if we want to be in Heaven—this is shown by the foregoing passages.
2. What is required for us to be considered a Dedicated Christian? We shall examine some Biblical information that will answer this question.

### II. DEDICATION TO CHRIST REQUIRES THAT WE WALK BY FAITH.

#### A. Faith is the foundation of the Christian life.

1. Salvation is by faith: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:” (Rom 5:1).
2. The Christian life is lived by faith: “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7).
3. It is impossible to please God without faith (Heb 11:6).
4. Without faith in Christ we will die in sin: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).
5. Faith is the secret to obedience, whether of an individual or a congregation.
  - a. How can we get aliens to obey gospel?
  - b. How can we get wayward members to repent?
  - c. How can we get members to work? Live right? Worship right?
6. Faith is the answer!
  - a. We cannot use a gun or cattle prod to get aliens to obey gospel.
  - b. We cannot use a gun or cattle prod to get members to work.
  - c. We do not walk by the cattle prod but by faith (2 Cor 5:7).

#### B. Since faith is so important, we need to know what it is.

1. Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
  - a. Substance [*hupostasis*]: that which stands under and gives substance to.
  - b. Faith stands under, supports, and gives confidence in things we hope for.
2. Faith is the firm belief, the unshakable conviction, in something.

#### C. Faith is produced by testimony.

1. The more certain the testimony, the more certain is the faith.
  - a. The testimony of our physical senses are reliable in their realm: we can positively identify the smell of a skunk and the aroma of a rose.



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- b. But the testimony of the Creator's word is far more reliable and certain.
  2. Testimony is directed to the mind: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17). How is an unbeliever to come to accept Bible facts as true? Testimony and evidence are given to prove it to his mind.
    - a. Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
    - b. Acts 2:36-38: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
    - c. Acts 15:7: "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."
    - d. Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
    - e. Acts 14:1: "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."
    - f. Acts 8:5, 12: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them....But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
  3. The written word contains evidence and testimony.
    - a. It gives all the necessary evidence to prove everything we are asked to believe.
      - 1) John 20:30-31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."
      - 2) Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
      - 3) John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."
    - b. The evidence is presented, faith is born, and the result is hope and confidence.
  - D. Faith produces obedience.
    1. Acts 8:5, 12: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them....But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
    2. One can obey from the heart command of God only if he has faith.
      - a. We repent, confess, and are baptized because of faith (cf Mark 16:16).
      - b. We love others, we pray, we give, we worship—because of faith.
    3. Faith causes us to obey even when there's no apparent reason.
      - a. Abraham left Ur and Noah built the ark. God did not coerce them to act! He simply stated the facts—and they obeyed!
      - b. We are baptized when there is no reason apparent except that God said do it.
      - c. Christians live right and work in the kingdom because they believe the gospel.
    4. Faith causes us to obey even when there is no apparent connection between the thing commanded and result desired.
      - a. Jericho (Josh. 6).
      - b. Naaman (2 Kings 5).
      - c. Baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
    5. Faith causes us to obey even when the need is not apparent and is contrary to experience.
      - a. Consider the case of Noah and the flood (Gen. 6-9)..
      - b. Consider the case of the blind man and the pool of Siloam (John 9).
      - c. Consider baptism.
    6. Faith causes obedience to every command exactly as commanded.

