

SERMONS

VOLUME 2

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**GOSPEL
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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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Yes, We *Really* Can

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Baptism of Suffering Illustrates the Difficulties of Serving God in a Sinful World.

1. Matthew 20:20-23: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."
2. The baptism of suffering was more than James and John bargained for.

B. But These Two Sons of Zebedee [James and John] Were Able to Endure this Serious Problem.

1. Acts 12:2: "And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." The apostle James lost his life for the cause of Christ, but his eternal glory far surpasses this earthly loss: "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" (Rom. 8:18).
2. Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." What John wrote in other parts of *Revelation* also applied to himself:
 - a. 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."
 - b. 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."

C. We Who Live Today Also Have a Burden or Cross to Bear.

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. 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
3. Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

II. WITH GOD'S HELP WE ARE ABLE TO BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH:

A. We Can Fulfill All of Our Obligations.

1. The one-talent man was mistaken:
 - a. Matthew 25:24-30: "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. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - b. He thought he could hide his talent [his opportunities, his abilities, his money, etc.] and not have to use them.

- c. God knows all:
 - 1) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
2. Consider the cases of Caleb and Joshua:
 - a. 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."
 - b. Numbers 14:30: "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."
 - c. Numbers 14:38: "But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still."
 - d. Numbers 26:65: "For the LORD had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."
 - e. Numbers 32:12: "Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD."
 - f. Deuteronomy 1:36: "Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD."
3. Consider the case of the early Christians:
 - a. Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 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."
 - d. Romans 10:18: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."
4. We can teach the gospel, edify each other, and help the needy—the sum of our work.
 - a. Ephesians 4:12: "For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (ASV).
 - b. Ephesians 4:12: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (KJV).
 - c. Our three obligations are:
 - 1) *To perfect the saints.* Those having the gifts instructed the saints in the complete will of God, equipping them with the information and traits essential to discharging their duty, and bringing them to spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:1-2). The first century saints were aided by inspired men who taught and edified the brethren. We use the inspired word to accomplish the same result.
 - 2) *For the work of ministering.* Those having the gifts instructed the saints in regards to helping those who are in need of the essentials of life. They accomplished this by calling attention to their duty to help and by providing them with scriptural motives to do what they could (Gal. 6:9-10).
 - a) James 2:14-16: "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?"
 - b) 1 John 3:17-18: "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My Little

- children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.”
- 3) *To guide and assist the church in carrying the gospel to the lost, thus building up the church numerically.* The ASV has "building up the body of Christ." The authority for this is given in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47).
 - d. The inspired written word is able to furnish the church today with the power to accomplish these same results.
 - 1) 2 Timothy 3:15-17: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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."
 - 2) 2 Peter 1:1-3: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 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." [Cf. 2 Peter 1:4-12].
 - 3) 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."
 - 4) 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."
 - 5) James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
 - 6) 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."
 - e. These three activities summarize all of the church's work today. Our responsibilities are limited to these three matters; beyond these three we have no authority to go.
 - 1) The church has neither the right nor the obligation to entertain its members, or to do anything not comprehended in the three principles stated in this verse.
 - 2) The church has the right to help a home that is in financial trouble (Gal. 6:9-10). An orphan's home is still a home, even though it is not the usual format for a home. It is therefore, scriptural for a congregation to assist such a home.
 - f. Individual Christians and the local church can help those who are in need, whether they are saints or not.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 9:13: "Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men."
 - 2) Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 5. Each Christian can give whatever he has to offer, and each can encourage the others with whom he has contact.
- B. We Can Live a Successful Christian Life.
1. The life and teachings of Christ are to be the pattern for our lives.
 - a. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).
 - b. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).
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2. We can live Christ-like lives if we study his word and make proper application.
 - 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."
 3. It must be high on our priority list to learn how he lived, to perceive what his attitudes were, and to observe what his conduct was in the various situations of life.
 - a. Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."
 - b. Philippians 4:19: "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."
 - c. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: "And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."
- C. With God's Help, We Can Overcome Temptations.
1. Observe these powerful passages:
 - 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. 2 Peter 2:9: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."
 2. We commit sin when we allow ourselves to be drawn away from the truth and do not take the escape route God provides.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Hebrews 10:36-39: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."
 - c. James 4:17: "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
- D. We Can Bear Many Trials and Hardships.
1. Review the example of Paul:
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."
 - 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
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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 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

2. We are able: “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” (Ps. 37:3-6).

E. We Can Contribute Freely and Cheerfully, Perhaps More than We Think.

1. God has power to give us material wealth:
 - 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 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.”
2. Under the Mosaic Law, their blessings were primarily material [very productive land, good crops, protections from outside enemies, etc.].
 - a. Numbers 13:23: “And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.”
 - b. Malachi 3:10: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”
 - c. Exodus 34:23-24: “Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.”
3. Under the Gospel system, our blessings are primarily spiritual.
 - a. Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”
 - 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. Hebrews 8:1-6: “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 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. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”
4. We can do things beyond our expectations. A congregation was asked to give extra money to erect a meeting house. The men of the congregation did not believe they could afford the cost. The local miller, the treasurer for the church, added a small charge to each of their business transactions the members conducted with him. In a fairly short time, he had collected enough money from them to pay for the building project.

F. We Can Overcome Sorrow and Discouragement.

1. The promise of the resurrection gives us reason for hope.
 - 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. Acts 24:15: “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: “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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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.”
2. We must not focus on the grave, but on Heaven.
 - a. Colossians 3:1-3: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 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.”
 - 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.”
 - c. Hebrews 12:1-3: “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.”
 - d. 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.”
 3. Think of the glorious reunion!
 - 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. 2 Samuel 12:23: “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.”
 - c. 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.”

III. WE ARE ABLE TO APPROACH END OF DAYS WITH SERENITY.

A. It Is Far Better to Be with Christ Than Abide on Earth With its Trials and Sorrows.

1. Philippians 1:21: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
2. 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.”
3. Heaven is beyond our full appreciation and comprehension now.

B. A Great Promise is Given To Those Who Love His Coming.

1. 2 Timothy 4:8: “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.”
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2. 2 Peter 3:8-14: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”
 3. We must be prepared if we are rightfully able to say we love his appearing.
 4. If we abide faithfully in Christ, we can truthfully say we are ready for his coming!
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Wise As Serpents and Harmless as Doves

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. No Two Creatures Are More Opposite in Nature Than Snakes and Doves or Wolves and Sheep.

1. The snake may stalk the dove with hungry desire; the dove may look at the snake with horror.
 - a. The serpent is the symbol of the evil one—Satan: “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:2).
 - b. The dove symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Christ—“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matt. 3:16).
2. Wolves are perceived as vicious animals, which attack in packs, and show no mercy or restraint; but sheep are perceived as virtually helpless and harmless, easily victimized.

B. We May Learn Valuable Lessons from Both the Serpent and the Dove.

1. Dove: “In Gen 8:8-12, we read, “And he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated.” Noah first sent out a raven, because it was a strong, aggressive bird and would return to its mate. But the raven only flew over the water and returned to perch on the ark. This was not satisfactory, so Noah in looking for a bird better suited to his purpose, bethought him of the most loving and tender bird he knew—the dove. It not only would return to the ark, but would enter and go to the cage of its mate, and if it found green food it would regurgitate a portion for her or its young, or if not nesting he could tell by its droppings if greenery had been eaten and so decide if the waters were going down. And this is precisely what happened. The dove came back, and the watching Noah saw it feed its mate little green olive leaves, for the dove never carries food in the beak, but swallows and then regurgitates it to mate and young” [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Biblesoft].
2. Serpent: “The serpent is subtle (Gen 3:1; 2 Cor 11:3); wise (Matt 10:16); accursed (Gen 3:14); eats dust (Gen 3:14; Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17). The adder is deaf (Ps 58:4). The serpent lurks in unexpected places (Gen 49:17; Eccl 10:8; Amos 5:19). Serpents may be charmed (Ps 58:5; Eccl 10:11; Jer 8:17). Among four wonderful things is “the way of a serpent upon a rock” (Prov 30:19)” [*ibid.*].

II. BE WISE AS SERPENTS AND AS HARMLESS AS DOVES.

A. The Lord Was Sending Them Forth as Sheep into a Cruel and Evil World.

1. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).
2. One wolf amid a flock of sheep can result in slaughter and carnage. Sheep are characterized as innocent and harmless. But the innocence of the sheep is no protection from wolves; even so with the apostles in preaching to a cold, indifferent world.
3. They were to be as “wise as serpents.”
 - a. Genesis 3:1: “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.....”
 - b. “The Egyptians used the serpent in their hieroglyphics as a symbol of wisdom. Probably the thing in which Christ directed his followers to imitate the serpent was in its caution in avoiding danger. No animal equals them in the rapidity and skill which they evince in escaping danger” (Barnes, Albert, p.111).
 - (1) Snakes are able to move rapidly and silently.
 - (2) They also are equipped with excellent camouflage markings.
 - c. “The serpent was considered a symbol of wisdom among the ancients, especially the python. The maid at Philippi who followed Paul and Silas was said to have had a ‘spirit of divination’ (Acts 16:16), but the Greek word denotes that she had a PYTHON! The dove as a symbol of harmlessness and innocence derived significance from Noah's use of it as a messenger in the ark.The brutal and vicious dangers to which the apostles would be exposed were not concealed by

- the Lord. Their mission was dangerous and fraught with countless perils"(Burton Coffman).
- d. **“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.**—Here Jesus expands his instruction from the view of the present limited mission so as to include the warfare and sufferings of their entire service as apostles. He draws a vivid picture of the perils which they must encounter; they are as innocent, helpless sheep ‘in the midst of wolves’ They are helpless, unarmed, undefended, to all appearances, and doomed to destruction. Their enemies shall be as eager to destroy them as wolves are to destroy sheep; only by their prudence and innocence will they be kept from such enemies; they are to be ‘wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.’ The serpent by his cunningness has found a place in the east as an example of wisdom and prudence; only the shrewd wisdom and prudence of the serpent are commended here, not its deceitful cunningness. The dove is a symbol of innocence and purity. His disciples are to be as innocent as sheep and as guileless as doves, yet not stupid and silly as those animals. Their prudence must not degenerate into guile, their simplicity must go hand in hand with the serpentine prudence. The serpent is the bodily emblem of Satan, and the dove is the bodily emblem of the Holy Spirit; Jesus' apostles must be shrewd like Satan, yet pure like the Holy Spirit. [Gospel Advocate Commentaries].
4. The dove is a symbol of innocence and purity. The disciples were to be as harmless and innocent as sheep and doves, but not "stupid and silly as those animals" (H. Leo Boles). People who would foolishly destroy a helpful snake would not harm a dove. Coffman wrote:
 - a. The dove was a "clean" creature under the ceremonial laws of the Jews.
 - b. It was used in their religious sacrifices, two, in fact, being offered upon the presentation of our Lord in the temple (Luke 2:24).
 - c. It is a monogamous creature!
 - d. It is a symbol of peace.
 - e. It is a marvel of gentleness, love, and affection.
 - f. It is a messenger (the homing pigeon is a dove).
 - g. The dove has no gall, suggesting that there is no bitterness in the service of God.
 5. The Lord would be well aware of the dangers and ill-treatment his apostles would suffer, especially in the universal mission on which they were later to go. He did not conceal from them beforehand the dangers and hardships they were to face; rather, he graphically described what was in store for them.
- B. Being Wise and Harmless According to the Context.**
1. “At this point in the discourse, Jesus passes from the first to the second mission of the apostles; for all of the persecutions enumerated were encountered under the latter. They were to be like sheep in the midst of wolves, because they were to be visited with cruelties, and they were to bear these without resistance. Under these circumstances they were to be as wise as serpents, whose only wisdom is displayed in escaping from danger, and as harmless as doves. Being humble, they would encounter no merited cruelty; and, being wise as serpents, they would escape all danger that could be avoided without dereliction of duty” (J.W. McGarvey).
 2. In effect, the Lord is telling them to know when to flee and when to take a stand, or when to contend earnestly for the faith and when to avoid a confrontation. Depending on our natural tendencies, we may either have the inclination to fight when some problem arises between ourselves and another, or we may want to flee from the confrontation. Wisdom gained from God’s word and experience in serving Him can tell us which is the right action to take.
 3. Following Paul’s conversion to Christ, he encountered a very dangerous situation in Damascus. The enemies of our Lord sought to arrest the apostle. What should he do? Should he surrender to these deadly foes and possibly be slain? If he had given himself over to them, think of all the great things that he would not have been able to do! At this point, he had not written any of his inspired epistles; he had not made those fruitful missionary journeys. In this case, wisdom dictated that he should avoid the enemy and live to carry on his life’s work.
 - a. Acts 9:23-25: “And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their
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- laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.”
- b. 2 Corinthians 11:32-33: “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”
4. On another occasion, when Paul and Silas had been arrested and beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, the authorities wanted to release them and get them out of town quietly. But Paul refused to accede to their plan.
 - a. Acts 16:35-37: "And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."
 - (1) Although the earthquake had released them from their confinement, Paul and Silas did not try to escape from the authorities. And as far as we know, none of the other prisoners got away. When morning came, the magistrates sent lesser officials to instruct the jailor to release Paul and Silas. The jailor gave them the information.
 - (2) Paul gave a strange reply: "They have beaten us openly, without establishing any guilt on our part; we are Roman citizens with the rights that pertain to that status; they have cast us into prison, and are now trying secretly to put us forth from the city. We will not leave until the magistrates personally come and release us." He was not being proud or spiteful. He knew that if the report of their arrest followed them, their work would be impeded, but if the officials personally released them, that would be tantamount to exoneration.
 - b. Acts 16:38-40: "And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."
 - (1) The serjeants reported this to the magistrates. It was a capital offense under Roman law to scourge a Roman citizen. The charges Paul laid against the magistrates were very serious, and placed them in jeopardy if legal action were pressed. The officials were quick to comply with Paul's demands.
 - (2) After meeting with the brethren in Lydia's house, where they comforted them, Paul and his company departed from Philippi.
 5. Others in the Bible who avoided confrontation when wisdom dictated this action:
 - a. Jacob left home to avoid trouble with his brother Esau (Gen. 28).
 - b. Moses fled from Egypt after his premature effort to aid his people (Ex. 2).
 - c. The two spies hid in Jericho to avoid arrest (Josh. 2).
 - d. Elijah was concealed from Ahab (1 Kings 17:1-7) and fled from Israel when Jezebel sought to kill him (1 Kings 19).
 - e. Our Lord avoided unnecessary conflict with the people of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30).
 - f. The brethren who comprised the church at Jerusalem were obliged to leave home to avoid the persecution brought against them after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1-4).
- C. Who is Wise?
1. One who fears God: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).
 2. One who listens to sound counsel.
 - a. Proverbs 1:1-5: “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and
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- discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.”
- b. Proverbs 12:15: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”
 3. One who accepts a rebuke with a good attitude.
 - a. “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning” (Prov. 9:8-9).
 - b. David humbly received the rebuke Nathan gave him over his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12).
 4. One who lives a godly life.
 - a. James 3:13-17: “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.”
 - b. There is a wisdom that is earthly and worldly.
 - c. There is a wisdom that emanates from God.
 5. One who respects his parents.
 - a. Proverbs 13:1: “A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.”
 - b. Proverbs 15:5: “A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.”
 - c. Ephesians 6:1-3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”
 6. One who wins souls: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30).
 7. One who obeys God in all things: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:24-27).
 8. One who controls his words.
 - a. Proverbs 10:19: “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”
 - b. Proverbs 29:11: “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”
 - c. Proverbs 17:28: “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.”
 - d. 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.”
 - e. James 3:1-12: “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of
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serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF WISE WORDS AND ACTIONS.

A. Wise Words and Actions Are Described and Defined.

1. James 3:17: "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."
2. The wisdom of the passage originates in heaven. It was not engendered by human reasoning, but from God's infinite mind. This wisdom is characteristic of God, not of worldly-minded men. The various traits of love are given in 1 Corinthians 13; some of the traits of wisdom are listed here. Notice the similarity between the passage and the Lord's statements in Matthew 5:8-9: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

B. This Wisdom Which Inspiration Requires Is First **Pure**.

1. The heart must be pure or else the other qualities would be corrupt and useless. One who is pure is uncontaminated by an evil attitude, wicked words, or sinful practices; rather, he is entirely good. This does not mean that he is utterly without any fault, but does not regularly practice anything sinful; he might stumble occasionally, but walks in the light of the gospel to the best of his ability (1 John 1:7-10). Purity of heart is essential to fellowship with God and entrance into heaven.
2. Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
3. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
4. 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."
5. Worldly wisdom does not promote purity, but rather the opposite. Does atheism or evolution improve the purity of an individual? Does humanism make one a better person?

C. A Pure Heart Does **Not** Generate Strife.

1. Matthew 5:9: "Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."
2. Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
3. 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."
4. Does worldly wisdom promote peace? Will a person who denies the inspiration and authority of the Bible be made a more peaceable person because of his unbelief?

D. This Wisdom Is **Gentle**.

1. The characteristic of gentleness keeps us from demanding our own way; it makes us fair, kind and reasonable. One who is gentle is not self-centered, thus does not insist on his own way, is not overbearing. In this we have our Lord as the flawless model, and which the apostle Paul demonstrated in his life: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you" (2 Cor. 10:1).
2. It is especially important for a teacher or preacher of the word to avoid being overbearing, proud, or harsh. Severity in tone and word-choice may add to one's perceived authority, but will make no contribution to the gentleness required of him by the Lord.
3. Gentleness is not opposed to manliness. It does not negate courage. Gentleness is an indicator of strength and courage. An arrogant, loud-mouthed, overbearing, self-centered individual is violent and bombastic; he may be filled with self-assurance, but that does not give him strength of character; his aggressiveness may be under his control, but his attitude is not under the control of the wisdom from

above. Our Lord was perfect in manliness and courage, but he was neither weak nor over-bearing.

E. This Wisdom Is **Easy to Be Entreated**.

1. A faithful Christian, having this characteristic, may be approached without fear of rebuke. One who operates under the influence of heavenly wisdom sincerely wants to be helpful, is easy to talk to, is open to questions and requests, and is ever congenial. He does not look for an excuse to deny an inquiry or an occasion to denounce another.
2. "One easy to be entreated is open to reason, ever ready to hear what others have to say, and to be willing to yield to what is right. It is not to be interpreted as meaning that one is susceptible to every vagrant impulse, or carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14); there is no weakness or deficiency of courage inherent in the word. He who is thus influenced will listen carefully to what others have to say and, if it appears that the course he has adopted is an erroneous one, he will not hesitate to abandon it, and to accept that which is right....This disposition will exhibit itself both inwardly and outwardly" (Guy N. Woods, *Commentary on James*, p.193).
3. Heavenly wisdom is easy to be entreated [*eupeithes*]. It can be persuaded by truth. It is open to reason. It has not closed its mind to truth. It makes us to be honest with the truth.

F. This Wisdom Is **Full of Mercy**.

1. Mercy is from a Greek word which means compassion. James 1:27 is an example of compassion which we are told to manifest: "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."
2. The nature of the gospel is such that if we desire to obtain mercy (from God or man) we must be willing to show mercy.
 - a. Matthew 5:7: "Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."
 - b. James 2:13: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."
 - c. Luke 10:36-37: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."
3. We deserve justice, but we need mercy.