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- a. Noah followed every detail regarding the construction of the ark: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22).
  - b. Moses followed every detail in constructing the tabernacle: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5).
  - c. The same is true with immersion in water (baptism), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), the worship we offer, the work we do, and Christian life we live.
- E. Obey even when the thing commanded results in self-denial and sacrifice.
1. Consider the cases of Shadrach and his friends, Moses, Abraham, and Paul.
  2. 2 Corinthians 4:13: "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak."
  3. Because of our faith, we happily give of our time, money, energy, and life: "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Phil. 2:30).
- F. Faith also results in an unshakeable trust.
1. The testimony of experience teaches trust.
  2. We know that when the right conditions are met, we can grow a crop; we know that if we place our money in a secure bank, our funds will be safe; we know that if we and the on-coming driver keep control of our vehicles, we will pass each other safely.
  3. The testimony of God's word is far more certain.
    - a. 1 John 5:9: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."
    - b. John 6:68-69: "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."
  4. We trust God to do what we cannot do.
    - a. "Several years ago a middle-aged farmer and his wife were riding in a buggy on their way to meet with the church one Sunday morning. They had experienced drought and hard times, and now they had only seven cents in cash. The farmer asked, 'What can we do with the nickel and two pennies?' The wife answered, 'Let's give the nickel to the Lord and keep the pennies.'" On the way home, a few hours later, they met a wagon loaded with hay, and the wagon was so large they had to pull their buggy to the side of the road. As the hay wagon came along side, the driver said, 'Why, I believe you are Mr. Brown that used to run a store in town.'" "That's right," the husband replied. The man told him, 'You may not remember me, sir, but I want to pay you \$14 I owe you for groceries I bought in your store ten years ago.'" As they drove on, Mrs. Brown said, 'That should teach us, John, that if we do right for the Lord, the Lord will take care of us.'" (Willard Collins, *Great Preachers of Today*, p.159).
    - b. "The late Ben Harding, who was superintendent of the Tennessee Orphan Home for several years, told me a great deal of his farther, the late James A. Harding, who one lived in Nashville. The son said that many such things happened in the life of his father because he trusted so much in Almighty God. Once when Brother Harding was living in Nashville on Eighth Avenue, he only had ten cents in cash. He was scheduled to go to South Alabama that particular week-end for a preaching appointment. He told Sister Harding that he was going to start with the ten cents and go as far as he could go on that amount. Brother Harding believed that if he would do his part Almighty God would do the rest, if it was the will of God.
      - 1) "He caught a streetcar, paid the conductor five cents and went to Union Station in downtown Nashville. When he arrived in the lobby of the station and had walked around for a few minutes, a friend came up to Brother Harding and said, 'I'm glad to see you. Here is a twenty dollar bill I would like for you to take and use in the work of the Lord.'
      - 2) "The gospel preacher took the \$20, walked to the ticket window and purchased his ticket for the town in South Alabama where he was scheduled to preach the next day. It takes a great deal of faith and confidence to be this close to Jehovah!
      - 3) "Brother Ben Harding told me that such events happened in the life of his father very often

because his father lived so near to God. It is no wonder that he had such a great influence for Christ and the church” (ibid., pp.159f).

- c. Acts 2:24-25: “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.”
5. We trust God to reward our faithfulness.
  - a. 2 Timothy 1:12: “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”
  - b. 2 Timothy 4:6-8: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”
- G. Saving faith produces hope.
  1. Passages:
    - a. Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
    - b. 2 Corinthians 4:14: “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.”
  2. We have hope of gaining ultimate victory over the grave, obtaining a glorified spiritual body, and of being invited into the glories of Heaven.
  3. Faith is truly the foundation of our spiritual hope.

### III. DEDICATION TO CHRIST REQUIRES THAT WE A SPIRITUAL PERSON.

- A. What is spirituality? Who is a spiritual person? How do we know if we are spiritual?
  1. Is it the person who continually is proclaiming “Praise the Lord”?
  2. Is it the person who speaks in tongues?
  3. Is it the person who claps and shouts hallelujah?
  4. Is it the person that accepts all religions as God-ordained?
  5. Is it the person who professes faith in Christ?
  6. Definition of *pneumatikos* [spiritual: Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor 2:14-15]:
    - a. Relating to the human spirit, or rational soul, as part of the man which is akin to God and serves as his instrument or organ.
    - b. Belonging to the Divine Spirit; of God the Holy Spirit; one who is filled with and governed by the Spirit of God.
    - c. Vine: “Men in Christ who walk so as to please God are ‘spiritual.’”
- B. Only those who are led by God’s Holy Spirit is spiritual.
  1. The spiritual person is led by God’s Holy Spirit.
  2. Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."
  3. How does He lead? Through the inspired revelation of the written word [1 Cor 2:11-13].
  4. He no longer speaks directly to man but only through inspired message.
    - a. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10: “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”
    - b. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”
    - c. Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
    - d. James 1:21-25: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his

way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

- e. 1 Peter 1:22-25: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”
5. Thus the person who claims to see visions, hears voices, and receive promptings is not a spiritual person, but is a deceived person.

C. The spiritual person is not carnal.

1. 1 Corinthians 3:1: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”
2. A carnal person is governed by human nature instead of God, having nature of flesh.
3. A carnal person is concerned over the loss of some material item—than violating God’s word.
4. A carnal person is more concerned about what his peers think than what God thinks.
5. A carnal person is divisive; some at Corinth were more concerned with their own preeminence than the unity of the church: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).
6. The spiritual person is the opposite of the carnal person.

D. Spiritual person examines his life in relation to God’s word.

1. We are told to look deeply into our hearts: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5).
2. To examine is to search, scrutinize, discern, investigate, and appraise.
3. Must be able to “rightly divide” the Word (2 Tim. 2:15).
4. Thus the person who is not a student of God’s Word and not able to judge in relation to God’s Word is not spiritual: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

E. A spiritual person who walks in the Spirit—shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

1. A spiritual person practices genuine love.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”
  - b. John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
  - c. 1 Corinthians 16:22: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”
  - d. Galatians 5:6: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”
  - e. 1 John 4:21: “And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”

- f. Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love."
2. To walk in the Spirit is to obey God:
  - a. Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
  - b. Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
  - c. Romans 10:16: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"
3. He obeys the Gospel plan of Salvation
4. He worships God in spirit and in truth.
5. He constantly obeys by following God's plan for morality.
6. To walk in the Spirit is to bear the fruits of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).
7. If one does not walk in the Spirit he is not spiritual.
8. The spiritual person is interested in lost souls
  - a. Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
  - b. Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
9. The spiritual person is part of God's spiritual family; God's spiritual house is the church.
  - a. 1 Peter 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."
  - b. Ephesians 2:19-22: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."
  - c. 1 Timothy 3:14-15: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
  - d. The Lord adds those who obey the gospel to the church (Acts 2:47); there is no other way they can enter. He adds only those who are baptized (Acts 2:41).

#### IV. DEDICATION TO CHRIST REQUIRES THAT WE ADD THE CHRISTIAN GRACES.

##### A. The Christian Graces:

1. 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
2. Virtue—sufficient courage to obey the gospel and remain faithful even in the face of persecution.
3. Knowledge—through study and application, we learn as much of God's word as possible.
4. Temperance—self-control.
5. Patience—perseverance, endurance, not giving up, longsuffering.
6. Godliness—acquiring and practicing those qualities that are characteristic of God.
7. Brotherly kindness—the closeness of feeling that characterizes brothers and sisters in the same family.
8. Love—the willing of good to all others; the opposite of taking vengeance or being hurtful.

**B. The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).**

1. Love.
2. Joy.
3. Peace.
4. Longsuffering.
5. Gentleness.
6. Goodness.
7. Faith.
8. Meekness.
9. Temperance.

**V. DEDICATION TO CHRIST REQUIRES THAT WE LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT.****A. Hebrews 12:1-3:**

1. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with 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, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."
2. We must lay aside every evil practice.
  - a. The sin that doth so easily beset us is probably unbelief.
  - b. Unbelief is especially emphasized in Hebrews: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (3:12-13).
  - c. Unbelief is emphasized elsewhere:
    - 1) Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
    - 2) John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
    - 3) Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
    - 4) Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
  - d. Each individual has some sin/s to which he is more greatly tempted—set it aside!

**B. We must lay aside the Old Testament as an Operative Law.**

1. It was nailed to cross:
  - a. Colossians 2:14-17: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."
  - b. Ephesians 2:13-15: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."
2. The Old Testament is useful for great precepts and examples it contains:
  - a. Romans 15:4: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."
  - b. 1 Corinthians 10:6: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."
  - c. 1 Corinthians 10:11: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."
3. But New Covenant in force as God's operative law:
  - a. Hebrews 7:12-14: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of

- the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.”
- b. Hebrews 9:15-17: “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”
  - c. 2 Corinthians 3:13-18: “And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”
4. We are not required or allowed to keep the Sabbath, the feast days, or to offer animal sacrifices.
- C. We must lay aside all uncleanness, foolish talking, and works of flesh.
1. Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”
  2. Ephesians 5:3-14: “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”
- D. We must lay aside all of the *polite* sins.
1. Colossians 3:5-11: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”
  2. Covetousness is a “polite” sin for it is condoned and encouraged.
- E. We must put aside all deceit and hypocrisy.
1. 1 Peter 2:1: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.”
  2. Instead, we are to desire the sincere milk of God's word: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2).
- F. We must lay aside excuses and anxiety.
1. Luke 12:22-34: “And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have
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storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

2. Matthew 6:25-34: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”
3. 1 Peter 5:7: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

G. We must try to lay aside all grief and sorrow.

1. Life must go on; we cannot change history.
2. We ought not grieve over past mistakes.
3. We ought not grieve over loved ones we have lost. David's example: “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23).

## VI. CONCLUSION.

A. Some of the results of a dedicated life.

1. We will be willing to suffer persecution if such is required.
2. We will be willing to put the Lord first, regardless of the circumstances.
3. We will be present at every service of the Lord's church, unless conditions beyond our control prevent our presence.
4. We will be attentive to the sermons, the prayers, the songs, and the Lord's Supper.
5. Our life will be one of commitment to the Lord and his cause.