G. This Wisdom Is Full of **Good Fruits**.

1. "'Mercy,' here (*elous*) is compassion, the disposition to desire to help those in distress; and, the 'good fruits,' (*harpon agathon*) result from such an attitude of heart. A man possessed of such a disposition is like a tree ever in bloom, and ever bestowing its blessed fruits upon those about it. This, indeed, is the test of the heart's status; one cannot always know the condition of the tree, but one can easily determine the character of the tree by the nature of the fruit" (Guy N. Woods, *ibid.*, pp.193f).
2. If one has genuine mercy in his heart, that compassionate disposition will manifest itself in the performance of kind acts of benevolence upon those who are in need of that which we are able to provide. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10).

H. This Wisdom Is **Without Partiality**.

1. This is rendered "without variance" in the ASV. This disposition is the opposite of that which is possessed by the double-minded man (Jas. 1:8). His faith, disposition, words, and actions are consistent; they are not uncertain or indecisive.
2. One who is without variance is one who "does not doubt, is not drawn by divided opinions, and is stable in his views regarding religion" (Woods, p.194).
3. "The wisdom which is from above enables one to be firm in his views, and to entertain complete confidence in God and in his word....The faithful disciple of the Lord has confirmed convictions; these convictions are grounded in a robust faith in God's word; and to question them is to question the word, and ultimately, the Lord himself. A vacillating, changeable disposition is neither conducive to

Christian growth, nor to useful service in the vineyard of the Lord; and does not originate in the heavenly wisdom. We should all acquire and maintain principles by which to guide our lives and these may be properly obtained only from God. Those thus directed follow a compass which is not deflected by worldly acclaim or selfish interests, not by current views announced by favorite preachers” (Woods, *ibid.*).

4. “Heavenly wisdom is without partiality. The original word, *adiakritos*, signifies to be without suspicion, or free from judging, making no undue surmises nor differences in our conduct towards one person more than another” (Matthew Henry).

I. This Wisdom Is **Without Hypocrisy**.

1. Hypocrisy is a form of dishonesty. On the surface, the hypocrite appears to be one thing, but in reality he is totally different. To say one thing and do the opposite is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy was a common malady among the Jewish leaders, which sparked a severe rebuke from Christ (Matt. 23). “Feigned piety, and an affected holiness, are as contemptible in God’s sight as deceptive actions. Neither has any place in the lives of Christians” (Woods, p.195).
2. Peter and Barnabas stumbled into hypocrisy in regards to accepting Gentiles into full fellowship. They both knew the truth, that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in Christ, but under the pressure of a volatile situation, they blundered: “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (Gal. 2:11-14). “Dissimulation” means “hypocrisy.”
3. “That wisdom which is from above is without hypocrisy. It has no disguises nor deceits. It cannot fall in with those managements which the world counts wise, which are crafty and guileful; but it is sincere and open, steady and uniform, and consistent with itself. O that you and I may always be guided by such wisdom as this! that with Paul we may be able to say, Not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have our conversation” (Henry, *Biblesoft*).

IV. **PRACTICAL CASES OF USING WISDOM**

A. Using Wisdom in Making Choices.

1. Wisdom is the ability to judge soundly, based on a balanced and complete understanding of the facts. Knowledge is the possession of facts; wisdom is the ability to use those facts prudently.
2. Making rash, impulsive decisions is not acting with wisdom.
3. Making decisions based on worldly or sensual desires is not acting with wisdom.
 - a. Lot decided to pitch his tent toward Sodom—Gen. 13:1-11; 19:14-38.
 - b. The Prodigal Son chose a sinful lifestyle—Luke 15:11-32.

B. Making Wise Decisions Starts with a Good Understanding of God’s Word and the Wisdom it Dispenses.

1. Psalms 19:7: “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”
2. Psalms 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
3. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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. There Are Great Examples in the Bible of Individuals Who Made Wise Choices.

1. Moses: “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” (Heb. 11:24-26).

2. Joshua: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15).

D. Important Decisions Which We must Make.

1. What kind of work will I follow in life? Do my talents equip me to do the work? Is this an honorable occupation? Will it interfere with my service to Christ?
2. What kind of friends will I seek? “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV).
3. What kind of spouse will I select?
4. Will I serve God or self?
5. What kind of church-member will I be? Will I be active or lukewarm? Will I be faithful and zealous?

E. Using Widsom in Organizing a Congregation to Be Sound.

1. Elders.
 - a. It is very likely that more trouble is experienced in congregations in regards to elders than over any other matter. Sometimes unqualified men seek to be made elders; sometimes unfounded charges are brought against godly elders; sometimes weak members will rebel against the elders; sometimes weak elders will not do their job; sometimes an elder will get involved in sin or false doctrine.
 - b. Great wisdom must be exercised in selecting and appointing men to the eldership. Before elders are selected and appointed, a careful study of the qualifications and work of elders must be made.
 - c. Before a candidate is appointed, a close examination must be made of his life in the light of the New Testament teaching on the qualifications and work of elders. Unless the individual clearly meets the qualifications, he must not be appointed.
 - d. Wisdom, gleaned from God word, will avoid much potential trouble in the future. We cannot do right if we take short-cuts with God’s requirements for elders; we cannot do wrong by following what God says about the qualifications of elders.
 - e. 1 Timothy 3:1-7: “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”
 - f. Titus 1:5-11: “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: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.”
2. Deacons.
 - a. What was just said about the selection and appointment of elders is likewise true with deacons.
 - b. 1 Timothy 3:8-10: “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let

- these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.”
- c. 1 Timothy 3:13: “For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (ASV).
3. Preachers.
 - a. One of the most important decisions a congregation must make is the preacher they select to work with them. The direction of the local church can hinge on the messages that emanate from the pulpit.
 - b. A weak preacher cannot influence the church for growth and strength; a compromising preacher will starve the congregation; an arrogant preacher can drive away many who would otherwise be a good asset.
 - c. The church must assess the preacher using the Bible as the standard. Just because one can speak well from the pulpit does not guarantee soundness or effectiveness.
 4. Teachers.
 - a. Willingness to teach is a requirement for a good teacher, but that is not sufficient of itself.
 - b. A teacher must know the Bible, believe the Bible, live by the Bible, and have the ability to teach the Bible.
 - c. Wisdom dictates that teachers be evaluated.
 5. Worship.
 - a. A congregation must understand what worship is, what acts are required, and how these avenues of worship are to be done.
 - b. All the required acts of worship are to be done—scripturally.
 - c. Decency and order must be followed throughout the worship period.
 - d. Wisdom is to be exercised in the planning of the worship service, insuring that qualified men are selected to lead the various activities.
 6. Evangelism.
 - a. We must be wise enough to do the work.
 - b. Wisdom is necessary in choosing the best methods: Gospel meetings, vacation Bible schools, Bible correspondence courses, radio and television programs, newspaper articles, door-knocking, etc.
 7. Benevolence.
 - a. Helping the needy without bankrupting the congregation.
 - b. Helping the needy without compromising other responsibilities.
 - c. Knowing which needy persons to aid.

V. HANDLING CONGREGATIONAL PROBLEMS.

A. Dealing With False Doctrine.

1. Error condemns the soul.
 - a. 2 John 1:9-11: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: “And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (ASV).
 2. Truth is able to save the soul.
 - a. James 1:21: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”
 - b. John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 3. We can recognize and discern error and perceive the truth by studying God’s word:
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- a. 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."
 - b. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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."
- B. Dealing With Unruly Factions.
1. Sometimes a congregation experiences rebellion against the eldership, the preacher, or some unpleasant Bible truth.
 2. Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
 3. Titus 1:9-11: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped..."
- C. Dealing With Hiring Preachers.
1. His personal appearance, his eloquence, his personality—these are minor importance.
 2. What is important: Does he know the Scriptures; does he believe and follow the Scriptures; is he able to instruct people in the Scriptures.
- D. Appointing Elders.
1. It is easier to appoint elders than to remove them if they are unqualified.
 2. An ounce of prevention is still worth more than a pound of cure.
- E. Replacing Preachers.
1. To remove a preacher is a painful experience; it can also be dangerous to the congregation.
 2. In the cases where such a drastic action is necessary, great wisdom must be exercised.
- F. Removing Unqualified Elders.
1. If the faithful elders are in the plurality, removing an unqualified elder is simple in concept: the other elders can lead the congregation in removing him from office.
 2. If the eldership is unqualified, the men of the congregation will have to exercise good judgment in calling for their resignation.
- G. Handling Problems With Individuals.
1. The problem of a case of marriage, divorce and unscriptural remarriage.
 - a. Matthew 19:9: "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."
 - b. The above passage is clear; the difficulty with some is believing and applying its requirements.
 2. The problem of some pushing for instrument music in worship.
 - a. Again, the Bible is clear about the kind of music God allows—vocal (not mechanical).
 - b. Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other."
 - d. 2 John 1:9: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son."
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- e. Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
- 3. The problem of someone pushing some doctrinal error in the congregation.
 - a. The error must be identified and clearly known to be error.
 - b. We must not run roughshod over the errorists if it is clear that they are sincere; they may likely be teachable if we are patient.
 - c. But error must be exposed and refuted; it must not be allowed to take a foothold in the church.
- 4. The problem of brotherhood issues.
 - a. We need to be aware of what is going on across the brotherhood; the issues that are clearly wrong must be exposed and resisted.
 - b. But we cannot build up the local church by majoring on brotherhood issues.
- 5. The problem of church discipline.
 - a. 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."
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."
- 6. The problem relating to attendance.
 - a. If the preacher continually preaches on attendance, it is likely that little good will be done.
 - b. The problem must be addressed, and not merely the symptom. The symptom is weak attendance; the problem is lack of love for the Lord.
- 7. The problem of giving.
 - a. The New Testament teaches that giving is primarily for the good of the giver; of course, the local church is aided by the giving.
 - b. 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. Philippians 4:17: "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account."

VI. WISDOM IN DOING PERSONAL EVANGELISM. [Gleaned from outline by Glann Lee].

A. "What Do You Think Of....?"

- 1. Hypothetical questions may be asked to prejudice someone.
- 2. Jesus did not judge in personal matters: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:13-14).
- 3. Reply: *"I don't think I am qualified to judge such hypothetical questions."*
- 4. Teach as the student is able to "bear it."

B. Will the Good People of All Churches Go to Heaven?"

- 1. Ask: *"Are you suggesting that one goes to heaven because one is good? Or a member of some church?"*
- 2. Proceed by showing that we must obey God's word regardless of what someone may say is "good" or of what church one may be a member.

C. "Do You Believe One Church is as Good as Another?"

- 1. Reply: *"I think we can agree that one can be a Christian without being a member of any denomination."*
- 2. Continue: *"In the first century Christians were members of no denomination. My interest is in leading people to be Christians only and only Christians."*

D. "Do I Have to be a Member of the Church of Christ to be Saved?"

- 1. Reply with a question: *"What is the church of Christ?"*
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2. Christ's church is the spiritual body of the saved.
 - 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 5:23-27: "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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
 3. All the saved are in Christ's church.
 - E. "What Does the Church of Christ Teach About....?"
 1. Reply: Do not leave the impression that there is a "church of Christ doctrine."
 2. Reply: *"I am not interested in what some church may teach. Our authority is in Christ. Therefore, let us study the Bible to learn what it says."*
 - F. "Do You Believe That Only Members of the Church of Christ Will be Saved?"
 1. Those going to heaven are they who obey the Lord: "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" (Matt. 7:20-21).
 2. "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" (Matt. 7:13-14).
 3. God is the final Judge.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."
 - G. "Do You Believe One Must be Baptized to be Saved?"
 1. Reply: *"I probably believe what you believe about that. Whatever the Bible teaches is what I want to believe. No doubt you desire to believe what the Bible teaches. Isn't that what everyone should believe and teach?"*
 2. Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 3. 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."
 4. 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
 5. Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - H. "Is Sprinkling and Pouring Baptism?"
 1. Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
 2. Acts 8:36-39: "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. And he
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commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”

3. Let them explain what these passages say about the action of baptism.

I. “Why Does the Church of Christ Not Use Mechanical Instruments of Music in Worship?”

1. Answer: *“Because the Bible does not authorize it.”*

2. If the student insists that it was authorized in the Old Testament, point out that we are not now under the Old Testament: “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” (Heb. 9:15-17).

J. “Why Do You Observe the Lord’s Supper Each Sunday?”

1. Reply: “The apostles were guided into all truth” (John 16:13).

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.”

K. “What About Divorce and Remarriage?”

1. Reply: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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. 19:3-9).

2. Avoid giving premature answers to difficult situations, but give timely and accurate answers.

VII. **CONCLUSION.**

A. Be Wise as Serpents but Harmless as Doves Is Simple but Very Profound!

1. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

2. Proverbs 15:1: “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

3. Proverbs 26:4-5: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”

B. Personal Workers Need to Remember That Jesus Said.

1. “For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47).

2. We should follow Jesus’ example in teaching and in reacting to questions.

God's Friend

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Biographies of Bible Characters are Very Interesting to Those Who Love Spiritual Things.

1. Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Joseph, Elijah, David, Deborah, Sara, Hannah, the Apostles...their stories delight us and furnish many timely and profound object lessons.
2. From these familiar stories we learn....
 - a. That David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).
 - b. That Enoch walked with God and was translated past death (Gen. 5:21-24; Heb. 11:5).
 - c. That Abraham was the friend of God (Jas. 2:23).

B. Abraham Is Familiar to All of Us and to Many Other People.

1. Jews and Arabs look to him as their ancestor; there were other people also, now gone from the earth, who claim him as their forebear.
2. Christians are called his heirs, and he is spoken of as the father of the faithful: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

C. Is There A Greater Compliment Than to be Known as a Friend of God?

1. James 2:23: "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."
2. 2 Chronicles 20:7: "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?"
3. Isaiah 41:8: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."
4. Abraham is the only man in the Bible who is specifically designated as the friend of God.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. A Brief history of Abraham's life.

1. He was born in Ur, a city in the Chaldees [Babylonia].
2. He was a descendant of Noah through Shem and Terah (Gen 5:1ff; 11:32).
3. He was called by God to leave his homeland (Gen. 11:31; 12:1ff; Acts 7:2-3). Think of how great a challenge this was.
4. He became the father of many nations (Gen. 12:3; 23:1-4). Israel, the Arabs, and others traced their lineage back to Abraham. He had six sons through Keturah, each of which produced a nation of people (Gen. 25:1ff).
5. He was promised a son.
 - a. Genesis 15:4: "And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir."
 - b. Romans 4:18-21: "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."
6. He was sorely tested by Jehovah (Gen. 22).
 - a. Hebrews 11:17-19 : "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from

- whence also he received him in a figure.”
- b. James 2:21-23: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”
 7. He is called the father of the faithful: “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Rom. 4:11).
 8. Countless people are blessed through his Seed: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).
 9. We are the heirs of Abraham: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:28-29).
- B. Without His Faith, He Would Not Be Called the Friend of God.
1. He possessed great faith: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (Jas. 2:21-23).
 2. His great faith pleased God:
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Matthew 8:10: “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”
 - c. Matthew 15:28: “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”
 - d. Genesis 22:12: “And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”
 3. Consider:
 - a. Mark 9:23-24: “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”
 - b. Luke 17:5: “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”
- C. His Readiness to Obey.
1. His faith motivated him to do what God said.
 - a. Genesis 12:4: “So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”
 - b. Genesis 22:3: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.”
 - c. Hebrews 11:8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”
 - d. Hebrews 11:17: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.”
 2. We must be glad to obey.
 - a. 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.”
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- b. Acts 2:41: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."
- c. 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."

D. His Attitude Toward God.

- 1. Genesis 12:7: "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him."
- 2. Genesis 13:18: "Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD."
- 3. He had a godly fear [reverence] for Jehovah: "And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12).
- 4. Reverence for the Almighty is part of our duty: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

E. His Genuine Interest in Others.

- 1. He sought to develop and maintain peace with Lot: "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Gen. 13:8).
- 2. He interceded in behalf of the people of Sodom: "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Gen. 18:23-32).
- 3. The beloved apostle Paul partook of this interest in others:
 - a. Romans 1:14-16: "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. 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."
 - b. Romans 9:1: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."
 - c. 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.”
- d. Acts 26:29: “And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”
4. We must cultivate and exercise this same disposition.
- a. Mark 16:15-16: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (ASV).
 - b. Philippians 2:4: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”
 - c. Matthew 9:36-38: “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. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”
 - d. 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.”
- F. Abraham Had Respect For the Home as God Had Established it.
- 1. Genesis 18:19: “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”
 - a. Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”
 - b. Ephesians 5:23-32: “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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”
 - c. Ephesians 6:1-4: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
 - 2. In our situation, we are to have respect for the home, civil government and the Lord’s church.
 - a. The home: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).
 - b. Civil government: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues:
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tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Rom. 13:1-7).

c. The Lord’s church:

(1) Matthew 16:16-18: “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 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. 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.”

(2) 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.”

G. Abraham Was Given to Hospitality.

1. Consider:

a. Genesis 18:1-2: “And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.”

b. Hebrews 13:1-2: “Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

2. Our situation:

a. Romans 12:13: “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

b. 1 Timothy 3:2: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.”

c. Titus 1:8: “But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.”

d. 1 Peter 4:9: “Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”

H. Abraham Was God’s Friend Despite Being Less Than Perfect.

1. He erred on more than one occasion.

a. Genesis 12:10-20: “And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.”

b. Genesis 20:1-13: “And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And

God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother."

- c. Genesis 16:1-4: "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes."
2. Every accountable person, despite their sincerity, commit sin on occasion; this is true even of the most devoted Christian.
 - a. Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - b. Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 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."
3. Abraham was able to perceive his errors, make the necessary improvements, and become a better man: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:21-23).

III. CONCLUSION.

A. We Would Do Well to Follow Abraham's Good Example.

1. 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."
2. Hebrews 11:10: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."
3. Hebrews 13:14: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."
4. He was a great example of God helping a faithful man as he faced life's problems, and receiving the benefits of God's promises.

B. Abraham Was a Great Man Because of His Faith.

1. Let us strive to imitate his great faith.
 2. Although faithfulness is sometimes difficult, it can be done: "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" (1 John 5:2-3).
 3. Putting our trust in God is a condition we must learn.
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A Long-Haired Heart-Stealer

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The 3,000-Year-Old Story of David's Son Illustrates Great Truths We Need to Know Today.

1. 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."
2. 1 Corinthians 10:6: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."
3. 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."

B. The Bible Sets Forth the Following Information About Absalom:

1. 2 Samuel 15:1-6: "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."
2. 2 Samuel 14:25-26: "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight."

C. A Survey of the Life of Absalom.

1. He was a brother of Tamar, who was assaulted by Amnon, his half-brother:
 - a. 2 Samuel 13:1-2: "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her."
 - b. 2 Samuel 13:11-14: "And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister. And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly. And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her."
 - c. "And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house. But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth. And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar" (2 Sam. 13:20-22).
2. After two years, Absalom avenged her: "And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baalhazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons....Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant. And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled" (2

Sam. 13:23-29).

3. Absalom went into exile in Geshur for the next three years (2 Sam. 13:34-39).
4. Joab was able to convince David to allow Absalom to come home, using his well-known deceitfulness (2 Sam. 14).
5. David allowed Absalom to return home, but did not see him for two years (2 Sam. 14).
6. Absalom burned Joab's fields to get the general's attention (2 Sam. 14:28-32); the general then brought Absalom to David: "So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom" (2 Sam. 14:33).
7. Absalom sweet-talked the people of Israel, winning their love and support (2 Sam. 15:1-6).
8. He was able to usurp the kingdom from David temporarily (2 Sam. 15).
9. Finally, Absalom died in a most unusual fashion:
 - a. 2 Samuel 18:9: "And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away."
 - b. 2 Samuel 18:14-17: "Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him. And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent."

D. In Our Study, We Will Notice:

1. How Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
2. What made it possible for their hearts to be stolen.
3. That such could and does happen today.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Absalom Stole the Hearts of Israel by His Appearance.

1. "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight"
 - a. The Israelites had a weakness in judging their leaders by their physical size and appearance.
 - (1) 1 Samuel 9:2: "And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."
 - (2) 1 Samuel 16:12: "And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."
 - (3) 1 Samuel 17:42: "And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance."
 - b. Samuel was cautioned against judging by outward appearances:
 - (1) 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
 - (2) John 7:24: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."
2. We are swayed by appearances.
 - a. If several women are vying for the same position, the prettiest usually is chosen.
 - b. If several men are trying to get the same job, the most handsome, most personable, or perhaps even the tallest one is chosen.

- c. If a man and a woman are being considered by the same position, in today's world the woman is more often chosen.
 - d. These deductions have been reached through various stories and reports that have come to the author's notice over many years.
 - 3. We choose our mates mostly by appearance.
 - a. Is a pretty, young lady more apt to be attracted to a handsome, personable, athletic, young man or an overweight, uncouth and homely person?
 - b. Is a handsome young man apt to be more attracted to a pretty girl or to a homely, overweight lady?
 - 4. Congregations choose as their preachers those who are suave, sophisticated, smooth, and handsome; they are not interested in one who has any physical *distractions*.
- B. Absalom Stole the Hearts of Israel by His Fame.
- 1. He was a favorite son of King David.
 - a. At the time, David was well-loved and honored in Israel. He had brought the nation together after the turmoil that resulted from Saul's blunders.
 - b. David had won some notable victories over Israel's enemies.
 - (1) 2 Samuel 8:1-2: "And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts."
 - (2) 2 Samuel 8:5-13: "And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Bethah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass. When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass: Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued; Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men."
 - c. He had expanded Israel's borders to its greatest extent, and had tribute coming in from many places.
 - (1) 2 Samuel 8:3: "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates."
 - (2) 1 Kings 4:21: "And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life."
 - d. The fame that David had acquired would in a measure devolve upon Absalom.
 - 2. Absalom gained fame in Israel in the case of his ravaged sister.
 - a. When he judged the time to be ripe, he avenged his sister by slaying the half-brother who assaulted her.
 - b. He was likely exalted in the eyes of Israel when he voluntarily went into exile, to preclude his father having to punish him for his crime.
 - c. His renown undoubtedly grew when people learned that he burned the fields of Joab to force the general to fulfill his pledge to bring Absalom back into the king's presence. Joab was feared by
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many in Israel for his practice of avenging himself with those who crossed him. Absalom did not let Joab's fearsome reputation keep him from setting the fire.

3. We fall for similar appeals today.

- a. Actors who play doctors in soap operas have been hired by drug companies to sell pain relievers in television commercials. The actor knows nothing about the medical field; he only spouts the lines his doctor-role calls on him to speak. But the public may be deceived into thinking that he has somehow some special knowledge about the item he is trying to sell.
- b. General Chuck Yeager, a test pilot who was the first to break the sound barrier, later was hired to sell auto parts on television. His flying exploits did not equip him to be an expert in what he was trying to sell.
- c. Joe DiMaggio, a famous baseball player, sold coffee makers in television commercials.
- d. Movie stars endorse abortion, promote the climate change agenda, and many other liberal political items. They have no qualifications to make moral judgments or to tell others what the best political programs are.
- e. Fame, beauty, or notoriety may have a certain appeal and influence with some people, but they are not qualified to speak with authority on the items they are promoting. Absalom's fame did not give him the right to overthrow David's God-given rule; his fame did not qualify him to be a good ruler.

C. Absalom Stole the Hearts of Israel by Telling the People What They Wanted to Hear.

1. 2 Samuel 15:1: "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him."
 - a. "This ostentation by Absalom should have alerted David to his son's intentions. Throughout history, the first step of any man seeking to usurp power was to procure a bodyguard. Herodotus tells us how Pisistratus seized control of Athens by means of that very procedure. It was unusual for Israelites to ride in chariots drawn by horses; and the practice was frowned upon by God's prophets" (Coffman, pp.199f).
 - b. Samuel had warned the nation that such things would result from their demand for a king. "And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots" (1 Sam. 8:11).
 - c. "Persons of quality, who ride on horseback, and still more those who are conveyed in splendid vehicles are preceded by one servant, or by several, who run before their masters, carrying a stick or baton, which they constantly wave about them, and strike right and left to clear the way, especially in the streets of Oriental cities, which are always narrow and crowded....They are accustomed to run, and can keep on at a rapid pace with the equipage which they precede, for many miles without stoppage, their feet covered with dust, and frequently bleeding from wounds" (JFB, p.251).
 2. 2 Samuel 15: 2-3: "And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee."
 - a. Public business was usually conducted at the gates of the city; there the leaders and judges could be found; judicial and business matters were transacted there. Daily, Israelites from various parts of the nation would enter Jerusalem, seeking resolution of problems.
 - b. Absalom, taking advantage of his free time, good looks, and popularity, went early in the morning to the gates, and spoke with those who came with grievances. There are always malcontents in every nation, as well as some who have legitimate complaints. It may have been the case that David was too preoccupied with various matters of state and personal concerns to deal with these grievances; also he may not have deputed subordinates to handle these problems.
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- c. Absalom took advantage of this situation to advance his personal ambitions. He sought out those men who had a controversy, the resolution of which they came to make an appeal to the king. Absalom made it plain that the individual's complaint was legitimate, but that there was no one who would deal with his case.
 - d. Everyone likes to have others to sympathize with his personal problems and to reassure him that his grievance is genuine. We all like for others to support our cause.
3. 2 Samuel 14:4: "Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!"
- a. Absalom had little concern for the problems of these people; he was manipulating them to his own selfish ends! They were so naive that they could not perceive his true purposes. His real motives could have been discovered by the ostentatious display of chariots and runners.
 - b. "Studiously concealing his ambitious designs, he expressed a wish to be invested with official power, only that he might accelerate the course of justice, and advance the public interests. This profession had an air of extraordinary generosity and disinterestedness; and, together with his fawning arts in lavishing civilities on all, made him a popular favourite. Thus, by forcing a contrast between his own display of public spirit and the dilatory proceedings of the court, he created a growing disgust with his father's government, as weak, careless, or corrupt, and seduced the affections of the multitude, who neither penetrated the motives nor foresaw the tendency of his conduct..." (JFB, p.252).
 - c. There have been gospel preachers who have followed the way of Absalom. Some of these are very personable, handsome, and talented; by sweet words and pleasing smiles they have deceived the hearts of countless simple people. That is another reason we need the divine standard of God's word! "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).
4. 2 Samuel 15:5: "And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him."
- a. Absalom's behavior was contrived to make the people believe he considered himself on their social level, that although he was of the royal blood, yet he was one of the common people in reality.
 - b. Flattery is a powerful tool the devious mind can use with great success on the unsuspecting. Many so-called "evangelists" use this effectively. Genuine compliments and flattery are not the same.
 - (1) Job 17:5: "He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail."
 - (2) Proverbs 6:24: "To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."
 - (3) Job 32:21-22: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away."
 - (4) Psalms 12:2-3: "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things."
 - (5) Proverbs 7:21: "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him."
 - (6) Proverbs 26:28: "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."
 - (7) 1 Thessalonians 2:5: "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness."
5. 2 Samuel 15:6: "And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so
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Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

- a. “His methods were the same as that of any demagogue; he promised everyone whom he met that he would give them what they wanted if only he were in authority. He pretended that he was interested in justice for every one....All of this, of course, was as phony as similar pretensions by current seekers of political office; but the people were deceived by it...” (Coffman, p.202).
- b. Why are people gullible? It is not due to lack of education, for the present generation of Americans are the best educated of our history, and we are among the most gullible on earth! For proof, look at the huge success of radical political, social, pseudo-scientific, and religious agendas. How could a cultist succeed without naive people?
- c. People are gullible because they do not know or do not apply God’s infallible standard. The more we know, understand, believe, and apply the Bible to our thinking and actions, the less likely we are to be deceived. Americans have swallowed the devil’s poison that there is no absolute standard; once this concept has been accepted, it is only a matter of time before the general public will fall victim to the most blatant of errors.

6. His deceiving methods were these:

- a. He greeted people with kiss—a pretended show of devotion (vs. 5).
- b. He told them their matters were all good and right (vs. 5).
- c. He told them they were being injured by their leaders (vs. 4).

D. The Israelites Set Themselves up to Have Their Hearts Stolen.

1. Their shallow thinking lead them to judge Absalom merely by appearance. Things and people are not always what they seem to be! Hitler deceived the German people and led them to a great disaster.
 - a. People with a shallow mind and a weak will, who operate with little knowledge, are ripe to be misled. The great majority of people are like this since they will not think for themselves.
 - b. The great multitudes who welcomed our Lord into Jerusalem in the Triumphant Entry were singing his praises; they were overwhelmed by the occasion. However, a few days later, after the chief priests had circulated among them, many of these same people cried out for the Lord’s crucifixion.
 - (1) Matthew 21:8-11: “And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”
 - (2) Mark 15:6-14: “Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.”
- c. We can get ourselves into extreme difficulties also if we judge according to the way things appear.
 - (1) John 7:24: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”
 - (a) “Appearance *opsin*. Primarily, ‘seeing or sight.’ In John 11:44; Rev 1:16, ‘face,’ and hence, ‘external appearance.’ The word occurs only in the three passages cited” [Vincent Word Studies, Biblesoft]. Compare:
 - (b) John 11:44: “And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and

- his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”
- (c) Revelation 1:16: “And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”
- (2) “According to appearance *kat' opsin*. And so, superficially” (Robertson's Word Pictures, Biblesoft].
- d. We must not judge the motives of others: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11).
- (1) We cannot know a brother's motive unless he reveals it to us.
- (2) We must not read something into a statement or an action which is not plainly indicated.
- e. We must not pass judgment without knowing the full facts.
- (1) An old story illustration this: A father in a frontier situation saw his child crying hysterically; nearby was the family dog with blood all over his face. The man jumped to the conclusion that the dog had viciously attacked the child, and quickly killed the dog. Moments later, he found the dead body of a panther in the bushes. The dog had saved the child from the panther.
- (2) Another case: One brother met another brother on the street; the first saint passed the second man without speaking. Why did he look the other way and not speak? The second brother jumped to the conclusion that he was being shunned by the first. Later he learned that the first man's mother had just died and he was blind with grief.
- (3) On the lighter side: A wealthy lady gave a fancy dinner party with about twenty important people as guests. The cook opened a can of mushrooms; she asked the lady of the house whether the green scum on the top mean the contents were tainted. The lady fed some to the family dog; when he ate it without any harm, she proceeded to serve the mushrooms to the guests. After the meal was over, a maid came running to the lady and exclaimed: “Oh, madam, the dog is dead!” The lady assumed the worst; she rushed her guests to the hospital to have their stomachs pumped. When she returned home, she inquired about the dog. The maid then reported that the dog had been run over while crossing the street.
2. They were more interested in Absalom's famous name than in his qualifications.
- a. When he deemed the time was right, Absalom made his bold move to overthrow David. He did not have God's approval and was not qualified to mount the throne.
- b. General Grant won the race to be President—based on his fame on the battlefield. However, his administration was one of the most corrupt in the history of the country.
- c. A generation ago, Pat Boone was used extensively in big congregations to lead singing. His fame attracted many people. When he later went into Pentecostalism, he caused much harm.
3. They wanted someone to tell them what they wanted to hear.
- a. The people he talked with were not interested in justice; they sought to fulfill their own selfish aims.
- b. One who is victimized by sweet talk is shallow, ignorant, and foolish.
4. They failed to appreciate the king they had.
- a. David himself was a handsome man: “...Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he” (1 Sam 16:12).
- b. David was famous: “And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam 18:7).
- c. David has these superficial qualities, but was also a good king; Israel could safely trust him to lead them correctly.
5. Some of the greatest men we have had in the brotherhood in modern time may not have met the world's standard for greatness, but their successful and faithful work proved them to be great men of God. Such men as David Lipscomb, Marshall Keeble, Guy N. Woods, B.C. Goodpasture, Franklin Camp, Foy Wallace, Gus Nichols (any many others) fit the depiction.
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E. The Same Mistakes Made in Absalom's Case Could and Do Happen Today.

1. There are many Christians who choose the congregation they attend by outward appearances. The number in attendance is large; the building is large and commodious; the wealthy and influential people of the community attend there. The most important question should be: Is this a faithful congregation.
2. Many want to be part of a congregation because of the size and nature of their exciting programs. Again, all too often, the question about the faithfulness of the church goes unasked.
3. Many will attend a congregation because it takes a positive-only stance. Such a congregation will be weak in preaching, and will not emphasize Biblical authority.
4. Sometimes elders, deacons and preachers are selected by appearance.
 - a. Some elders have been selected because they were good businessmen, or followed prominent professions, or who had great wealth.
 - b. Preachers have been selected because of good looks, degrees, good speaking voices, outgoing personality, and were "good mixers."
5. Doubtless, some preachers, elders and teachers are chosen because they will present what people want to hear.
 - a. 2 Timothy 4:2-5: "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."
 - b. Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
6. Some leave one congregation for another one for similar reasons.
 - a. 1 John 2:18-19: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 11:19: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."
7. Some preachers enjoy great popularity because they espouse liberal doctrines and practices; such things are important to weak and ignorant members.
8. Some preachers are popular because they reject such fundamental truths as marriage, divorce, and remarriage: "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).

III. CONCLUSION:**A. Is it Possible for Our Hearts to Be Stolen?**

1. By the appearance of a false teacher?
2. By the fame of a false teacher?
3. Because we want to be praised instead of taught the truth?

B. Our Hearts Can Be Stolen Only If We Allow it to Happen.

1. If we do not know the truth: we can and must learn it—for the good of our own souls!
2. If we do not want the truth: we will accept some false standard.

C. Biblical Truth is Not Popular; Error is Easy and Popular.

1. The items in the plan of salvation are demanding:
 - a. Faith: "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).
- b. Repentance: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).
 - c. Confession: “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” (Matt. 10:32-33).
 - d. Baptism:
 - (1) Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
 - (2) 1 Peter 3:21: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”
 - (3) 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.”
 - (4) 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.”
2. The common tenets of sectarianism are easy but false:
- a. Faith only: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jas. 2:24-26).
 - b. Live as you wish: “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” (Rom. 6:16-18).
 - c. Worship as you want: “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” (John 4:23-24).
3. At the end of time, when all accountable people stand before the Lord in the final Judgment, the word of God will be intact and in force.
- a. John 12:48-50: “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. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”
 - b. Revelation 20:12-15: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”
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The Conversion of a Warrior

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Story of the Conversion of Cornelius.

1. Acts 10:1-6: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."
2. Acts 10:44-48: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."

B. This Passage Is Just as Important Now as Ever.

1. Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
2. 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you."

II. DISCUSSION.

A. The Bible's Description of Cornelius.

1. He was a centurion in the Roman army which was comprised of pagan, bloodthirsty, and idolatrous men. He was the leader of one hundred men.
2. However, because he was of such a high spiritual caliber, his influence undoubtedly was a powerful force on those under his command.

B. The Historian Gives Us a Rather Strange Description of this Unconverted Man.

1. He was devout and feared God with all his house.
 - a. He was not only a devout worshiper of God, but he reared his family to do likewise.
 - b. Did not neglect to teach family and guide his servants.
 - c. Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."
2. He was a benevolent man—he gave much alms to the poor.
3. He had religious convictions—he prayed to God always.
4. He was not ashamed of his faith in God.

C. What Change Did He Need? Many Would Say None.

1. Nevertheless, he needed salvation:
 - a. Acts 11:13-14: "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, *whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*"

- b. Acts 10:6: “He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”
- c. Compare: “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6).
- d. Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
- 2. Many are not as good as Cornelius and do not fear the Judgment.
- 3. Would you be willing to measure your goodness with Cornelius’?
- D. Circumstances Leading to His Conversion.
 - 1. He was praying at the ninth hour—this may have been his usual practice.
 - a. This was at mid-afternoon, when many people are usually busy.
 - b. God chose that time to send an angel with a message to Cornelius. When Cornelius was praying the messenger was sent; while the Ethiopian was reading the Bible, the messenger was sent.
 - c. In the case of the Ethiopian, the preacher (Philip) was sent directly (Acts 8:26-39). In Cornelius’ case, the angel instructed him to send for the preacher (Peter).
 - 2. The angel came to Cornelius with an announcement and instructions:
 - a. Acts 10:3-6: “He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”
 - b. What change did this devout man need? Many would “vote him in”—he was a good man and had had an “experience.”
 - c. Acts 11:13-14: “And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” [They not presently in a saved condition].
 - d. Acts 10:7: “And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually.”
 - 3. Cornelius sent three men promptly to find Peter.
- E. God Prepared Peter for this Important Mission.
 - 1. There was a great religious divide between Gentiles and Jews while the Law of Moses was in effect. Although the gospel removed the partition, no Gentiles had yet obeyed the gospel. The time now was ripe for the practical removal of that division.
 - a. “And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).
 - b. The great vision Peter experiences was designed to convince the apostle to go to Cornelius (Acts 10:9-20).
 - 2. Peter willingly went with the men sent by Cornelius to fetch the apostle.
 - a. When he arrived, he found an audience already assembled: “And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends” (Acts 10:24).
 - b. Cornelius met him as an honored guest: “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26).
 - c. Cornelius explained why he had sent for Peter: “And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed

me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:27-33).

3. This was an ideal occasion and audience for a gospel preacher!

F. The Holy Spirit Descended on Cornelius and Others in the Audience.

1. Passages:

- a. Acts 11:15: “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.”
- b. Acts 10:44: “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.”

2. Peter’s first statement: “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” (Acts 10:34-35).

3. The Spirit’s descent proved that the Gentiles had a God-given right to the gospel, a truth that the saints did not at the first understand, even though the Lord had made it plain.

- a. Acts 10:11-16: “And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.”
- b. Acts 10:28-29: “And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?”
- c. Acts 2:39: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”
- d. 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.”

4. Many today claim the Spirit’s descent meant they were saved: Compare: “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32).

- a. Acts 11:14 shows that they were saved after they had believed and obeyed Peter’s message [the gospel]: “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”
- b. What proves too much, proves nothing. If these people were saved at the point the Holy Spirit came upon them, then they were saved before they believed:
 - (1) Acts 11:15: “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.”
 - (2) 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.”
 - (3) Romans 10:17: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
 - (4) The Spirit came when Peter first opened his mouth to speak (Acts 11:15), therefore before the

faith-producing message was presented (Rom. 10:17).

G. The Purpose of the Spirit's Coming Is Seen by Peter's Use of It.

1. To someone who knows nothing about a car, the brake and gas pedals would be mysterious—until he saw them being used.
2. Peter was called in by the brethren at Jerusalem to explain why he went into the house of a Gentile; his explanation calmed all fears.
 - a. Acts 11:1-4: “And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them....”
 - b. Acts 11:17-18: “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”
 - c. Even the six Jewish Christians [Acts 11:12] who accompanied Peter to Cornelius' house concluded that God was surely opening the door for Gentiles to obey the gospel: “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:44-48).
 - d. Peter's response convinced the Jewish saints that the Gentiles were proper subjects for the gospel (Acts 11:11-18).
3. The purpose of the Holy Spirit's descent on the Gentiles was to convince Peter and the rest of the Lord's church that God wanted the Gentiles to be taught the gospel. If this was not the purpose of the Holy Spirit's operation in this case, Peter misused it, misled the brethren, and was not inspired in the statement; and further, Luke was not inspired in recording it.
4. The purpose was not to change Cornelius but to convince Peter, the six Jews who were with the apostle, and the whole church that the Gentiles have a right to the gospel.