B. To be a dedicated Christian requires several items, including those we discussed:

1. That we walk by faith, not by sight.
2. That we develop and practice spirituality.
3. That we cultivate and practices the Christian graces and exercise the fruit of the Spirit.
4. That we lay aside every weight that besets us.

C. A dedicated life is not an impossible job.

1. Micah 6:8: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”
  2. 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”
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## Rendering Service to Christ in His Church

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. Consider these verses:

1. 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
2. 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
3. John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
4. Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
5. Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

#### B. Christ expects from each of us a life of diligent service in his kingdom.

1. We must not be lazy. The Book of Proverbs has much to say against the sluggard.
  - a. Proverbs 6:6 : "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."
  - b. Proverbs 6:9: "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"
  - c. Proverbs 10:26: "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him."
  - d. Proverbs 13:4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."
  - e. Proverbs 20:4: "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."
  - f. Proverbs 26:16: "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason."
2. A Christian can become a sluggard in various ways.
  - a. He may spend his time involved in matters of a secondary importance [sports, fishing, traveling, entertaining]. There are many things that are right and proper, but which must not be allowed to take precedence over our obligations to God.
  - b. He may put off a good work until a more convenient occasion arises. We cannot do everything that needs to be done on the same day, but we ought not to procrastinate doing a job that needs to be done now. "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).
  - c. He may be happy to let somebody else do the unpleasant chores in the church's work. "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (Prov. 26:14-16).
  - d. He may be waiting until someone tells him to do the job. There are many folks who have little initiative; they need someone to point the way.
  - e. He may have tried but was discouraged by criticism or did not meet with quick or easy success. We must never discourage the willing by criticism; and the fainthearted must never give up when success in a job does not come quickly and easily.
  - f. He may become lazy because he has an interest only in activities that are new or exciting.

### II. EACH CHRISTIAN BEARS PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH.

#### A. Cooperation in a worthwhile endeavor includes personal responsibility.

1. To accomplish any mission personal responsibility is necessary.
  - a. A football team can be successful only if each player performs his job well.
  - b. A factory can produce its product only when each worker does his part.
  - c. A chain requires the presence and strength of each of its links.
2. One individual cannot get by on the fact that others do their part.

#### B. Cooperation and personal responsibility are essential in the church of Christ.

1. Only when individuals cooperate with each other and fulfill their own personal responsibility can the local congregation fulfill its God-given duty.
  2. The work of the church is three-fold: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12, ASV).
    - a. To perfect the saints is to edify them, to build them up in the most holy faith.
    - b. The work of ministering is to help the needy.
    - c. To build up the body of Christ is to increase its membership by preaching the gospel.
  3. Without the full cooperation of all the members, this great mission is hindered.
  4. Each member of the local church bears a personal responsibility to our great mission.
    - a. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
    - b. Mark 13:34: “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.”
    - c. Romans 14:12: “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”
    - d. Romans 2:6: “Who will render to every man according to his deeds.”
    - e. Philippians 1:12: “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”
    - f. Galatians 6:5: “For every man shall bear his own burden.”
    - g. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”
  5. No one can evade his responsibility always, for we must face the cold reality of truth eventually. The man in Florida who bought a new barometer, and then ignored its extremely low reading, thinking it was defective, hence did not prepare for the approaching hurricane, had to face the cold harsh reality of his poor judgment. A hurricane soon hit.
- C. The principle of cooperation and personal responsibility is illustrated in the New Testament.
1. Each individual Christian is branch of true vine (John 15:1ff). Each vine must bear its own fruit.
    - a. John 15:2: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”
    - b. Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”
    - c. 2 Peter 1:5-7: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”
    - d. No branch can get by on the fact that the other branches bear fruit.
  2. Individual Christians comprise a spiritual building:
    - a. 1 Peter 2:5: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer
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- up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”
- b. Ephesians 2:20-21: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”
  - c. Each item of material in the building is necessary. The walls need each other; the roof needs the walls; the rest of the building needs the roof. As no part of a building is unnecessary, so no member of the Lord’s spiritual body is unnecessary.
3. Each Christian is likened to a candle on a candlestick:
- a. Philippians 2:14-16: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”
  - b. Matthew 5:14-16: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
  - c. We reflect the light of the gospel.
    - 1) Reflected light is feeble at best. The moon is not nearly as bright as the sun, for the moon reflects the sun’s light—it has no light of its own.
    - 2) Compare: “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).
  - d. No Christian can get by on the fact that the other candles are shining brightly.
- D. There are some attitudes which we must have in order to bear our personal responsibility.
1. A gladness to do the work without complaint: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10).
  2. A steadiness in discharging our duty: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with 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, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 2:1-3).
  3. A heart that is filled with courage: Compare: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mark 2:5).
    - a. The four men had carried their friend to the house where Jesus was teaching. Not being able to enter the house because of the crowd of people, they mounted the roof, opened a hole, and lowered the palsied man into the presence of our Lord. The Lord saw their faith.
    - b. Many people would have been too afraid to do what they did.
  4. Our duty is to be done with many prayers: “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16).
- E. With this as the background, test your record on these general points.
1. Am I faithful to the marriage vows I made to Christ? “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2).
  2. Am I truly putting the Lord first?
    - a. Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
    - b. Matthew 10:37-38: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”
    - c. Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”
  3. Am I doing my part to support the Lord’s work? “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and
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compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16).