H. The Conversion of Cornelius.

1. This Gentile was obviously a believer in the God of Heaven; clearly he followed certain moral and spiritual principles and requirements of a believer. However, he was not a believer in Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah. Although he was morally pure in his life, he still retained the guilt of his past sins.
 - a. He needed to believe in Christ: “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).
 - b. He needed to repent of his sins: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31; cf. Luke 13:3).
 - c. He needed to confess his faith in Christ: “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” (Acts 8:37).
 - d. He needed to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins:
 - (1) 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.”
 - (2) Acts 10:47-48: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name

of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

- (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.”
2. If we read the sermon Peter presented, and follow the logical progression carefully, we can see how Cornelius and others who were in the audience were able to see the truth and obey it: “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. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:34-43).
 3. Cornelius needed to learn the gospel, see how it applied to him, that he needed to obey it, and thus obtain the salvation and all the other spiritual blessings found in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

III. CONCLUSION.

A. This Is the Conversion Story of a Good Man.

1. Though he was devout and good, his past sins would keep him out of heaven.
2. Even one sin unrepented of [thus unforgiven] will keep even the best moral man from heaven.
3. All of his personal goodness could not get him into heaven.

B. The Same Is True of Us All.

1. But if God forgives, all the enemies on earth cannot keep us out of heaven!
 2. All the angels could not, but one personal sin can.
 3. Are you open-minded and teachable as he was? “Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).
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Abiding in the Abundant Life

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. The Holiday Season at the End of Each Year is the Happiest Time of the Year for Many People.

1. Families are reunited.
2. Friends visit each other.
3. Most people have time off from their regular work.
4. Many gifts are exchanged.
5. Greetings are expressed by cards, phone calls, meals and visits.
6. Good will and kindness are shown by many to many—even to strangers.
7. It would be truly wonderful if this happy spirit and friendliness were always present!

B. It Is Unfortunate That Many Live Most of Their Lives Without Happiness.

1. Many folks live their lives by anticipation; they are not happy now but they intend to be happy. First, they must reach a certain plateau or goal in their lives, when sudden happiness will descend.
2. Many folks think that when they attain a certain goal, that happiness will invariably blossom.
3. Life for many is series of expectations and disappointments.
4. A basic truth of life is that happiness does not depend on outward circumstances; we can be happy regardless of our surroundings; we can also be unhappy despite the best of surroundings.
5. Happiness develops from within our minds. It is a consciously-developed attitude.

II. DISCUSSION:

A. Christ Came to Make the New, Abundant Life Possible

1. John 10:10: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
 - a. “In contrast with him who came to give entrance into the fold and to provide for the sheep's best interests, the ‘thief,’ to whom reference is made in verse 1, has only selfish ends in view. The ‘thief’ represents false teachers who will, without hesitation, sacrifice the sheep for their own gain. This is a clear and unmistakable denunciation of all who teach any other doctrine (2 John 9), while knowing the truth of the gospel. The contrast Jesus draws is a vivid one; he comes to give life, the thief to destroy life; he to offer it in abundance, the thief to take it away. The word ‘abundantly,’ means bountiful blessings overflowing in extent—the rich supply only deity can give. (Psalm 33:1ff.) The Greek term used suggests the idea of a continuous overflowing—a never-ceasing supply of life for every faithful soul. All of this the thief would take away. We must not lose sight of the fact that the ‘thief’ in this narrative is the person who teaches that the way of salvation is some other than that Jesus gave. These specifically described here were selfishly motivated but the ones who are misled are lost whatever the motivation may be. The sheep which follow a stranger's voice are destroyed though themselves unaware of the motives of the false shepherd; their honesty and sincerity will be of no avail to them at the last great day” [Guy N. Woods, *Commentary on John*].
 - b. “But that he may steal, and kill, and destroy....Note the order of the verbs. Stealing is the purpose of the thief, but he will kill and destroy if necessary just like the modern bandit or gangster. I came that they may have life....In sharp contrast ... as the good shepherd with the thieves and robbers of John 10:1 came Jesus. Note present active subjunctive *echoosin*, ‘that they (people) may keep on having life (eternal, he means)’ as he shows in John 10:28. He is ‘the life’ (John 14:6). And may have it abundantly....Repetition of *echoosin* (may keep on having) abundance...Abundance of life and all that sustains life, Jesus gives” (Robertson's Word Pictures, Biblesoft].
2. There have been many through the years who mistakenly have thought that living the Christian life removes happiness.

- a. If one thinks he must consume alcohol, use illegal drugs, be immoral, use profanity freely, live in an adulterous relationship, mistreat others, live selfishly, be full of malice or anger—if he will not overcome these sins, he cannot live the Christian life; if he cannot be happy without these sins, then the Christian life would be foreign to his tainted heart.
 - b. Those who live in sin, may for a time believe themselves to be happy; however, sin always has a sting; there are always harsh consequences to sin. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8).
 - (1) John 8:34: “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
 - (2) 2 Peter 2:19: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”
 3. Some have the mistaken idea that a faithful saint is not as well off as sinners.
 - a. An infidel remarked to a neighbor who was a faithful Christian: “You go to worship regularly, pray without ceasing, and give a goodly amount to the church; I do none of these things, and yet my crops in the fall are just as bountiful as yours! Why should I be a Christian?” The believer replied, “God does not give all of his rewards in October.”
 - b. Who is as well off as a Christian? His necessities are assured; he has forgiveness; he has daily help from God’s word; he has peace of mind; he has the daily support of God’s providence; he has hope beyond the grave.
 4. Our Lord did not come to shut us up in a dungeon of fear, guilt, and doubt; he came to give us pardon, comfort, peace, and hope.
- B. The Abundant, Happy Life is Found only in Christ.**
1. John 10:10: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
 - a. He came to provide this abundant, happy life. It was not available before he came:
 - (1) John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 - (2) Hebrews 10:1-4: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”
 - (3) Acts 13:38-39: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”
 - (4) John 15:1-5: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 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. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”
 2. The real difference between a saint and a rank sinner is the master who is followed.
 - a. 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
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- righteousness.”
- b. 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. Compare: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).
- a. The word *IF* obviously sets a condition—we must enter into Christ [which requires obedience to the gospel].
- b. We must be in Christ to be made new creatures.
- c. We enter Christ only by baptism:
- (1) Galatians 3:26-27: “For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (ASV).
- (2) Romans 6:3-4: “Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (ASV).
- (3) Romans 6:17-18: “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (ASV).
- d. We remain in Christ by continued faithfulness:
- (1) 1 John 3:24: “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”
- (2) 2 John 1:9: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”
- e. Several important new things are obtained in Christ:
- (1) Forgiveness and a fresh start:
- (a) Hebrews 8:12: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”
- (b) 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.”
- (2) A new relationship:
- (a) John 1:12: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”
- (b) Galatians 3:29: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
- (3) A new name:
- (a) Acts 11:26: “...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” [The new name *Christian* was given in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies].
- (b) Isaiah 62:2: “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.”
- (c) 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.”
- (4) A new law to follow—the best possible law: “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them
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by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:6-13).

4. We make the choice of the master we obey.

- a. If we consciously or unconsciously enter into sin and stay there, we have made a choice.
- b. To follow Christ, we must consciously and sincerely commit ourselves to follow him.
 - (1) Compare: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15).
 - (2) 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.”
 - (3) 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.”
 - (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. We make our choice when we believe and repent; the change is completed when we are baptized into Christ. Afterwards, we may stumble into sin again, but we do not always have to be deciding who our Master is.

C. Happiness Cannot Come by Living in Sin and Rebellion to Our Maker.

1. Sin eventually destroys happiness for it takes away peace of mind, destroys health, besmirches our good name; it can embitter us; it invariably separates us from God.
2. What kind of happiness can be produced by hatred, greed, lust, envy, selfishness, drunkenness, lying, stealing, cheating, or any other kind of disobedience?
3. The sinful man who claims happiness is deceived:
 - a. John 8:34: “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
 - b. 2 Peter 2:19: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”
 - c. The Prodigal Son learned this lesson the hard way (Luke 15).
4. The old sinful ways of the past must be put away for one to have this new life in Christ.
 - a. Obeying the gospel brings about certain changes within us.
 - (1) Faith in Christ changes what we love—in the past we loved the world but now we love Christ. We now believe that Christ is the Son of God and the only Savior; therefore, love for him is created within us; as we grow to love him, we love the world less and less. When sinners believed the Gospel, they were “pricked in their hearts” (Acts 2:37). Their emotions were very deeply affected—by their faith.
 - (2) Repentance changes the practices of our life—in the past we followed sin and worldliness. We now follow a godly life. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance

which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10, ASV).

- (a) There are things we must quit: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:13-14).
- (b) This change of life is required: "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" (Col. 3:6-7).
- (3) Baptism changes our state—in the past we were guilty of sin, and thus were separated from God (cf. Isa. 59:1-2). We are now free from all guilt; we are innocent and pure.
 - (a) Colossians 2:12: "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."
 - (b) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness."
 - (c) Galatians 3:26-27: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."
 - (d) Ephesians 2:13-16: "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."
 - (e) 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."
- b. Those who are converted to Christ are greatly changed.
 - (1) Colossians 3:5-9: "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."
 - (2) Whereas we were sinful in life, now we are godly; before we served self, but now we serve God. Compare: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9).
 - (3) After our conversion, we have an entirely new way of living—the way of life that is demanded by the gospel.
 - (a) Acts 26:9: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." [This was Paul before he was converted].
 - (b) 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." [This was Paul after his conversion].

D. The First Law of Human Nature is to Satisfy Self (which includes self-preservation).

- 1. A selfish life is an unhappy life for we cannot always get what we want. If a selfish man does not get what he wants, he will turn inward and be overly conscious of his own problems and wants.
 - a. The Lord's pattern is indicated in Acts 20:35: "I have shewed 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.” The statement affirms that unselfishness produces a state of happiness [*blessed* = to be happy].

- b. If we got everything we wanted, these *blessings* would become a drag. There are only so many trips we can take, there are only so many houses we can live in, there are only so many cars we can drive, there are only so many feasts we can enjoy. Rich people often become very unhappy.
- c. The Lord requires that we put him first in our lives and love others as we love ourselves: “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” (Mark 12:30-31). We are to be unselfish toward God and our fellow man.
- d. We must work together with God if we are to build a happy life.
 - (1) He supplies the blueprint, the providential aid, and the encouragement.
 - (2) The gospel can mold our lives to fit the will of God; the result is an abundant, happy life.
- e. God made us, thus he knows better what we need and how we ought to live than we do.
 - (1) John 2:25: “And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”
 - (2) Isaiah 45:12: “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.”
 - (3) Matthew 5:3-12: “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. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

E. To Live the Abundant, Happy Life, We must Be Ever Mindful of Heaven.

- 1. Without God we can have hope only in this life; *that hope* is neither great nor reliable:
 - a. Job 14:1-2: “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”
 - b. Psalms 90:10: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”
- 2. When this life closes there is still the resurrection, the final Judgment, and eternity:
 - a. Hebrews 9:27-28: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”
 - b. Psalms 90:10, 12: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away....So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”
- 3. Faithful Christians have been raised with Christ from the watery grave of baptism.
 - a. Colossians 2:12-13: “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”
 - (1) The old man of sin has died and been buried; the new man has been put on: “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. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one

another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col. 3:10-15).

- (2) We are now alive spiritually: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11).
- b. Therefore, we are to set our affections on Heaven: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 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” (Col. 3:1-3).
 - (1) To set the affection on Heaven is to focus our thoughts, our desires, our emotions, our heart on Heaven—to let nothing interfere with our quest to be with the Lord in eternity.
 - (2) Consider:
 - (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) 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.”
 - (c) Jeremiah 29:13: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”
 - (d) Acts 17:27: “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.”

III. CONCLUSION.

A. Christ Provides the Abundant Life by Breaking Sin Which Shackles the Soul.

1. A shackle is something that limits—such as prison, blindness, paralysis, and sin:
 - a. Luke 4:18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”
 - b. John 8:31-32: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - c. John 8:34: “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
 - d. 2 Peter 2:19: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”
2. Freedom from sin and its consequences means:
 - a. The guilt of sin is completely removed: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:12).
 - b. We no longer practice sin: “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” (Heb. 12:1-2; cf. Luke 13:5).
 - c. We no longer face the penalty of sin: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand” (John 10:27-29).
 - d. One of our present rewards is peace of mind: “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7, ASV).

- e. We have a living hope of gaining Heaven: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:3-9).

B. Who but a Faithful Child of God Has Reason to Be Happy!

- 1. Do you enjoy these blessings now?
 - a. Colossians 3:4: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”
 - 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.”
- 2. Do you want to obtain them?

The Abuses Christ Suffered and the Lord's Supper

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Lord's Supper Is Profoundly Important to Every Mature Child of God.

1. While it is not the most important act of worship, it is highly significant.
2. The Supper calls back to our minds the intense suffering our Lord endured on his last night and day before his death.

B. We Are Told to Remember the Lord's Death as We Eat the Supper.

1. "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. 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. 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" (1 Cor. 11:20-30).
2. The bread represents the suffering body of our Savior, and the fruit of the vine represents the shed blood of the Redeemer.
3. What can help us to eat the Lord's Supper with greater meaning and feeling? Undoubtedly, if we look once again at the details of his last several hours before his crucifixion, and notice some of the abuses he endured, that information will make his Supper more meaningful to us.

II. DISCUSSION—Matthew 26.

A. He Was Betrayed and Crucified:

1. Verses 1-2: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."
2. He knew about the betrayal and knew the identity of the traitor:
 - a. Psalms 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."
 - b. John 13:26-27: "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."
3. He knew before he left Heaven that he would be crucified.
 - a. Acts 2:23: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."
 - b. Revelation 13:8: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."
 - c. Hebrews 10:5-7: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."
 - d. Hebrews 2:9-10: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering

of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

B. Religious and Political Leaders Met to Decide What to Do with Jesus.

1. Verses 3-5: “Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.”
2. They were aware that Jesus performed many miracles, but they closed their minds to the truth he preached, which confirmed by his miracles. They were more concerned about maintaining their positions of power and wealth. “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:47-48).

C. His Disciple Judas Went to These Vicious Men:

1. Verses 14-16: “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.”
2. There may have been several things that motivated Judas to betray the Lord, one of which was greed. John 12:1-6 reports that he was a thief, stealing from the treasury the disciples maintained.
3. God, knowing the future as well as he knows the past and present, told ahead of time about the betrayal, and even reported the price to be paid: “And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD” (Zech. 11:13).

D. The Lord Announced His Betrayal:

1. Verses 17-25: “Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.”
2. This announcement showed the apostles that Jesus was no ordinary man; he knew the future, even to the fact of the betrayal and the identity of the traitor.
3. It also gave Judas the opportunity to change his plans. Judas had witnessed several miracles done by the Lord; it is possible that he figured the Lord would deliver himself from the clutches of his enemies by supernatural power. He missed the whole purpose of the Savior’s mission.

E. The Lord Instituted the Supper:

1. Verses 26-30: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”
2. The elements of the Lord’s Supper are unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine [grape juice]. The New Testament never uses the word “wine” in connection to the Lord’s Supper, although it might be

included under the general reference to “fruit of the vine.”

3. The bread is representative of his body and the fruit of the vine represents his shed blood. As we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine, we are able to visualize in our minds the body and blood of the Redeemer. We are moved by reflecting on his ordeal.
4. The power of Christ is focused on his death, burial and resurrection. How could God cause people to *want* to obey the gospel and dedicate their lives to serving Christ? The power of the cross is able to elicit that desire! “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:32-33).

F. The Lord Announced That He Was to Be Forsaken by His Disciples:

1. Verses 31-35: “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”
2. The Old Testament Scriptures foretold this event: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones” (Zech. 13:7).
3. Although the Lord told them plainly that they would be offended at him and be scattered from him, they did not believe it; Peter was especially vehement in denying that he would turn from Christ.
4. Subsequent events of that very night show that they did exactly as the Lord had forewarned. Under those circumstances, we would scarcely have done better.

G. The Lord’s Agony in Gethsemane:

1. Verses 36-39: “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 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. Luke 22:44 is very graphic in describing this scene: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”
3. Only those with a very hard heart can remain unmoved by the description of this awful scene! We are apt to shed tears when we see some touching movie, for example the final few moments of *It’s A Wonderful Life*. But the scene in Gethsemane is vastly more touching to those with pliable hearts!

H. The Disciples Slept While the Lord Agonized.

1. Verses 40-46: “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”
2. This adds even greater pathos to the scene; it makes the Lord’s agony even more poignant. Can any faithful Christian fail to be touched by this tearful scene? Can you visualize the intense emotions our Lord experienced? Do we appreciate the purpose of his pain?

I. The Armed Mob Came to Arrest the Lord:

1. Verses 47-56: “And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that

betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

2. Judas is the preeminent villain in this dark scene, when he identified Christ by a kiss. A token of love became the means of pointing out the Lamb of God to the hate-filled mob sent to arrest him.
3. Peter's feeble attempt to deliver Jesus from the posse was rebuffed by the Lord. If deliverance had been intended, he could have quickly obtained the services of more than twelve legions of angels.
4. Our Lord meekly submitted to arrest; he knew that this was necessary if he were to fulfill his God-given mission.

J. He Was Taken Before the High Priest for Trial:

1. Verses 57-68: "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?"
2. When Saddam Hussein was about to be executed, his enemies made some critical remarks and catcalls to him; this was excoriated by the news media. But what was said and done to Saddam was very mild in contrast to what our Lord endured.
3. False witnesses were obtained to allege charges against Christ. There was plenty of evidence to prove that he truly is the Messiah, the Son of God, but the enemy was not interested in truth; their hatred must be satisfied.
4. The high priest adjured the Lord to plainly state whether he is the Christ, the Son of God. He was obliged to give a straightforward answer; he calmly affirmed that he is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - a. The high priest feigned shock and dismay at this answer, but secretly he was elated; this was the very statement he wanted to hear. He tore his garments in a show of false shock.
 - b. The rest of the Sanhedrin Court quickly agreed that his statement deserved the penalty of death. No effort was made to test the Lord's claim.

K. He Was Denied by Peter:

1. Verses 69-75: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This

fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”

2. Our Lord was depending on Peter. He had forewarned the apostle that he would deny the Lord, a warning which promoted repentance on Peter’s part when he perceived what he had done.

L. He Was Reviled by His Enemies.

1. 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.”
2. 1 Peter 2:21-25: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”
3. How would we have reacted to such treatment? Would we have called for God’s punishment to be poured upon them? Or could we have prayed in their behalf as our Lord did? “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

III. CONCLUSION.

A. We Have the Weekly Opportunity to Eat the Lord’s Supper.

1. This event is called the “Communion” because as we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine, we are communing with the Lord; he participates with us in this beautiful act of worship.
2. Having reviewed some of the abuses our Savior endured, perhaps we will be able to partake of the elements of the Supper with greater meaning and feeling.

B. Perhaps You Are Not Qualified to Eat the Lord’s Supper.

1. If you are not a member of the body of Christ, the church for which the Savior died, you do not have the right to partake. To become a member of his church, you need:
 - a. To believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God—John 8:24.
 - b. To repent of your past sins—Luke 13:3.
 - c. To confess your faith in him—Matthew 10:32.
 - d. To be immersed in the waters of baptism for the remission of sins—Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4.
2. If you are a member of the body of Christ, but are guilty of sin committed after you entered Christ, you are not presently qualified to eat the Supper until you:
 - a. Repent of the sins of your life—Acts 8:22.
 - b. Confess your sins to the Father through Christ—James 5:16.
 - c. Pray that the Father might forgive your trespasses—Acts 8:22.
 - d. These three steps you may take privately; if your sins are known publicly, your brethren need to know that you have repented.
3. Some have developed the mistaken idea that unless they feel “worthy” to partake, they must not eat the Lord’s Supper. No one is *worthy* to partake. First Corinthians 11:27-29 does not say we must be *worthy* to partake, but that we are to partake *worthily*. That means we must eat the Supper with a good awareness of what the elements of the Supper represent, and that we participate with sincerity and understanding.

May I Start Over?

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. The Present World Conditions Are Cause for Grave Concern.

1. Among the many potential problems we can list are terrorism, crime, illegal drugs, war, death, a sense of hopelessness, disease, and natural disasters.
2. Then there are the equally deadly problems of unbelief, modernism, liberalism, sectarianism, immorality, and broken homes.

B. Time Is Fleeting for Us All.

1. James 4:13-15: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."
2. 1 Peter 1:24: "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."
3. Our time is limited and so are our opportunities. We must be aware of our obligations, and solve as many of our problems as possible, and use our time wisely.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. We Often Reach Certain Plateaus in Life.

1. At the proper intervals, we reach the turn of a century, a new decade, a new year, a new season, a new month, a new week, a new day, a new hour.
2. Reaching a new plateau gives an opportunity to evaluate our situation, decide on certain changes that need to be made, commit ourselves to make improvements, to pursue a greater work, or do more for the Lord.
3. These things are true of individual Christians and local congregations. Each of us needs encouragement to make progress and to persevere in our faithfulness.

B. On Reaching a New Plateau, We Begin to Travel a New Path.

1. Joshua 3:3-4: "And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."
2. This is a time to made a new start.
 - 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. Hebrews 12:1-4: "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. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."
3. We must not look back.
 - a. To the old sinful world:
 - (1) Genesis 19:17, 24-26: "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed....Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain,

and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” [There may be more to her looking back than a mere backward glance; it may be that she did not want to leave Sodom].

- (2) Luke 9:62: “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”
 - (3) 1 John 2:15-17: “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. To past accomplishments:
- (1) 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.”
 - (2) Philippians 3:13-14: “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.”
 - (a) Paul's life is used as an example for Christians of all time. This does not mean that Paul was a perfect specimen of Christianity, but his case was as near as humanity can come to that exalted condition. “Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). “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” (Phil. 4:9).
 - (b) Paul knew that he must not dwell on those things which lay behind him in life. Those advantages he had among the Jews were not important losses. The evils he had perpetrated on Christians prior to his own conversion, while still weighing heavily on his mind, were lost to the past; they could not be erased from history, but their guilt had been removed in his obedience (Acts 22:16).
 - (c) It is impossible to erase every thought of the past, and is not always desirable. We are told to remember certain things. “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:12-13).
 - (d) Peter reproved those brethren who had “forgotten” that they had been purged from sin (2 Pet. 1:9). If we are to learn, we must remember the lessons we have been taught, the experiences we have had, the people we have known, the dangers we have encountered, and the blessings we have received.
 - (e) We are not to allow previous ties to hinder our obedience to God. Abraham left his home and family in Ur of the Chaldees. Paul broke off his Jewish ties (Phil. 3:8). If we must go against the wishes of our relatives and friends to obey God, we are to do so (Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 14:26-33).
- c. We are not to brood over past mistakes, failures, problems, or sins. The past is fixed and unchangeable. It cannot be undone anymore than we could catch a sackful of goose feathers which has been released into a strong wind.
- (1) Paul had persecuted saints, but did not let that memory ruin his peace of mind or zeal, and did not let it hinder his work.
 - (a) Acts 26:9-11: “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

- (b) 1 Timothy 1:13-15: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."
 - (2) We can repent of past sins, and rejoice that they are forever forgiven.
 - (a) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - (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) James 5:15: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."
 - (d) Acts 8:22-24: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."
 - (3) We are to purpose in our hearts to grow, improve, be more loving, more faithful, more zealous, and more congenial. We are to resolve to save souls, to work, to worship, and to strengthen and encourage the weak.
 - (4) We are to commit ourselves to remain faithful regardless of circumstances.
 - (a) "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" (1 Cor. 15:58).
 - (b) "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" (Phil. 2:12; cf. 3:7-11).
 - d. We must not become self-satisfied: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15-21).
 - e. We must redeem the time. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16).
 - (1) We are here taught to take advantage of opportunities, to make the best use of the time we have. The statement literally means to buy up the time. This we can do by using our time wisely.
 - (2) Time is precious; it is "the stuff that life is made of." Our time is our life; what you do with your time is what you are doing with your life.
 - (3) The reason for wisely using our time is because the days are evil. Sin abounds; we must do everything to counteract it. The world needs an example of godly living, and we are the only ones who can provide such an example. "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" (1 Tim. 4:12).
 - (4) We are to pray for opportunities to make wise use of our time.
 - (a) Colossians 4:5: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."
 - (b) 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you."
 - f. We must set our affections on things above:
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- (1) Colossians 3:2: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
- (2) Matthew 6:19-20: "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."
- (3) We are to "trim our lamps" and "press toward mark" [Matt. 25:7-8; Phil. 3:12-14].
- g. We are to seek the eternal life promised to the faithful.
 - (1) "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).
 - (2) "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).
 - (3) It is like a child who sees an apple in a tree, sets his desires on it, and overcomes his fear of height in order to get it. Paul continued to strive to go forward, pressing onward. No one can remain stationary, but must advance; in living the Christian life, we must press onward.
 - (a) There are problems of an individual nature, including temptations, discouragements, and opposition of sinners and of the world.
 - (b) There are problems of a congregational nature, including false teachings, innovations, liberalism, envy, modernism, emotionalism, division, hatred, worldliness, discouragement, and apathy.
 - (c) Problems must be met with knowledge, faith, love, purity, devotion, unity, zeal, and Bible preaching and teaching.

C. Let Us Put Forth Greater Efforts Toward Growth.

1. In attendance at all services.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Compare: "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33).
2. In additions and restorations to the local congregation.
 - a. Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (ASV).
 - b. Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 - c. Acts 11:22-26: "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 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. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 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."
 - 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."
3. In knowledge:
 - 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. 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. In spirituality:
 - 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. 2 Peter 1:3-11: "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: 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; 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."
 - 5. Greater work in the kingdom:
 - a. 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."
 - b. Hebrews 4:11: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."
 - c. 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."
 - D. We Cannot Afford to Take it Easy.
 - 1. Consider the sluggard:
 - a. Proverbs 6:6-11: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."
 - b. Proverbs 26:13-16: "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. 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."
 - c. Hebrews 12:12-15: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."
 - 2. Consider what it means to be condemned:
 - a. Matthew 25:14-20: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and
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brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more."

- b. Condemnation in *Gehenna* is so awful that it is beyond our ability to comprehend. Ponder these truths:

- (1) 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."
- (2) John 3:16-18: "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
- (3) 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."
- (4) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
- (5) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

- c. The awfulness of Hell is described in the Bible in horrific terms:

- (1) A place of outer darkness (Matt. 25:30).
- (2) A place where the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-48).
- (3) A place of many stripes (Luke 12:47).
- (4) A place of no rest (Rev. 14:11).
- (5) A lake of fire, the second death (Rev. 21:8; 20:12-15).
- (6) A place of everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46).

3. We must **lay up** treasure:

- a. Matthew 6:20: "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."
- b. Luke 12:15-21: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
- c. John 6:27: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

4. The time for the harvest is always present:

- a. John 4:34: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."
- b. Matthew 9:36-38: "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. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

E. God Will Blesses Those Who Try.

1. Respect his law:
 - a. Psalms 19:7: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."
 - b. Psalms 1:2: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."
 - c. Romans 2:13: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."
 - d. James 1:25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
 2. God was with Joshua—Why?
 - a. Joshua 1:5: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."
 - b. Joshua 23:14-16: "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you."
 3. God provides the means:
 - a. Isaiah 41:17-20: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."
 - b. Psalms 37:25: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."
 - c. 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."
 4. We must remain faithful:
 - a. 1 John 1:7: "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."
 - b. Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
 5. We must purpose and accomplish greater things: "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God" (2 Cor. 9:10-11).
- F. Our Reward Will Be According to Deeds.
1. The reward will be given at the Lord's return:
 - a. Matthew 16:24-26: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the
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whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

- b. 2 Timothy 4:8: "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. We must be faithful stewards: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:2).
3. It will not be according to how successful we have been, but how faithful:
 - a. Noah worked diligently for about one hundred and twenty years, and could only influence seven other people, who were all members of his own family.
 - b. On the other hand, Peter [with the other apostles] preached one sermon, and there were about three thousand converts.
 - c. The difference was not in the preacher, but in the audience.
4. It is not how long one lives, but how he lives.
5. Our past deeds are recorded. Will we be able to do better in the future?

III. CONCLUSION.

A. We Should Get off to a Good Start.

1. Romans 1:16: "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."
2. Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

B. We Should Strive to Live Closer to God:

1. "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).
 2. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (Jas. 4:8).
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Beautifying the Glorious Gospel

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Value of Making a Product Attractive Is Widely Recognized by Business People.

1. Car makers endeavor to make their product as magnetic and desirable as possible.
2. Clothing manufacturers put their garments on the most beautiful and handsome people in their advertisements, thus creating a desire to the product in the viewers.
3. Satan understands the principle, therefore the alcohol commercials, the ribald movies, and uncouth magazines are presented in impressive advertisements. Compare: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6).
4. God also uses this principle, but he does not deceive anyone; he presents the glorious gospel in its natural beauty:
 - a. John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."
 - b. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 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. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 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."

B. The Lord's Church Needs to Keep this Principle Ever Before It.

1. The meal is repulsive if the waitress is dirty, or if the table is messy, or if flies are present.
2. We have the finest spiritual food possible: the pure truth of the gospel!
3. The truth is unattractive if its adherents are spiritually unclean:
 - a. Titus 2:10: "Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 1 Timothy 1:9-16: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

II. DISCUSSION: Things that adorn the gospel of Christ:

A. Good Works Adorn the Gospel of Christ.

1. Consider:
 - a. Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your

Father which is in heaven.”

- b. 1 Peter 2:12: “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”
 - c. Galatians 6:10: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”
 2. Opportunities for speaking good words may be our daily privilege; there are sick people who need words of encouragement, neighbors who need help, there are many who are lost who need to be taught, and there are many who are fainthearted who need to be strengthened.
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:14: “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded [*fainthearted*, ASV], support the weak, be patient toward all men.”
 - 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. James 2:14-16: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”
 3. Many lost people may be reached with gospel through good works. Doing good to such a person can prepare his heart to be taught the gospel.
- B. Christian Love Can Beautify the Gospel of Christ.
1. 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.”
 2. God has used love to beautify Christianity:
 - 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. John 12:32-33: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”
 3. Which attitude appeals more to you?
 - a. 1 Samuel 18:9, 11: “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward....And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.”
 - b. 1 Samuel 19:4; 20:17: “And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good....And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”
 4. Strife, or bitterness, or hatred, make the gospel unattractive, if these sinful characteristics are seen in members of the Lord’s church: “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” (Phil. 2:14-16).
- C. The Words We Speak Can Beautify the Gospel of Christ.
1. Colossians 4:6: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Compare:
 - 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. 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.”
 2. Our words are always to be with grace—not occasionally, not part-time.
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3. Grace is that which causes pleasure, delight, or favorable regard: “And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?” (Luke 4:22).
 4. To be seasoned with salt us to make something wholesome, to preserve, to purify, to uplift (Eph. 4:29).
- D. Unity Among Saints.
1. Passages:
 - a. John 17:20-22: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.”
 - b. 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.”
 2. The greatest plea in the world [the plea of the pure gospel] will go unheeded if we are divided in doctrine or practice.
 - 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. Luke 24:47: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
 - c. Romans 10:13-18: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”
 3. We do not want to have friends who are constantly bickering.
- E. The Peace of Mind of Real Christians Also Beautifies the Gospel of Christ.
1. The world is looking for peace of mind and happiness.
 - a. Drugs, alcohol, wealth, social standing, or fulfilling the lusts of the flesh cannot give it.
 - b. These and other such things are vain and empty, and vex the soul.
 - c. Galatians 5:19-22: “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. Only the gospel gives real peace:
 - a. Philippians 4:6-9: “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. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 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.”
 - b. Philippians 4:11-13: “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. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
 - c. The gospel of Christ can lift up the downtrodden and unhappy spirit: “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).
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- d. The gospel of Christ can give real peace of mind to faithful Christians, it can provide grand hope for their future, and cultivate a clear conscience for each sincere follower of Christ.
 - 3. Are we really different from people around us? We must be!
 - 4. For peace of mind we must believe the gospel and trust in the Savior.
 - a. Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."
 - b. 1 Peter 3:5: "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands."
 - c. Psalms 37:3-7: "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. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."
 - d. Psalms 37:37: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."
 - e. Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
 - F. Dedication and Devotion to God Will Beautify the Gospel.
 - 1. Compare Ruth's devotion to Naomi, her beloved mother-in law: "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16-17).
 - 2. Is our attitude as beautiful as that of the apostles? "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).
 - 3. Polycarp's dying words express his dedication and devotion to the Lord in a very beautiful way: *Eighty and six years have I served my Savior, and he has done me no wrong; how can I revile him who gave his life for me?*
 - 4. 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."
 - G. Stability and Dependability Make the Gospel Attractive.
 - 1. Consider the case of Daniel:
 - a. Daniel 6:3-5: "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."
 - b. Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."
 - c. Daniel 6:16: "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."
 - d. Daniel 6:25-27: "Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."
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2. Some members have been jokingly described to be like an old car: they may run today, but not tomorrow.
3. If we are unstable or undependable, we will not be an attractive example of Christianity.

III. CONCLUSION.

A. Doing Our Best Is the Least We Can Do.

1. Mark 14:3-9: "And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."
2. Mark 12:41-44: "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."
3. 1 John 1:6-10: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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."

B. Do Not Soil or Hinder the Gospel.

1. 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."
 2. Titus 2:10: "Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."
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Compassionate and Helpful

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Two Key Words of Our Study Defined:

1. Compassion:

a. Vine's Dictionary:

(1) Verbs.

- (a) *oikteiro*—"to have pity, a feeling of distress through the ills of others," is used of God's compassion, Rom 9:15.
- (b) *splanchnizomai*—"to be moved as to one's inwards (*splanchna*), to be moved with compassion, to yearn with compassion," is frequently recorded of Christ towards the multitude and towards individual sufferers, Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22 (of the appeal of a father for a demon-possessed son); Luke 7:13; 10:33; of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, 15:20....
- (c) *sumpatheo*—"to suffer with another (sun, 'with,' *pascho*, 'to suffer'), to be affected similarly" (Eng., "sympathy"), to have "compassion" upon, Heb 10:34, of "compassionating" those in prison, is translated "be touched with" in Heb 4:15, of Christ as the High Priest....
- (d) *eleeo*—"to have mercy (*eleos*, "mercy"), to show kindness, by beneficence, or assistance," is translated "have compassion" in Matt 18:33 (KJV); Mark 5:19 and Jude 22....

(2) Nouns.

- (a) *oiktirmos*—akin to A, No. 1, is used with *splanchna* (see below), "the viscera, the inward parts," as the seat of emotion, the "heart," Phil 2:1; Col 3:12, "a heart of compassion" (KJV, "bowels of mercies"). In Heb 10:28 it is used with *choris*, "without," (lit., "without compassions"). It is translated "mercies" in Rom 12:1 and 2 Cor 1:3....
- (b) *splanchnon*—always used in the plural, is suitably rendered "compassion" in the RV of Col 3:12 and 1 John 3:17; "compassions" in Phil 2:1, Cf. A, No. 2. See BOWELS.

- (3) Adjective: *sumpathes*—denotes suffering with, "compassionate," 1 Peter 3:8, RV (KJV, "having compassion").

b. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

- (1) Compassion, literally a feeling with and for others, is a fundamental and distinctive quality of the Biblical conception of God, and to its prominence the world owes more than words can express. (1) It lay at the foundation of Israel's faith in Yahweh. For it was out of His compassion that He, by a marvelous act of power, delivered them from Egyptian bondage and called them to be His own people. Nothing, therefore, is more prominent in the Old Testament than the ascription of compassion, pity, mercy, etc., to God; the people may be said to have gloried in it.
- (2) It is summed up in such sayings as that of the great declaration in Ex 34:6: "Yahweh—a God full of compassion (the American Standard Revised Version merciful) and gracious" (compare Ps 78:38; 86:15; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; Lam 3:22, "His compassions fail not"). And, because this was the character of their God, the prophets declared that compassion was an essential requirement on the part of members of the community (Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8; compare Prov 19:17).
- (2) In Jesus Christ, in whom God was "manifest in the flesh," compassion was an outstanding feature (Matt 9:36; 14:14, etc.) and He taught that it ought to be extended, not to friends and neighbors only, but to all without exception, even to enemies (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 10:30-37). [Biblesoft].

2. Helpful [benevolent].

a. Vine:

(1) Nouns:

- (a) *antilepsis* or *antilempsis*—properly signifies "a laying hold of, an exchange" (*anti*, "in exchange," or, in its local sense, "in front," and *lambano*, "to take, lay hold of," so as to

support); then, "a help" (akin to B, No. 1); it is mentioned in 1 Cor 12:28, as one of the ministrations in the local church, by way of rendering assistance, perhaps especially of "help" ministered to the weak and needy. So Theophylact defines the injunction in 1 Thess 5:14, "support the weak"; cf. Acts 20:35; not official functionaries are in view in the term "helps," but rather the functioning of those who, like the household of Stephanas, devote themselves to minister to the saints. Hort defines the ministration as "anything that would be done for poor or weak or outcast brethren."

- (b) *boetheia*—from *boe*, "a shout," and *theo*, "to run," denotes "help, succour," Heb 4:16, lit., "(grace) unto (timely) help"; in Acts 27:17, where the plural is used, the term is nautical, "frapping."
- (c) *epikouria*—strictly denotes such aid as is rendered by an *epikouros*, "an ally, an auxiliary"; Paul uses it in his testimony to Agrippa, "having therefore obtained the help that is from God," Acts 26:22, RV.

(2) Verbs.

- (a) *antilambano*—lit., "to take instead of, or in turn" (akin to A, No. 1), is used in the middle voice, and rendered "He hath holpen" in Luke 1:54; "to help," RV, "to support," KJV, in Acts 20:35; its other meaning, to partake of, is used of partaking of things, 1 Tim 6:2, "that partake of," for KJV, "partakers of." See PARTAKE, SUPPORT.
- (b) *sullambano*—"to assist, take part with" (sun, "with," and *lambano*), is used, in the middle voice, of rendering help in what others are doing, Luke 5:7, of bringing in a catch of fish; in Phil 4:3, in an appeal to Synzygus ("yokefellow") to help Euodia and Syntyche v. 2. See CATCH, CONCEIVE.
- (c) *sunantizambano*—signifies "to lake hold with at the side for assistance" (sun, "with," and No. 1); hence, "to take a share in, help in bearing, to help in general." It is used, in the middle voice in Martha's request to the Lord to bid her sister help her, Luke 10:40; and of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in helping our infirmities, Rom 8:26. In the Sept., Ex 18:22; Num 11:17; Ps 89:21.
- (d) *boetheo*—"to come to the aid of anyone, to succour" (akin to A, No. 2), is used in Matt 15:25; Mark 9:22,24; Acts 16:9; 21:28; 2 Cor 6:2, "did I succour"; Heb 2:18, "to succour"; Rev 12:16.
- (e) *sumballo*—lit., "to throw together" (sun, "with," ballo, "to throw"), is used in the middle voice in Acts 18:27, of helping or benefiting believers by discussion or ministry of the Word of God. See CONFER, ENCOUNTER, MAKE (war), MEET, PONDER.
- (f) *sunupourgeo*—denotes "to help together, join in helping, to serve with anyone as an underworker" (sun, "with," *hupourgeo*, "to serve"; *hupo*, "under," *ergon*, "work"); it is used in 2 Cor 1:11.
- (g) *sunergeo*—"to help in work, to co-operate, be a co-worker," is rendered "that helpeth with" in 1 Cor 16:16. See WORK.
- (h) Note: *Paristemi*, "to place beside" (*para*, "by," *histemi*, "to cause to stand"), "to stand by, be at hand," is used of "standing up for help," in Rom 16:2, "that ye assist," and 2 Tim 4:17, "stood with."