4. Am I doing my best in serving Christ? “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24).

F. If every member were just like me, what kind of congregation would this one be?

1. How strong would it be?
  - a. Ephesians 6:20: “For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”
  - b. 1 Corinthians 16:13: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”
  - c. Acts 20:32: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”
2. What kind of reputation would it have?
  - a. Does the world see a different person in me from what brethren see?
  - b. Would the lost be encouraged or discouraged to obey by the congregation’s influence?
3. As a parent, what kind of parents would others be if they were all like me?
  - a. Ephesians 6:4: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
  - b. 1 Timothy 5:14: “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”
4. How much knowledge would be in the church if everyone knew what I know?
5. How peaceful would the church be?
6. How much would the contribution be?
7. How many would be present Sunday AM? PM? Wednesday? VBS? Gospel Meetings?
8. How many would be invited or privately taught if every other member did exactly what I do? How many weak, unfaithful members would be encouraged?
9. How much work would be done around the building and in the community if everyone else did exactly the amount of work that I do?

G. This has been offered as means of examining ourselves.

1. 2 Corinthians 13:5: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”
2. How have you cooperated and fulfilled your personal responsibility?
  - a. Are you doing the best of your ability?
  - b. Are you being faithful unto death?

### III. HOW TO MAKE THE LOCAL CHURCH STRONGER.

A. Physical strength is highly respected by men.

1. Modern men and women lift weights in order to increase their physical strength and endurance; weakness is not admired by most folks.
2. Sports stars, soldiers, and animals are often pitted in contests to show their strength.
3. We all admire strong healthy bodies; among other things, this is an indicator of good health.
4. The Lord is especially interested in spiritual strength.
  - a. Ephesians 6:10-17: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
  - b. 1 Timothy 4:8: “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”
  - c. Colossians 1:11: “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