- b. "With the sense of that which brings aid, support, or deliverance, 'help' (noun and vb.) represents a large variety of words in Hebrew and Greek..." [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia].

B. Many Are Concerned About the Environment and Animals.

1. Rain Forests and the ozone were major concerns for extreme environmentalists—we hear very little about these today. Things that are perceived as very serious at one time, may be of little consequence at a later time.
2. Many are justly concerned about major oil spills.
3. Many have gone to the extreme about air pollution and insignificant species of small critters.
4. A very great effort has been pushed in the past few years over the unproved "danger" of *global*

warming. God is still in control of his universe: “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). A few years ago, alarmists and politicians with an agenda warned of a coming ice age. The same type people ride one issue until it dissipates, then change to another “danger.”

C. The Majority is Unconcerned about Certain Mightily Important Matters.

1. Many are unconcerned about cries for help from their fellow human beings. News reports of such things have been fairly frequent in our generation. *I don't want to get involved!*
2. How much interest is expressed about spiritual matters:
 - a. The immortal soul.
 - (1) Matthew 16:25-26: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 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?”
 - (2) Luke 9:25: “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?”
 - b. Sin that condemns the immortal soul.
 - (1) Daniel 12:2: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”
 - (2) Matthew 25:46: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”
 - c. Pleasing our Creator.
 - (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) 1 Thessalonians 4:1: “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”
 - (3) 1 John 2:17: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”
 - (4) Hebrews 10:36: “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”
 - (5) Colossians 4:12: “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”
 - (6) Galatians 1:10: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”
 - (7) 1 Thessalonians 2:4: “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”
 - d. Eternity.
 - (1) The Rich Young Ruler asked our Lord about obtaining eternal life (Matt. 19:16-29)
 - (a) How thrilling and important this question is! This young man understood that the way he lived determined its reception.
 - (b) The Jews thought eternal life was obtained by following the Mosaic Law and rejecting Jesus: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” (John 5:39-40).
 - (c) But eternal life is found only in Christ: “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:11, cf. John 5:40).
 - (d) Eternal life is conditional: God provides it and man accepts by meeting God's terms: “And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16).
 - (2) Eternal life is in the world to come—not 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) It will be given to the faithful after the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead and the final Judgment (Jude 21; Matt. 25:31-46; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29).

(3) Christians must stand the tests and trials of this life in order to inherit eternal life.

(a) James 1:2: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”

(b) James 1:12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

(c) Revelation 2:10: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

e. Greatest two questions one could ask:

(1) What must I do to be saved?

(2) What must I do to inherit eternal life?

f. The rich young ruler was unwilling to pay the price.

(1) He went away sorrowful—his great riches were more important to him.

(2) Nothing approaches the importance of salvation from sin and eternal life in Heaven!

II. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO WERE GREATLY CONCERNED.

A. Jesus Manifested Compassion.

1. John 11: The story of the death and resurrection of Lazarus.

a. Lazarus was grievously sick; his sisters sent for Jesus (John 10:40; 11:1ff).

b. The Lord's friend was dead when he arrived: "Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already" (John 11:17). Survey John 11:19-32.

c. “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept” (John 11:33-35).

(1) He groaned and was troubled (margin, "he troubled himself").

(2) Jesus wept. This was different from the wailing of Mary (vs. 31; another Greek word is used).

d. He did not weep because Lazarus had died; he knew he would raise him, and had deliberately delayed his coming to Bethany: “When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (11:4-6).

e. He did not even have to be present to raise him: cf. John 4:46-53 (Nobleman's son was healed from afar).

f. Verse 35 is known as the Bible's shortest verse; this little fact has perhaps taken away from the full import of the statement. (1 Thess. 5:16 has fewer letters in the Greek text than does this verse.)

(1) His tears showed his great compassionate heart!

(2) His tears implies grief.

(3) He grieved in compassion and sympathy with Mary and Martha.

2. Our Lord shed tears.

a. Luke 19:41-44: “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

b. 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.”

- c. Luke 22:44: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."
- d. John 11:35: "Jesus wept."

B. Concern and Grief Are Often Expressed in the Bible.

1. God was often grieved over humanity's follies and troubles.
 - a. He was grieved with the wicked of Noah's generation: "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. 6:6).
 - b. Likewise, he grieved when Israel sinned: "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest....But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" (Heb. 3:10,11,17).
 - c. He was also grieved over Israel's sufferings:
 - (1) Exodus 1:13-14: "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, *was* with rigour."
 - (2) Exodus 2:23-25: "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*."
 - (3) Exodus 3:7-10: "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."
 - d. He was grieved when Ammon oppressed Israel: "Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: **and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel**" (Judg. 10:9-16).
 - e. He was compassionate toward Israel under Syrian oppression: "And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet" (2 Kings 13:23).
 - f. He also expressed it in:
 - (1) Psalms 78:36-40: "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that

they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!"

(2) Psalms 86:15: "But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

(3) Psalms 145:8: "The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."

- g. God is gravely concerned about men today, and so must we be: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:7-11; cf. John 3:16).

C. Great People of the Bible Were Full of Tears and Compassion.

1. Jacob:

a. Genesis 33:4: "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept."

b. Genesis 37:35: "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

2. Joseph was one of the most tearful men the world has ever known.

a. He wept over his sinful, suffering brothers: "And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes" (Gen. 42:24).

b. He wept in his private chambers over his family: "And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there" (Gen. 43:30).

c. He wept aloud and unashamedly: "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard" (Gen. 45:1-2).

d. He wept as he greeted his brothers: "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him" (Gen. 45:15).

e. He wept when he was reunited with his father: "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while" (Gen. 46:29).

f. He wept when his father died: "And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him" (Gen. 50:1).

g. He wept with his brothers following Jacob's death: "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Gen. 50:15-21).

3. David was a man who expressed sorrow and grief.

a. He wept when he met his friend Jonathan: "*And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a*

- place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20:41).
- b. He wept when Amalek destroyed Ziklag: "And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; And had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep" (1 Sam. 30:1-4).
 - c. He wept on learning of the death of Saul and Jonathan: "Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword" (2 Sam. 1:11-12).
 - d. He wept at the funeral of Abner: "And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept....And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" (2 Sam. 3:31-32,38).
 - e. He wept when his little son was ill: "Then said his servants unto him, What thing *is* this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" (2 Sam. 12:21-22).
 - f. He wept over Absalom: "And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*....And the king said unto Cushai, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushai answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is*. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:29,32-33).
4. Jeremiah often wept, and is known to us as the "Weeping Prophet."
 - a. Jeremiah 9:1: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"
 - b. Jeremiah 13:17: "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."
 - c. Jeremiah 48:32: "O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach *even* to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage."
 - d. Lamentations 1:16: "For these *things* I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed."
 5. Mary Magdalene wept at the tomb of Jesus: "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre" (John 20:11).
 6. Paul the apostle was a man of tears.
 - a. Acts 20:19-20,31: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house...Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."
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- b. 2 Corinthians 2:4: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly with you."
- c. Romans 9:1-3: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."
- d. Romans 10:1: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."
- 7. The apostle Peter wept over his denial of Christ: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:75).
- 8. Our brethren of the first century wept:
 - a. Acts 9:39: "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them."
 - b. Acts 20:37-38: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more..."
- D. Christ the Son of God and the Son of Man Was a Man of Tears, Sorrow and Compassion.
 - 1. He was prophesied to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3).
 - a. He wept over Jerusalem: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37).
 - b. He wept in regards to his divine mission: "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" (Heb. 5:7).
 - c. He was filled with compassion toward the lost: "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" (Matt. 9:36).
 - d. He had compassion toward the great multitude which followed him: "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14).
 - e. The Lord was concerned over the hunger of the multitude: "Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way" (Matt. 15:32).
 - f. He was touched by the plight of the widow of Nain: "And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).
 - 2. He wept in sympathy and compassion with Mary and Martha over their grief and loss. Our Lord is sympathetic and compassionate toward our losses, troubles and grief: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).
 - 3. We are to have compassion toward those who are lost in sin—"“But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt. 9:12).
 - a. Acts 26:26-29: "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am

- persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”
- b. Romans 10:1: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”
 - c. Jude 1:21: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”
 - d. Acts 20:29-31: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”
4. We are to have compassion toward those who are in need of the essentials of life.
- a. Galatians 6:9-10: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”
 - 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 3:17-18: “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”
 - d. Matthew 25:37-40: “Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”
5. We are to have compassion toward those who are physically sick.
- a. Since nearly everyone has health insurance, and doctors and hospitals are available to most people, this requirement is not as much of necessity as in earlier times. Nevertheless, there are a good many sick people who need assistance as they recover from illness or surgery.
 - b. Furnishing transportation, cleaning their house, preparing food, and praying for them are among the ways we can aid the sick.
6. We are to have compassion toward those who are lonely.
- a. This is primarily an individual's own problem, but a word of cheer, a pleasant visit, a nice card, phone call, or a special dish of food can go a long way toward lightening the heartache of a despondent person.
 - b. Hebrews 12:11-15: “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”
7. We are to have compassion toward those who are in sorrow.
- a. Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24: “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;
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and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

E. Christ Had Much Grief over the Actions of Men During His Earthly Ministry.

1. The great majority rejected him: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12).
 - a. Most people still shun him and his word:
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."
 - (4) 2 Timothy 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
 - (5) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - (6) 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
 - b. In the brotherhood today, many Christians are rejecting him: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).
 - (1) His laws governing marriage, divorce, and remarriage are rejected: "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).
 - (2) His entrance requirements into the kingdom are being watered down and changed when men teach salvation is by grace only; or claim people can follow manmade doctrines and still be saved.
 - (3) His pattern for the worship and work of the church is altered by some.
 - (4) Many congregations want to hear only pleasant speeches by dynamic speakers which contain little truth, nothing negative, and have little instructional value; God is not glorified by such presentations, and souls are not saved or edified by such weak shows.
 - (5) Some are openly advocating false doctrine and aggressively denouncing the truth.
 - c. Many of the Lord's people are spiritually weak, live ungodly lives, and bring much reproach upon the Lord by covetousness, indifference, and lack of love.
2. The Lord was grieved over the unbelief of those who knew him.
 - a. His fellow-citizens of Nazareth: "And he went out from thence, and came into his own country.... And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching" (Mark 6:1-6).
 - b. Even his own apostles: "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told *it* unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (Mark

- 16:12-14).
3. He was grieved over the actions of some of his apostles.
 - a. Peter, who denied him:
 - (1) Luke 22:31-32: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
 - (2) Luke 22:60-62: "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."
 - b. Judas, who betrayed him:
 - (1) Psalms 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me."
 - (2) John 13:18,21: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me....When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."
 4. He was grieved over the sins of those who were crucifying him: "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots" (Luke 23:34).
 5. Our Lord grieves over the affairs of the world, our nation, and his church today. He is gravely and sincerely concerned over our sorrows and troubles.
 - a. "Does Jesus Care?"
 - (1) Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin."
 - (2) Hebrews 13:5: "*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."
 - (3) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 - b. When you have some serious illness, or trouble, or suffer over difficulties in the church, or face the debilitating loss of a loved one—the sympathetic and compassionate heart of Christ weeps with you.

III. EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO HELPED OTHERS.

A. Jesus is the Perfect Example of Helping Others—Putting His Concern into Practice.

1. Biblical statements:
 - a. Acts 10:38: "Jesus went about doing good."
 - (1) This is a concise biography of the life of Christ on earth.
 - (2) What exactly did the Lord do that is characterized as going about "doing good?"
 - b. Acts begins with Luke reminding Theophilus of what he had written about Christ's life.
 - (1) Acts 1:1: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."
 - (2) Acts 10:38 is given as a summary of all the details given in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
 - c. When we see what all Jesus did during his earthly ministry, we see what Luke had in mind by saying he "went about doing good."
 - d. It is important that we know what is involved in doing good for **we** are told to do just that.
 - (1) Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all..."
 - (2) James 1:22: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."
 2. Jesus is our example:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ."
 - b. 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."
 3. He went about preaching the word of God.
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- a. Teaching God's truth always does good.
 - (1) Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."
 - (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) 2 Corinthians 2:15-16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?"
 - b. Jesus taught God's word. "And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching" (Mark 6:1-6).
 - c. Preaching the gospel will cause men to make a decision for or against Christ. When men are brought to such a point, their rejection brings God's wrath upon them, but their reception brings God's blessings. God's will is done.
 - (1) Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 - (2) Romans 10:18: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."
 - (3) 1 Corinthians 9:16: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"
 - (4) 1 Timothy 4:6: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ..."
 - (5) 1 Timothy 4:13-16: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. "
 - (6) 2 Timothy 4:2-4: " 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."
 - d. As Jesus did good when he preached the truth, so we do good when we preach and teach the same truths. Souls are saved by the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).
 - e. When the apostles preached the word, they were sometimes beaten and imprisoned; but they did great good in the process.
 - f. The apostle Paul preached the word, and was stoned, beaten, and imprisoned; but he did great good in the process.
- B. Jesus Went about Rebuking Religious Error.
- 1. Many today have the idea that we should be preaching the gospel and leave everyone else alone.
 - a. This is "unity in diversity"—the idea that as long as people believe "something" about God, Christ, the Bible, they are alright. They think that the "details" are unimportant, that only the "core" of the gospel is vitally important. But what truth in the gospel is unimportant? Who is wise enough to differentiate?
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God..."
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- (2) Galatians 1:8: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."
- (3) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
- b. The Lord did not follow this practice of mouthing "sweet nothings."
- 2. He rebuked error, not for pleasure, but because error condemns the souls of men!
 - a. When men stand opposed to the truth which saves, such men must be exposed and rebuked—for their own good and for the good of others.
 - b. By exposing their errors, others can be warned and shown the truth which saves (John 8:32).
 - c. Jesus warned us all against false teachers and their errors:
 - (1) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
 - (4) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- 3. He did as much good while rebuking error as he did in preaching the word, for he accomplished both in the same process. Before the pure seed of the kingdom can be planted in the heart, the weeds of the devil have to be pulled up: "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" (Jer. 1:10).
 - a. The most scathing denunciation the Lord gave is found in Matthew 23 which includes the woes he pronounced upon those false teachers known as Pharisees and scribes.
 - b. He rebuked the Sadducees in Mark 12:24-27 and Matthew 22:23-33.
 - c. Did Jesus do wrong in this? Do not we err when we do not follow his example by exposing the false teachers of our day? By exposing their errors, he made it possible for the common man to receive the truth.
 - d. Alexander Campbell held many great debates with the leading figures among the sectarians. After he saw the great results, he concluded that one week of debate is worth a year of preaching, since he was able to convince so many of the truth when he exposed sectarian error and set forth truth.
- 4. Jesus went about doing good when he went about rebuking religious error.
- C. Jesus Went about Encouraging Others.
 - 1. Mark 4:26-29: "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."
 - 2. Mark mentions only 4 of the 30 parables Jesus told, but he names most of (21 of 39) the Lord's miracles. Mark emphasizes action, not dialogue.
 - a. But Mark includes one parable not found elsewhere in the other gospel accounts [Mark 4:26-29]. This parable gives encouragement to those who teach and preach God's word. We may not see any immediate results from our efforts, but we have been successful if we have faithfully planted the

- seed. "Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:5-6). It is not in vain.
- b. Noah was just as faithful (Gen. 6:6-9; 2 Pet. 2:5) as Peter was in Acts 2; anyone who is faithful is successful in God's sight.
 - c. God does not require us to carry a book with a complete record of all those we have taught and baptized; he takes care of the record-keeping!
 - d. Think of how encouraging this information is if we do the best we can in trying to teach the lost and erring.
3. Jesus did not go about bringing gloom and despair to the hearts of people. There are some who continually dwell on negative things; there are some who cast a "wet blanket" on a gathering when they enter a room. He could have said much that was gloomy and discouraging in view of what was about to happen, but he spoke uplifting words.
 - a. Mark 6:50: "For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."
 - b. 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."
 4. Jesus did good by encouraging others.
 - a. John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."
 - b. His forthcoming death would be discouraging to them but he offered encouragement. "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:32-33).
 - c. After his death and resurrection, and before his ascension, after which they would behold him no more in this world, he comforted them with the words of 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 alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."
 5. He encouraged those who put the kingdom first and seem to be despised by the world: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also....But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:21, 33).
 6. He taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Although saints seem to be left with an empty sack in this world, there is something worthwhile awaiting us in heaven! "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).
- D. Jesus Went about Setting High Standards of Living.
1. The great men who originated the popular religions of the world never approached the Lord's standard in his teachings.
 - a. Confucius taught: "Don't do unto others what you don't want them to do unto you." Note the negative view of life he proposed. But Christ said, "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" (Matt. 7:12).
 - b. Confucius taught that men ought not do anything bad against another; Christ taught that we are to do to others what we would have done to us.
 2. What would the result be if everyone on earth became a follower of one or the other of the prominent
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religions of our day?

- a. If the whole population adopted the religion of the Jews, the entire world would be following an empty religion; a system that has been finally and fully rejected by God.
 - b. If the whole population became followers of Mohammed, think of the great noise that would ensue (when the "faithful" are called to prayer). There would be no salvation and no hope.
 - c. If everyone converted to Hinduism, what would be the consequences? That religion teaches the false doctrine of reincarnation. They teach that if one is born into a family that is doomed to live their lives on the filthy streets of Calcutta, India, that is because they are being punished for evil done in a previous life; they are disinclined to aid any of those unfortunate souls since offering assistance could be perceived as going against the decree of "God."
3. If the teachings of Christ were used by all of the world's citizens, the world would be a much better place to live! There would be no lawsuits, no crime, no wars; the needy would be cared for; there would be no drug problems; immorality would be non-existent; there would be no prostitution or pornography; there would be no divorces breaking up homes and causing endless pains to innocent children; all of the blights of society would be eradicated. All of this and more is possible if people would only follow the great tenets of the gospel:
- a. The Beatitudes: "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. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Mat. 5:3-12).
 - b. The Golden Rule: "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" (Mat. 7:12).
 - c. The Law of Love:
 - (1) Mark 12:30-31: "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."
 - (2) Romans 13:8: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another..."
 - (3) Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour..."
 - (4) 1 Corinthians 16:22: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."
 - d. Letting God be the Avenger: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17-21).
 - e. Letting God be the Guide in religious matters: "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" (Mat. 7:21).
 - f. By allowing God to set the priorities and the ultimate goal of our lives: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man" (Eccl. 12:13; cf. Matt. 6:33; 6:19-21).
4. Do you know why the world is lost? The principle of Matthew 6:33 is ignored by the great majority. Instead of seeking God's kingdom and righteous above everything else, nearly everyone seeks food,
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clothing, and shelter first. They have reversed God's order. But one who puts God's kingdom and righteousness first is one who will become a Christian and will faithfully follow the will of God.

E. Jesus Went about Doing Good When He Defended God's Arrangement for Marriage.

1. Marriage was God's first divine institution, originating in Genesis 2. Marriage and the home it produces serves as the foundation of society. Jewish false teachers had perverted God's arrangement for marriage by inventing loopholes to permit a man the right to divorce his wife on almost any pretext. Some of their adherents asked the Lord if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for any cause. They were not sincere with their question, for they merely sought to tempt him (Matt. 19:3).
 - a. Jesus taught that marriage originated at the beginning, and was intended to include only one man and one woman, and was for life: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6).
 - b. The Jews argued that Moses commanded divorce, but Jesus pointed out that he only permitted divorce, and that only because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19:8). During that era of moral darkness, a man might kill his wife, or so mistreat her to drive her away, if he could not divorce her. Thus, Moses allowed some situations for divorce to counteract the hard hearts of many of the Jews.
 - c. Having shown that this was not the way God set up marriage in the beginning, he next showed them that only one exception was granted for divorce and remarriage: the guilt of fornication on the part of the husband or the wife.
 - (1) Matthew 5:32: "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."
 - (2) Matthew 19:9: "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."
 - (3) Preaching this truth cost John the Baptizer his head: "For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet" (Matt. 14:4-5).
2. Marriage was the first divine institution; the church is the second divine institution. God will not add to the second (the church) those who are living in violation of the first! God does not work against himself. Unless one's life is in harmony with God's first divine institution (marriage), he cannot be a faithful member of the second (the church).
3. Jesus went about doing good in upholding the integrity of marriage.

F. Jesus Went about Doing Good by Performing Miracles.

1. About 39 of the Lord's miracles are recorded in the gospel accounts, culminated by the greatest of them all: his resurrection from the dead. A great many others are not reported:
 - a. 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."
 - b. John 21:25: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."
2. The Lord did not perform a miracle merely to do something sensational. He taught needed lessons in connections with his miracles.
 - a. After miraculously feeding the 5,000 men, he taught the great lesson that he is the bread of life. John 6.
 - b. After giving the ability to walk to a man on the Sabbath day, he showed that doing good is greater than human traditions (John 5:1-18; Mark 7:9). Jesus said "My father worketh hitherto and I work"

- (John 5:17). His saving and providential activities still operate every day and hour.
- c. He proved his divinity and authority by his miracles: "And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion" (Mark 2:1-12).
 3. Think of the glad hearts which resulted from the uncounted miracles Jesus wrought! Many were able to avoid a life of extreme poverty by having their blindness, deafness and inability to walk healed. For every person who was healed of some infirmity, a great number of other people were indirectly benefitted. Truly, the miracles of our Lord accomplished great good!
- G. Jesus Went about Doing by Making the Right Impression on People.
1. John 3:1-2: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus **knew** this to be true; it was not a mere possibility. This keen observer was properly impressed by the Lord.
 2. He was the greatest of all teachers; none had ever spoken as he did.
 - a. Matthew 7:28-29: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."
 - b. John 7:46: "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man."
 3. In his trials, the Lord faced Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate; none of these could discover any real guilt on his part. Pilate openly declared his innocence. The Lord had earlier challenged his enemies to identify a genuine evil in his life and teachings: "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John 8:46).
 4. Matthew 27:54: "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." The Roman centurion admitted the deity of Jesus.
 5. Judas was impressed by the Lord, confessing the innocence of Jesus: "Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*" (Matt. 27:4).
 6. The wife of Pilate knew the innocence of Jesus and was impressed by him: "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. 27:19).
 7. God was impressed by Jesus:
 - a. Matthew 3:17: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - b. Matthew 17:5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
 8. The blind man of John 9 received his sight by the Lord's miracle; he returned to obtain spiritual insight: "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And
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Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee" (John 9:35-37).

9. The Samaritan woman was impressed by the Lord: "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:25-29).

H. Jesus Went about Doing Good by Doing the Will of the Father.

1. He was completely innocent of transgressing any of God's will—the only responsible person ever to live above sin. It was his lot in life to be the sin-bearer for lost humanity.
 - a. No wonder the Lord was so weighted down with sorrow in the garden.
 - (1) Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
 - (2) Matthew 26:39: "And he went a little farther, 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*."
 - (3) John 6:38: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."
 - b. He faced the prospect of dying a very cruel death.
 - c. He faced the awful reality of bearing the sins of the world on the cross—he was utterly guiltless.
 - d. He faced the terrible ordeal of the hours on the cross when he was separated from his Father.
 - e. He endured all this because he was committed to doing God's will.
2. In the "shadow of the cross" he could accurately say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."
3. On the cross, as he lived his last moments, he could state with finality, "It is finished" (John 19:30).
4. He was able to utterly complete everything the Father required of him; he allowed nothing to go undone.
 - a. John 8:29: "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."
 - b. Hebrews 2:10: "For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."
 - c. Hebrews 2:18: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."
 - d. Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

I. The Greatest Good That Jesus Did Was When He Went to the Cross.

1. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18). This passage is often overlooked in our preaching and studying. The Lord was not crucified due to weakness on his part, but due to a conscious, positive choice.
2. He willingly went to the cross; he took upon himself this ordeal voluntarily.
 - a. Galatians 1:4: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."
 - b. Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."
 - c. Philippians 2:8: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 - d. Colossians 1:20: "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven."
 - e. 1 Peter 2:24: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

- f. Revelation 1:5-6: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
- g. Revelation 5:12: "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."
3. This great truth is so commonly known that it is in danger of being taken for granted and being viewed abstractly.
4. But it has a personal meaning to each individual; it is the greatest truth of the ages: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

IV. EXAMPLES OF OTHERS WHO PUT THEIR CONCERN INTO PRACTICE.

A. Some Old Testament Cases.

1. Boaz: "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not" (Ruth 2:1-16).
 2. The worthy woman: "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" (Prov. 31:19-20).
 3. The Shunamite woman: "And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he
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shall turn in thither? (2 Kings 4:8-10).

B. Some New Testament Cases.

1. Mary, Martha and Lazarus:

- a. Luke 10:38-42: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
- b. John 12:1-3: "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

2. Dorcas: "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive" (Acts 9:32-41).

3. Publius: "In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously" (Acts 28:7).

4. Saints at Antioch: "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:27-30).

5. Saints at Jerusalem:

- a. Acts 2:44-47: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
- b. Acts 4:32-37: "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, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son

of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

6. Gentile saints:

- a. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4: “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. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.”
 - b. 2 Corinthians 8:1-7: “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. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.”
 - c. 2 Corinthians 9:1-7: “For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. 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. Acts 20:4: “And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.”
 - e. Philippians 4:10-18: “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 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. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”
 - f. 2 Corinthians 9:13-14: “Seeing that through the proving of you by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution unto them and unto all; while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you” (ASV).
- (1) Paul tells the Corinthians that their liberal gift proves their Christian character, which causes the Jewish Christians to glorify God for the manifestation of their obedience to the gospel. Those Jewish saints likewise glorified God on account of the liberal contribution they raised in behalf
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of the poor in Judea.

- (2) Notice that the contribution was intended for "them" (the Jewish Christians in Judea) and "unto all" (others who were not Christians in that impoverished province). It is Scriptural for congregations to assist the needy who are not Christians.
 - (a) Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - (b) 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*. See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*." The underlined phrase includes both believer and unbeliever; the similar phrase in the text does also.
- g. Romans 15:30-31: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints."
 - (1) Paul was asking them to pray in his behalf, but his request was not selfish in any sense. If Paul's efforts were blessed by God, the cause of Christ would be enhanced, souls would be saved, and the saints in Rome (and elsewhere) would be edified. The apostle was a tremendously valuable tool in the hands of God!
 - (2) Specifically, Paul asks that they pray that he would be delivered from the evil hands of Jewish unbelievers in Judea, and that the contribution would be well-received by the brethren there. His desire to be kept from his enemies was not primarily for his own personal benefit. If they had their way with him, he would be imprisoned or slain forthwith!
 - (3) If either of these evils happened, it would be to the detriment of the cause of Christ, and would deprive the saints in Rome of his aid. Personally, he was ready to suffer imprisonment and death in Jerusalem: "Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13).
 - (4) He wanted the Jewish saints to gladly receive the contribution from their Gentile brethren. His request that they pray for the gift to be received indicates the possibility that it might be rejected. Why would they reject it? The Judaizers might have raised prejudice among the Jews against their Gentile brethren. If the Jewish Christians rejected the gift, the cause of Christ would have suffered a horrible blow. Acceptance of the gift would indicate a bond between the two segments of the brotherhood of Christ.
7. 2 Timothy 1:16: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain."

V. METHODS AND MEANS OF PUTTING OUR COMPASSION INTO PRACTICE.

A. Showing Hospitality.

1. Elders must be **given to hospitality** (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). The parallel statement in Titus 1:8 says the elder must be "a lover of hospitality." A desire to show hospitality fills his heart, and he devotes himself to that service.
 2. To show hospitality is to entertain or receive a stranger (sojourner) into one's home as an honored guest and to provide the guest with food, shelter, and protection. This was not merely an oriental custom or good manners but a sacred duty that everyone was expected to observe. Only the depraved would violate this obligation. Hospitality is demonstrated in kindness and generosity shown to strangers or guests, at home or elsewhere.
 3. "Hospitality probably grew out of the needs of nomadic life. Since public inns were rare, a traveler had to depend on the kindness of others and had a right to expect it. This practice was extended to every sojourner, even a runaway slave (Deut. 23:16-17) or one's arch enemy. Hospitality was regarded as a
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sacred obligation by the ancient Greeks and Romans, one that was approved by Zeus, the god and protector of strangers. The Egyptians claimed it as a meritorious deed in life. For the bedouins, it was an expression of righteousness. The word is not used in the Old Testament, but its elements are recognizable: Abraham and the three visitors (Gen. 18:1-8), Lot and the two angels (Gen. 19:1-8), Abraham's servant at Nahor (Gen. 24:17-33), Reuel and Moses (Ex. 2:20), Manoah and the angel (Judg. 13:15), Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10-11), and Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-11). The Pentateuch contains specific commands for the Israelites to love the strangers as themselves (Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:18-19), and to look after their welfare (Deut. 24:17-22). The reason for practicing hospitality was that the Israelites themselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Some acts of hospitality were rewarded, the most notable of which was Rahab's (Josh. 6:22-25; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). Breaches of hospitality were condemned and punished, such as those of Sodom (Gen. 19:1-11) and Gibeah (Judg. 19:10-25). The only exception was Jael who was praised for killing Sisera (Judg. 4:18-24). Hospitality seemed to form the background of many details in the life of Jesus and the early church (Matt. 8:20; Luke 7:36; 9:2-5; 10:4-11). It was to be a characteristic of bishops and widows (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Titus 1:8) and a duty of Christians (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9). It was a natural expression of brotherly love (Heb. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:8-9) and a necessary tool of evangelism. Furthermore, one might even entertain angels or the Lord unawares (Heb. 13:2; Matt. 25:31-46). Both the Didache, which contained early Christian instructions, and rabbinic literature provided guidelines for guests' behavior and their duration of stay. Guests were enjoined to act appropriately, to observe the rules of etiquette, and to avoid presuming upon their hosts" (Holman, Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan).

4. Hospitality is a requirement of every Christian.

- a. Hebrews 13:1-2: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
- b. Mark 12:30-31: "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. 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."

B. Various Methods of Showing Compassion in Practical Ways:

1. Providing food to the hungry.
2. Providing shelter to those exposed to the weather.
3. Providing transportation when we can.
4. Tending to the needs of the sick as we are able.
5. Teaching the gospel to the lost.
6. Teaching and encouraging those who are weak in the faith.
7. Speaking kindly to people, with cheerful words and sincere interest.
8. Offering words of comfort to those who are down-hearted.

C. Be Quick to Extend Forgiveness to the Penitent.

1. When God forgives a penitent sinner, he removes the guilty notation from his *records*.
 - a. Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
 - b. Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - c. We may not be able to erase the memory of an offense done against us by a penitent one, but we can remove the barrier that the sin erected; we can receive our penitent brother back into our full fellowship. No human can remove the guilt of a single sin, but we forgive the offender when he repents by accepting him back as a brother in Christ.
 - d. When you bury a dead mule, do not leave his ears sticking out of the ground. When you forgive

- someone who has wronged you, do not bring up the issue again.
2. We must be ready to forgive a wayward brother the moment he repents.
 - a. Mark 11:25-26: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."
 - b. Luke 17:3-4: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."
 3. Unless we are willing to forgive one who has sinned against us, we cannot expect God to forgive us.
 - a. Matthew 6:9-12: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
 - b. Matthew 6:15: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
- D. We Are Our Brother's Keeper.
1. The case of Cain:
 - a. Genesis 4:8-10: "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."
 - b. 1 John 3:12: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."
 - c. 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."
 - d. Cain tried to deny any responsibility toward his brother, making the point: *I cannot watch my brother all the time, I cannot be blamed if something should happen to him!* Cain's envy, anger, and selfishness were behind his murder of Abel.
 2. Each normal individual has the primary responsibility for looking out for himself; and he must answer for himself when he stands before the Lord in the final Judgment.
 - a. 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."
 - b. 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."
 3. The Bible places many obligations upon the people of God toward others, including these:
 - a. Leviticus 19:18: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."
 - 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. Galatians 6:1-2: "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. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."
 - d. Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them
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- who are of the household of faith.”
- e. Ephesians 4:28: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”
 - f. Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”
 - g. 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.”
 - h. Ephesians 4:32: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

VI. CONCLUSION.

A. God Is Mostly Concerned about Our Spiritual Well-being.

1. He is concerned enough with our physical well-being that he gives us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons" to nourish and sustain us; he placed in nature the various cures for our ills; he oversees our lives with his providential care.
2. But his primary concern for us is that we obey his word, live pure lives, serve him and worship him properly, so that heaven can be our eternal home!
 - a. Luke 10:19-20: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:7-8: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. 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."
 - d. Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
3. Our Lord wept for others, not for himself: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23:27-28).
4. Christ is touched by our griefs today:
 - a. Hebrews 2:17-18: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."
 - b. Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin."

B. Pertinent Passages.

1. Psalm 126:5-6: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."
 2. Psalm 56:8: "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"
 3. Hebrews 6:9-20: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For
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when God made promise to Abraham...Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise....Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Pardon For a Wayward Woman

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Following Passage Is Rejected by Some People:

1. John 8:1-11: “Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”
2. Some object on the charge that Christ winked at adultery and showed mercy to a woman whose guilt was clearly established. We will show that our Lord did not wink at sin.
3. Some object because the passage is not found in a few old manuscripts. However, it is found in other manuscripts—more than sufficient to make the event both authentic and genuine.

B. We Have Solid Reason to Accept it as Good Scripture.

1. Both Christ and the Pharisees are in character in this story. Each did as what we would expect them to do from what we learn from other episodes.
2. The passage gives an excellent demonstration of our Lord’s mercy.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. We Need to See the Background and Details of the Story.

1. The Lord’s half-brothers urged him to go openly to the Feast:
 - a. John 7:1-9: “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.”
 - b. The Father planned the Messiah’s coming into the world; the means and the timing of his death were also decided by God’s eternal plan. The time for his crucifixion was not presently ripe.
 - c. The Feast of Tabernacles:
 - (1) From Nelson’s Dictionary: References to the Feast of Tabernacles in the Bible include Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:33-36,39-43; Num 29:12-32; Deut 16:13-16; Ezra 3:4; and Zech 14:16,18-19.
 - (a) Leviticus 23:33-36: “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.”
 - (b) Leviticus 23:39-43: “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered

in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

- (c) Deuteronomy 16:13-16: “Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.”
- (d) Ezra 3:4: “They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required.”
- (2) “This festival was observed on the 15th day of the seventh month to commemorate the wandering of Israel in the wilderness. Features of the celebration included a holy convocation on the first and eighth days, and the offering of many animal sacrifices. The Israelites were also commanded to live in booths made of palm and willow trees during the festival to commemorate their period of wilderness wandering when they lived in temporary shelters. This feast is also known as the Feast of Booths”[Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers].
- 2. Our Lord went to Jerusalem secretly. His Jewish enemies tried to locate him to fulfill their ultimate plan to destroy him. “But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews” (John 7:10-13).
- 3. Despite the danger posed by his foes, he taught in the temple and opened the truth to many people: “Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not

yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" (John 7:14-31).

4. The Pharisees and chief priests sent men to arrest him, but their soldiers returned without him: "The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come? In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house" (John 7:32-53).

B. The Scribes and the Pharisees Schemed to Catch Him in Some Error.

1. "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not" (John 8:1-6).
2. They had tried to "set him up" on other occasions, but were always unsuccessful (cf. Matt. 22).
 - a. The Herodians tried to entrap the Lord: "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way" (Matt. 22:15-22).
 - b. The Sadducees concocted a scheme by which they thought to ensnare him in an impossible situation regarding the resurrection: "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the

resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matt. 22:23-33).

- c. The Pharisees sent a lawyer (a specialist in the Mosaic Law) to test him: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matt. 22:34-46).
3. In this latest effort, our Lord first stooped down and wrote on ground (no one knows what he wrote). He was not trying to decide on how to answer, but to give his enemies a moment to think.
- C. Our Lord Replied with a Startling and Unanswerable Response to Their Evil Scheme.
 1. When they urged him to answer, he stood up and gave his famous response: "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground" (John 8:7-8).
 2. He here gave his judgment: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." Even these mean-spirited men knew that they would have exposed themselves as self-righteous and haughty if they had cast a stone.
 3. The witnesses were unwilling. These were the ones who were supposed to cast the first stones, and only then the rest of the people were to participate:
 - a. "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you" (Deut. 17:7).
 - b. "Stoning, which was the ordinary mode of execution. Ex 17:4; Luke 20:6; John 10:31; Acts 14:5. In the case of idolatry, and it may be presumed in other cases also, the witnesses, of whom there were to be at least two, were required to cast the first stone. Deut 13:9; Acts 7:58" [Smith's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible].
 - (1) Exodus 17:4: "And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."
 - (2) Luke 20:6: "But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet."
 - (3) Acts 14:5: "And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them."
 - (4) Deuteronomy 13:9: "But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people."
 - (5) Acts 7:58: "And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."
 - c. "Stoning, which was the ordinary mode of execution (Ex 19:13; Lev 20:27; Josh 7:25; Luke 20:6; Acts 7:58; 14:5). The witnesses, of whom there were at least two, were required to cast the first stone (Deut 13:9f; John 8:7). If these failed to cause death, the bystanders proceeded to complete the sentence, whereupon the body was to be suspended until sunset (Deut 21:23)" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Biblesoft].