- d. Ephesians 3:16: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."
  5. There is no blessing in spiritual weakness.
    - a. Revelation 3:17: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."
    - b. 2 Timothy 4:10: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."
  6. We can make the local congregation strong only by strengthening each member, enabling each to do his part fully.
  7. What can we do to make the local church stronger?
- B. We must fill the church with a good knowledge of the Bible.
1. Consider these statements:
    - a. Acts 20:32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
    - b. 1 Peter 2:2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
    - c. 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
    - d. Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."
  2. Without knowledge of God's word, we would not know right from wrong, or truth from error.
  3. We can gain knowledge in the public services: classes, worship, VBS, Gospel Meetings.
  4. We can learn through private studies: Bible, good books, sound religious papers.
  5. One can learn the Bible only by personal effort: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).
  6. Without knowledge, any zeal we may develop is bound to be misguided: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:1-3).
  7. Without continual study, we will lose the knowledge we have gained: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:12-14).
- C. We must fill the church with faith and trust.
1. Passages:
    - a. Ephesians 6:16: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."
    - b. 2 Thessalonians 1:3: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."
    - c. Romans 1:8: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."
    - d. Romans 16:19: "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."
    - e. The Romans were not commended because of the size of their buildings, the numbers in attendance, the amount of the contribution, or for the big programs they had designed. They were commended because of their faith!
  2. By studying the truth, we obtain knowledge; our knowledge produced faith and trust:
    - a. Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
    - b. Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
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- c. Why were Moses, the apostles, Paul in Athens, and Stephen in his ordeal, all able to do what they did? Their knowledge, faith, and trust motivated them.
  - d. What will enable us to fulfill our obligations to God? Knowledge, faith, trust.
    - 1) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
    - 2) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  - e. What will keep us from sin? Knowledge, faith, trust.
    - 1) Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
    - 2) 1 John 5:4: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."
- D. Keep the church full of fervent love.
- 1. Passages:
    - a. Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
    - b. John 14:15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
    - c. 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
    - d. Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
    - e. Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."
    - f. Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
    - g. 2 Corinthians 4:2: "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."
  - 2. There is a strange idea about love today:
    - a. Some think that love demands that we overlook sin and error.
    - b. But it is no act of love to let a lost person continue in error and sin without warning: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor 5:10-11).
  - 3. If we love God, we will serve him out of desire, not from dread.
  - 4. If we love each other and all men, we will seek their best good.
  - 5. Genuine love makes the church strong: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).
- E. For the church to be strong, it must be unspotted from world.
- 1. The church is unspotted as each member keeps himself so.
    - a. Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
    - b. James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."
    - c. 1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
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- d. 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
  2. The word *church* means "the called out ones." By its very definition, the church is separated from the world. The process by which we obey the gospel causes us to be delivered from darkness and translated into the kingdom, which is the church (Col. 1:13; Acts 2:47).
    - a. Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
    - b. 1 Timothy 5:22: "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."
    - c. 1 Peter 1:15-16: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."
    - d. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
- F. To make the church strong, we must give it zeal and devotion.
1. Passages:
    - a. 1 John 2:13-17: "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
    - b. 1 Thessalonians 1:5: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."
  2. The Laodiceans were not strong in zeal and devotion:
    - a. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:14-17).
    - b. Neither are the indifferent, the irreverent, and the inattentive today.
    - c. We must hunger and thirst for righteousness and knowledge; we must be truly interested in and dedicated to progress of Lord's Cause!
- G. The local church must have a united membership.
1. It cannot be strong if we pull against each other, have strife in our midst, or be bitter against one another.
  2. James 3:13-18: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."
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3. 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
  4. Acts 4:32-34: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold."
  5. Ephesians 4:3: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
- H. To have a strong church we must have strong, plain preaching.
1. A proper balance in our preaching is needed; not positive only or negative only:
    - a. Matthew 23:13-16: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!"
    - b. Acts 2:23, 36: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain....Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
    - c. Acts 7:51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."
    - d. Jeremiah 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."
    - e. 2 Timothy 4:1-8: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
  2. Balance needed between doctrinal and practical lessons; between basic truths and Christian living.
  3. Preaching that is not Bible-centered is valueless to the soul; it has no higher authority than the man who presents it.
  4. Psychology, entertainment, sensational programs may attract crowds, but they will weaken and destroy a congregation.
  5. Bible preaching will not drive away those who want to do right!
- I. To be strong, a congregation must keep members active.
1. Physical inactivity weakens and destroys our physical bodies.
  2. Spiritual inactivity will destroy both the soul of the individual and the local church.
  3. Each member can do something; if we bury our talent, or leave it undiscovered, we are in danger of being banished from heaven:
    - a. Matthew 25:25: "And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine."
    - b. Matthew 25:30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
    - c. Matthew 25:26: "His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou
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knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed.”

4. What if all were inactive? The local church would be destroyed!
5. A working church is happy; and it is a blessing to others.
6. Let Nehemiah 4:6 be descriptive of us: “So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.”

#### IV. WE MUST BE COMMITTED TO OUR LORD AND HIS CAUSE.

##### A. Our Lord willfully endured awful treatment.

1. Consider some of the details:
  - a. Matthew 27:39-44: “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.”
  - b. 1 Peter 2:23: “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”
2. Though he was severely reviled, he did not return evil for evil—Why not?
3. He suffered but he did not threaten his tormentors—Why not?
4. He endured it because he had committed himself to God. To commit is to turn yourself over entirely to the disposal of another. Christ did not live for himself:
  - a. Romans 15:3: “For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”
  - b. Matthew 26:39: “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”
  - c. Hebrews 10:7: “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

##### B. God expects this commitment from every Christian.

1. 1 Peter 2:21: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”
2. He got it from Paul.
  - a. Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
  - b. Ephesians 3:8: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”
  - c. Romans 1:14-15: “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”
  - d. 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”
3. He expects it from us.
  - a. Luke 9:23: “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
  - b. Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
  - c. John 14:15: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”
  - d. John 15:14: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”
  - e. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

##### C. We must be committed to the Bible.

1. We should believe it wholeheartedly, for it is inspired, relevant, and authoritative.
2. John 5:39: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

3. 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."
  4. Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
  5. Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
  6. Acts 20:32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
  7. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
  8. 2 Peter 1:3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."
  9. Titus 2:1: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."
- D. We must be committed to the Lord's church.
1. Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
  2. Why did Christ die?
    - a. Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
    - b. Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."
    - c. Did he make a bad bargain? The church is worth the price he paid!
  3. The church is important to our souls.
    - a. Acts 2:47: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
    - b. Ephesians 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."
  4. It is important to others, through the good that its members do: A thinly-clad boy on cold street corner was a given coat; he asked the donor whether he was Jesus. Faithful members of the Lord's church frequently help others.
  5. We must be committed to the necessity of being in the Lord's church!
  6. We must be committed to the distinctiveness of his church.
    - a. Matthew 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
    - b. Ephesians 5:26: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."
  7. The Lord's church today is identical in name, organization, teaching, mission, worship, and plan of salvation, as the church of the New Testament. It began at Jerusalem in the year 33 A.D.
- E. We must be committed to morality and righteousness.
1. God wants us pure:
    - a. 1 Peter 1:15-16: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."
    - b. James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."
    - c. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
    - d. Titus 2:14: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
  2. Must be pure to see God:
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- a. Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
- b. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
- c. 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

F. We must be committed to soul winning.

1. What earthly mission is greater?
  - a. Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."
  - b. Daniel 12:3: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."
  - c. Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
  - d. Romans 5:8-9: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."
  - e. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
  - f. Jude 23: "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."
2. Consider the case of Andrew and Philip: "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:40-47).

G. We must be committed to going to heaven.

1. Colossians 3:2-3: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."
2. Cannot go there unless we desire to go there.
3. A certain sectarian preacher said that many in heaven will be surprised to be there! But:
  - a. Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
  - b. Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  - c. Hebrews 5:9: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
  - d. Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
  - e. 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of

our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

4. Motivation to go to Heaven is abundant: reunion; no death, no tears, no sorrows.
  - a. Matthew 8:11: “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”
  - b. Revelation 21:4: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”
  - c. 2 Corinthians 5:1-2: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.”
  - d. 2 Corinthians 5:8-9: “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

H. Our responsibilities as Christians include the following:

1. Self denial—Matthew 16:24.
2. Love the brethren—John 13:34
3. Glorify God—1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
4. Teach others—2 Timothy 2:2.
5. Assemble with the saints—Hebrews 10:35.
6. Practice pure religion—James 1:27.
7. Be regular in prayer—1 Thessalonians 5:17.
8. Remain faithful unto death—Revelation 2:10.
9. Put the Lord first—Matthew 6:24.

V. **WE MUST AVOID DRIFTING WITH THE TIDE.**

A. Ocean tides often carry the unsuspecting out to sea.

1. There is no conscious awareness of movement, until it may be too late.
2. Hebrews 2:1-2:
  - a. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (KJV).
  - b. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (ASV).

B. If we begin to neglect assembling with the saints that is an indication that we are drifting.

1. There are occasions when even the most faithful find it impossible to be present. In such cases, there is no neglect and no sin.
2. But some are indifferent. They will miss “at the drop of the hat” [and they are willing to drop the hat themselves!].
3. Judges 5:23: “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.” [The citizens of Meroz erred in failing to do their duty].
4. James 4:17: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”
5. Hebrews 10:23-26: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

C. If we begin to lost interest in studying the Bible that is an indication that we are drifting.

1. 1 Peter 2:2: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

2. Hebrews 6:4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."
  3. Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
- D. If we begin to do less and less work for Lord that is an indication that we are drifting.
1. 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
  2. Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
  3. Titus 3:1: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work."
  4. Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."
- E. If we begin to lose interest in prayer that is an indication that we are drifting.
1. James 5:16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
  2. Luke 22:42: "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."
  3. Hebrews 5:7: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."
  4. 1 Timothy 2:1-3: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."
  5. 1 Timothy 2:8: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."
- F. If we begin to be more satisfied and at ease with our spiritual status that is an indication we are drifting.
1. Amos 6:1: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!"
  2. Hebrews 6:1: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God."
  3. Matthew 5:6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
- G. If we are losing sight of the value of souls that is an indication we are drifting.
1. Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."
  2. Matthew 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
- H. If we are losing the joy of our salvation that is an indication that we are drifting.
1. Psalms 51:11-12: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."
  2. 1 Peter 1:8: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."
  3. Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."
- I. If we are becoming discontented and critical that is an indication that we are drifting.
1. Matthew 7:1-3: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"
  2. James 4:11: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth

his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.”

J. If we begin offering foolish excuses for our lack of effort and interest that is an indication of drifting.

1. Luke 14:16-24: “Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”
2. Hebrews 2:3: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”
3. James 4:17: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

K. If we are starting to practice bad habits that is an indication that we are drifting.

1. Romans 12:1-2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
2. James 1:27: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
3. James 4:4: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”
4. Titus 2:11-12: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

## VI. CONCLUSION.

A. God’s definition of a Christian is the only definition that counts.

1. One is a Christian only if God says he is a Christian: “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).
2. A Christian is one who has heard, believed and obeyed the gospel of Christ.
  - a. Acts 11:19-21: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”
  - b. Acts 18:8: “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”
3. A Christian is one who has a supreme purpose.
  - a. Acts 11:23: “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”
  - b. Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
  - c. Philippians 3:12-14: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
4. A Christian is one who cleaves to the Lord: “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was

- glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23).
5. A Christian is one who shares the gospel with others: “And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20).
  6. A Christian is one who is not a quitter, but accepts responsibilities:
    - a. Acts 11:19: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”
    - b. Acts 11:29: “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.”
  7. A Christian is one who is a good person: “For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:24).
  8. A Christian is one who assembles with the saints: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only....And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:19,26).
  9. A Christian is in the Lord’s church.
    - a. Acts 11:26: “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”
    - b. Isaiah 56:5: “Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.”
    - c. 1 Timothy 3:15: “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
- B. Despite the difficulties and challenges, we are fully able to do all the Lord demands.
1. We are able to overcome temptations.
    - a. 1 Corinthians 10:13: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”
    - b. James 1:13-15: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
    - c. James 4:7: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
  2. We are able to bear our trials and hardships.
    - a. 2 Corinthians 12:9: “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
    - b. 2 Corinthians 11:24-28: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”
    - c. Philippians 4:11-12: “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”
    - d. Philippians 4:9: “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”
    - e. 1 Peter 5:7: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
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- f. Psalms 37:3-6: "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."
  3. We are able to fulfill our responsibilities.
    - a. Matthew 25:24-28: "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents."
    - b. Numbers 13:30-31: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."
    - c. Philippians 4:12-13: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
    - d. Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
    - e. Colossians 1:6: "Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth."
    - f. Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."
  4. We are able to give freely with his help.
    - a. Deuteronomy 8:18: "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day."
    - b. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."
    - c. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."
    - d. 2 Corinthians 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."
  5. We are able to reproduce the life of Christ in our lives.
    - a. 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
    - b. 2 Peter 1:4-5: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."
    - c. 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."
  6. We are able to overcome sorrows.
    - a. 1 Thessalonians 4:13: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."
    - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore
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comfort one another with these words.”

- c. Matthew 8:11: “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”
  - d. John 14:1-3: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”
7. We are able to approach the end of our earthly sojourn calmly and with hope.
- a. Philippians 1:21: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
  - b. Philippians 1:23: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”
  - c. 2 Timothy 4:6-8: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

C. Review.

1. Each Christian bears a personal responsibility to Christ in his church.
  2. Items that make the church stronger.
    - a. Fill it with knowledge.
    - b. Fill it with faith and trust.
    - c. Keep it full of fervent love.
    - d. Keep it unspotted from the world.
    - e. Fill it with zeal and devotion.
    - f. Maintain a united membership.
    - g. Strong plain preaching of the pure gospel.
    - h. The members must keep active
  3. We must be committed to our Lord and his cause.
    - a. God demands commitment from every Christian.
    - b. We must be committed to the Bible.
    - c. We must be committed to the Lord's church.
    - d. We must be committed to morality and righteousness.
    - e. We must be committed to soul winning.
    - f. We must be committed to going to heaven.
  4. Our responsibilities include:
    - a. Self denial—Matthew 16:24.
    - b. Love the brethren—John 13:34
    - c. Glorify God—1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
    - d. Teach others—2 Timothy 2:2.
    - e. Assemble with the saints—Hebrews 10:35.
    - f. Practice pure religion—James 1:27.
    - g. Be regular in prayer—1 Thessalonians 5:17.
    - h. Remain faithful unto death—Revelation 2:10.
    - i. Put the Lord first—Matthew 6:24.
  5. We must avoid drifting with the tide.
  6. God's definition of a Christian.
    - a. Only God can define who is a Christian.
    - b. One who has heard, believed, and obeyed the gospel.
    - c. One who has a supreme purpose.
    - d. One who cleaves to the Lord.
    - e. One who shares the gospel to others.
    - f. One who is not a quitter.
    - g. One who is a good person.
    - h. One who assembles with the saints.
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- i. One who is in the Lord's church
  - 7. We are able:
    - a. To overcome temptations.
    - b. To bear our trials and hardships.
    - c. To fulfill our responsibilities.
    - d. To reproduce the life of Christ in our lives.
    - e. To overcome sorrows.
    - f. To approach the end of life with calmness and hope.
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