- (1) Exodus 19:13: "There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount."
 - (2) Leviticus 20:27: "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them."
 - (3) Joshua 7:25: "And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones."
 - (4) Deuteronomy 13:9-10: "But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."
4. His wicked enemies were defeated:
 - a. John 8:9: "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."
 - b. No mortal could successfully contend with the infinite mind and power of Deity.
 5. Lord directed the woman to amend her ways:
 - a. John 8:10-11: "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."
 - b. The Lord did not condone her sinful conduct. The demands of the Mosaic Law could not be meted out in this case for both parties involved in the sin were not brought. Why did his enemies not bring the man? He was as guilty as the woman.
- D. These Pharisees Were Dishonest and Corrupt.
1. They hated Jesus, and sought to ensnare him; they were unconcerned about the woman, and were disinterested in justice: "This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not" (John 8:6).
 - a. They had no regard for the truth.
 - b. If they had been sincere in their charge against the woman, they would have brought the man. Who was this man? Was he a crony or relative?
 - c. Furthermore, they would have taken the man and the woman before the proper civil authorities.
 - d. These merciless men merely used the woman as weapon against Christ.
 2. The problem was presented to the Lord in order to get him into trouble.
 - a. If he had told them to stone the woman, he would have been in trouble with the Romans, for they had taken the power to execute criminals away from the Jews: "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31).
 - b. If he said turn her loose, the Jews would be offended and would turn against him.
 - c. His enemies often tried to get him into trouble:
 - (1) Matthew 22:15-22: "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way."
 - (2) Matthew 22:23-40: "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no
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resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine. But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

- (3) Matthew 19:3-9: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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.”
3. They had no compassion for the woman:
 - a. Consider:
 - (1) John 8:3-5: “And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?”
 - (2) Matthew 23:23: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”
 - b. They made her a public example, spelling out the sinful details. It is tragic to fall into hands of merciless sinners: “And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man” (2 Sam. 24:14).
 - c. Consider these truths:
 - (1) Matthew 5:7: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”
 - (2) 1 Peter 3:8: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”
 - (3) Ephesians 4:32: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”
4. They were scrupulous but were also guilty: “And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst” (John 8:9).
 - a. They claimed to be keepers of the law: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment,

mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:23-28).

- b. They did not bring the man, though he was as guilty as the woman. Their obligation was to apply the law equally, showing no prejudice. Compare: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written" (Rom. 2:17-24).
5. God was their judge; he judges us as we judge others:
 - a. Matthew 7:1-2: "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."
 - b. John 7:24: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."
 - c. 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
6. One who judges unfairly or with prejudice, falls into his own trap: "The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools" (Prov. 26:7). "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him" (Eccl. 10:8).
 - a. Haman:
 - (1) Esther 6:6-10: "So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king

delighteth to honour. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.”

(2) Esther 7:10: “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.”

- b. David: “And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul” (2 Sam. 12:1-7).

E. Our Lord He Rejected Fornication.

- 1. He condemns the guilty, regardless of the sin:
 - a. Revelation 21:8: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”
 - b. 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.”
 - c. Luke 13:3: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
 - d. Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
 - e. Matthew 25:46: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”
 - f. 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.”
 - 2. His law [the gospel] is stronger and stricter than Moses' law:
 - a. Matthew 19:8-9: “He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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.”
 - b. Matthew 5:27-28: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” [The gospel forbids even the lust which precedes fornication].
 - 3. All fornication is evil.
 - a. It is a sin against the body: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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” (1 Cor. 6:18-20). How is this statement to be understood: “Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” Some of the scholars offer the following comments:
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- (1) "This is to be taken *comparatively*. Sins in general; the common sins which men commit do not *immediately* and directly affect the body, or waste its energies, and destroy life. Such is the case with falsehood, theft, malice, dishonesty, pride, ambition, &c. They do not immediately and directly impair the constitution and waste its energies....The more immediate effect [of these other sins] is on the mind; but the sin under consideration produces an immediate and direct effect on the body itself" (Barnes, p.107).
 - (2) "This does not teach that fornication is greater than any other sin; but it does teach that it is altogether peculiar in its effects upon the body; not so much in its physical as in its moral spiritual effects. The idea runs through the Bible that there is something mysterious in the commerce of the sexes, and in the effects which flow from it. Every other sin, however degrading and ruinous to the health, even drunkenness, is external to the body, that is, external to its life. But fornication, involving as it does a community of life, is a sin against the body itself, because incompatible, as the Apostle had just taught, with the design of its creation, and with its immortal destiny" (Hodges, pp.105f).
 - (3) "Fornication takes the body as a whole and makes it the instrument of sin. It joins the body of sinful union to a body of death, so that it becomes one flesh with the condemned harlot, thereby severing itself from the life in Christ, and thus it strikes directly at the body's future state" (Lipscomb, p.93).
 - (4) In committing fornication, we sin against our own body. We are never the same again. It is a sin against God (Gen. 39:9); it is a repudiation of the institution of marriage, the arrangement in which God has given us the right to satisfy sexual desires.
 - b. It is a sin against the home: "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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. 19:8-9).
 - c. It is a sin against our soul:
 - (1) Proverbs 6:32-33: "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away."
 - (2) 2 Peter 2:14: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children."
 - (3) 1 Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."
 - (4) 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."
 - d. It is a sin against the local church of which we are a member: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether
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with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:1-13).

- e. It a sin against Christ: “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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” (1 Cor 6:13-20).
- 4. God condemns fornication:
 - a. Consider:
 - (1) Leviticus 20:10: “And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 10:8: “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.”
 - (3) Hebrews 10:28-31: “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.”
 - (4) 1 Thessalonians 4:3: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”
 - b. Fornication is never right, even when “legal” and or “respectable.”
 - (1) Matthew 14:4: “For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.”
 - (2) Matthew 19:9: “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.”
 - c. Christ hates sin, but is the friend of the sinner:
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”
 - (2) Matthew 1:21: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”
 - (3) 1 John 2:1-3: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”
 - (4) Acts 3:26: “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

F. Our Lord's Nature.

1. Although he created the universe and the world (Col. 1:15-18; John 1:1-3), yet it was not his mission to exercise civil authority in this world.
 - a. Our Lord did not order the execution of this wayward woman: "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11).
 - b. His kingdom is not of this world: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).
 - c. He rejected the demands many made on him to mount the throne by force: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).
2. He had great wisdom, indeed it was infinite.
 - a. He evaded the deceptive trap his enemies had laid, and turned it against them. Brilliant!
 - b. He never failed to handle every situation, no matter how complex or beguiling.
3. He possessed eternal knowledge.
 - a. He could know the very thoughts of individuals: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25).
 - b. He knows all about us:
 - (1) Psalms 1:6: "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."
 - (2) Revelation 2:2: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."
 - (3) Revelation 2:9: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."
 - (4) Revelation 2:13: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."
 - (5) Revelation 2:19: "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."
 - (6) Revelation 3:1: "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."
 - (7) Revelation 3:8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."
 - (8) Revelation 3:15: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot."

III. CONCLUSION**A. Divine Goodness is an Essential Part of His Nature.**

1. He loved the sinful woman of this episode, and showed mercy to her; he condemned her sin but offered compassion and pardon to her.
 2. He forgives all who repent, but rebukes those who will not:
 - a. 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. Proverbs 28:13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."
 - c. Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will
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I remember no more.”

3. The Prodigal Son was pardoned: “And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:11-32).
 4. Forgiveness was extended to Simon the Pharisee: “But wisdom is justified of all her children. And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:36-50).
 5. Notice how forgiveness and impenitence are handled in the story of the impenitent Pharisee and the penitent Publican: “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as
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other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14).

B. What Does Your Soul Need?

1. To obey gospel?
 2. To repent and be restored?
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A Quartet of Woes

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Man Does Not Always Value the Same Things Which God Esteems Highly.

1. God is higher than man, and looks beneath the surface.
 - a. Isaiah 55:8: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."
 - b. 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
2. God sees things as they are; we see them as they seem to be. Our Lord cautions us against measuring things only from their outward appearance: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).
3. God contemplates a situation or a matter from its present effect to its end result, while we often look only at the present.

B. In Luke 6:24-26, Our Lord Pronounced Some Valuable Woes.

1. Luke 6:24-26: "But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."
2. Man's estimates about these items would contradict the Lord's evaluation of these great truths.
3. In his greater wisdom, Christ saw something dangerous, weak and wrong in the four verities.

II. DISCUSSION:

A. Woe unto You That Are Rich.

1. The curse is not upon riches as such.
 - a. Riches are neither a blessing or a curse; the means by which they are acquired, the owner's attitude toward them, and the uses to which he puts them—these are the determining factors regarding whether wealth is a blessing or a curse.
 - b. Many men of great spiritual stature have been wealthy.
 - (1) Job.
 - (2) Abraham.
 - (3) Joseph.
 - (4) Daniel.
 - c. A faithful child of God can be both financially and spiritually rich.
 - d. Inspiration teaches that it is the *love* for riches that is dangerous: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9-10).
 2. Our Lord also teaches us that it is extremely dangerous for us to put our trust in wealth. The curse is on the one who trusts in his riches.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Mark 10:23-25: "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a
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- needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” [The careful reader will perceive that the rich man of this statement is anyone who places his trust in his money, even though his wealth may not be measured by the millions, but by loose change].
- c. One cannot trust his wealth, position, or property and still have trust in the Almighty. “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” (Matt. 6:24).
 - (1) One who lays up his treasures in heaven serves God; one who lays up his treasures on earth serves mammon (a term for riches).
 - (2) "If a servant obeys one master he must disobey the other; the very act of obedience to one is disobedience to the other....God and mammon are of such opposite natures that it is impossible to love either one supremely without hating the other; that which attracts to one repels from the other" (H. Leo Boles, *Commentary on Matthew*, pp.166f).
 - (3) Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - (4) 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."
 - (5) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
 - d. Riches are uncertain, they cannot deliver us from the temptations of Satan, neither can they preserve us against sickness, accident or death; they cannot buy peace, life or salvation.
3. We can be rich toward God even while we are in financial poverty: “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).
- a. Jamieson: “*So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.* Here is a picture of present folly, and of its awful issue. Such is the man ‘who is not rich toward God:’ he lives to amass and enjoy such riches only as terminate on self, and end with time; but as to God's favour which is life (Ps 30:5), and precious faith (2 Peter 1:1; James 2:5), and riches in good works (1 Tim 6:18), and the wisdom which is better than rubies (Prov 3:15), and in a word, all that the Lord esteems true riches (Rev 2:9; 3:18), he lives and dies a beggar!” [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Biblesoft].
 - b. “The being rich is never condemned by Jesus Christ; nor even the growing richer. Among the saints of God in both Testaments are many notable rich men, whose possessions seem to have helped rather than hindered their journey to the city of God. The lesson which lies on the forefront of this parable-story is the especial danger which riches ever bring of gradually deadening the heart and rendering it impervious to any feeling of love either for God or man. The directions which immediately followed upon this parable were addressed to the inner circle of disciples. The general instruction, it will be seen, belongs to all who in any age wish to be ‘of his Church;’ but several of the particular charges cannot be pressed as general commands, being addressed to men whose work and office were unique” [The Pulpit Commentary, Biblesoft].
 - c. The Lord intends that his people be rich in faith, be liberal with their time, strength and money, and to be filled with good works.
 - (1) James 2:5: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 8:1-3: “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.”
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- (3) 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. Christians are told how to be rich:
- (1) "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18).
- (2) They should buy from him gold that has been tried in the fire; this is a reference to spiritual riches— true and lasting wealth.
4. They should buy white raiment; this is a reference to pure spiritual clothing.
5. They ought to buy eyesalve from him; the purpose of this was to give them the ability to see their true condition. The eye medicine made at Laodicea would not suffice to relieve their spiritual blindness.
- a. Psalms 19:8: "The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes."
- b. Psalms 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."
- c. 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."
- d. The price by which they could buy the proffered benefits was that of a dedicated, obedient life.
- B. Woe Unto You That Are Full.
1. The Lord does not pronounce a curse on fullness as such; being full of itself is neither right nor wrong (spiritually).
- a. Paul was full:
- (1) Philippians 4:12: "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."
- (2) Philippians 4:18: "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."
- (3) Paul was conditioned to the problems of living in a sinful world. He had learned through experiences what it meant to be humbled, as well as to abound; he comprehended by personal knowledge the great blessing of being full and the harsh reality of hunger; he had been in both circumstances. He had happily enjoyed the prosperous times, but had not been embittered by the times of need.
- (4) "Everything and all things in the experience of Paul contributed to the learning of which he here spoke. The Greek word *memuēmai*, rendered as 'I have learned the secret,' literally means 'I am initiated. I possess the mystery.' It is a metaphor taken from the initiatory rites of the pagan cults. Such initiation was a slow and laborious process. Not without toil, patience, and pain had Paul reached this stage of his seeking for perfection" (James Tolle, *Philippians*, p.73).
- (5) "The sum of Paul's affirmation in this verse is that he kept a cool head, his Christian equilibrium and steadfastness, in every circumstance of life. Whether he was full or hungry, prosperous or poor, he conducted himself as a trusting, loving disciple of Christ" (*ibid.*).
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- b. Job, Joseph, David, and many others were full.
 - c. Our Lord fills the hungry:
 - (1) Luke 1:53: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away."
 - (2) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2. The curse is on those who find all the satisfaction they want in earthly fullness.
 - a. This is both foolish and dangerous:
 - (1) Deuteronomy 6:10-15: "And it shall be, when Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee, great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and cisterns hewn out, which thou hewedst not, vineyards and olive-trees, which thou plantedst not, and thou shalt eat and be full; then beware lest thou forget Jehovah, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God; and him shalt thou serve, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples that are round about you; for Jehovah thy God in the midst of thee is a jealous God; lest the anger of Jehovah thy God be kindled against thee, and he destroy thee from off the face of the earth" (ASV).
 - (2) Deuteronomy 8:10-12: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein."
 - b. Solomon prayed to be delivered from this disposition: "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. 30:8-9)..
 - c. One who is full thinks he needs to seek nothing else.
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Luke 12:15-21: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - d. Fullness will not let one rest: "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Eccl. 5:12).
 - C. Woe Unto Them That Laugh Now.
 - 1. There is no curse on laughter as such.
 - a. A cheerful heart is highly commended:
 - (1) Proverbs 17:22: "A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."
 - (2) Proverbs 15:13: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."
 - (3) Proverbs 15:15: "All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a
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continual feast."

- b. Our Lord attended a wedding feast, which is universally considered a happy, festive occasion (John 2).
2. But a curse is on those who know no other joy than that which is worldly or sensual.
 - a. These comprehend no other use of worldly goods than to be merry in the worldly sense.
 - b. Solomon found laughter to be madness: "I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccl. 2:2.).
 - c. Laughter of fools is like crackling of thorns: "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity" (Eccl. 7:6). The crackling sound of fire is pleasant, but thorns and twigs burn quickly into ashes, and produce little heat.
 - d. Merrymaking banishes godly sorrow from the heart: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).
3. Christians are to put away jesting: "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4).
 - a. Some things are not to be laughed at. *Jesting* is translated from *eutrapelia* and "denotes wit, facetiousness, versatility....It was used in the literal sense to describe the quick movements of apes and persons....It came to denote coarse jesting, ribaldry..." (Vine, Vol. 2, p.274). The prohibition is not given in reference to harmless jokes and humorous stories, but of lewd or contemptuous stories which tend to degrade and corrupt the hearer as well as the teller.
 - b. Christians are to be characterized by sobriety, rather than by mirth:
 - (1) Titus 2:2: "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."
 - (2) Titus 2:4: "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."
 - (3) 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."
4. For those who are sinfully merry, their laughter will be turned into weeping:
 - a. Matthew 22:13: "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - b. Matthew 25:30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - c. Luke 16:19-31: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."
5. A merry heart dispels many clouds, but one cannot build his life on mirth. While there is a time to

laugh, there is a time when laughter is out of place and empty. A tasty dessert tops off a good meal, but it could not rightly serve as the meal. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Prov. 14:13).

- a. Job 14:1-2: "Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."
 - b. Luke 12:15-21: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - c. James 4:14: "Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."
6. "The crumbs of the Gospel are infinitely richer than the dainties of the world. But this is man's common delusion—to suppose that happiness is the creature of circumstances. If, therefore, he is disappointed in one course, he will seek it in another. Little does the self-deluded victim know that he carries the principle of his misery in his own bosom. Far, indeed, is he from his object. What he wishes is one thing. What he really needs is another" (Bridges, *Proverbs*, p.28).
7. There are too many solemnities in life for one to give himself over to a life of mirth. Man, being the offspring of God, cannot be truly happy while separated from his Heavenly Father. The wise man correctly concluded that mirth and gaiety is not the stuff from which a happy life is constructed.
- a. Philippians 4:11-13: "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. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:7-8: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. 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. Applying the principles of the Beattitudes and cultivating the Christian Graces will result in genuine happiness (Matt. 5:3-11; 2 Pet. 1:1-12).
- D. Woe Unto You When All Men Shall Speak Well of You.
1. This is the thing that many seek, for no one wants to have others speak ill of them.
 - a. Some would not confess Christ for this cause: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).
 - b. Some want preachers to tickle their ears by withholding the demands of the gospel, while giving them messages which are entirely positive and pleasing: "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" (2 Tim. 4:3).
 - c. Some preachers will avoid addressing unpopular or negative subjects for this cause.
 - d. It is not necessarily a compliment to have no opposition or enemies.
 - (1) 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
 - (2) The Lord bluntly stated that the world hated him, and thus was altogether willing to persecute him even unto death. Since the disciples are not greater than the Master, so the world will hate them also. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will

keep yours also" (John 15:20).

2. One who speaks the word faithfully will have opposition and enemies.
 - a. Micaiah was hated by Ahab: "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so" (1 Kings 22:8).
 - b. Jeremiah, Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets were mistreated.
 - (1) Hebrews 11:36-38: "And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth."
 - (2) Some underwent trials of mockings and scourgings, being placed in bonds and imprisoned. Samson's experiences in the idol's temple is one such case. Micaiah (1 Kings 22:27), Hanani (2 Chron. 16:10), and Jeremiah (Jer. 22; 32) are other examples.
 - (3) Some were stoned. "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD" (2 Chron. 24:20-22).
 - (4) Some were sawn asunder. Milligan reports from the Talmud that Isaiah was sawn asunder at the order of Manasseh, king of Judah. The account says that the prophet was placed between two boards for this dreadful act of brutality. Of Manasseh, Josephus reports: "But when his son Manasseh...had taken the kingdom, he departed from the conduct of his father, and fell into a course of life quite contrary thereto, and showed himself in his manners most wicked in all respects, and omitted no sort of impiety, but imitated those transgressions of the Israelites, by the commission of which against God, they had been destroyed; for he was so hardy as to defile the temple of God, and the city, and the whole country; for by setting out from a contempt of God, he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflowed with blood" (*Antiquities*, Book X, Chapter 3, 1, p.214).
 - (5) Some were tempted. Enticements to sin are difficult to endure; they often produce hardship and suffering if the individual withstands the temptation. This general problem came upon all those great men and women of faith in the ancient times, and upon all who would serve Christ today.
 - (6) Some were slain with the sword.
 - (a) 1 Kings 19:10: "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."
 - (b) Jeremiah 26:23: "And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people."
 - (7) The younger prophet was unpopular when he told the truth (1 Kings 13).
3. God's servants will reprove and rebuke sin and sinners, a most unpopular practice.
 - a. John the Baptizer was beheaded for this.
 - b. Paul was beaten for this.
 - c. Other apostles were beaten or killed.
 - d. The godly shall suffer persecution.

III. CONCLUSION:

A. Four Woes: Luke 6:24-26.

1. Woe to you that are rich.
 2. Woe to you that are full.
 3. Woe to them that laugh now.
 4. Woe to you when all men speak well of you.
- B. Serious thinking people will want to avoid these woes.
1. We ought to accept the Lord's estimation of these matters.
 2. We ought to obey the Lord, and follow him faithfully.
 3. Our sins will be covered by Christ's blood.
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Great Truths About Biblical Faith

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Basis of God's Dealings With Man Follows the Three-Fold Plan of Grace, Faith and Obedience.

GRACE ■ FAITH ■ OBEDIENCE Ephesians 2:8-9 ■ Philippians 2:12		
Grace (God's Part)	Faith (Man's Part: Jas. 2)	Blessing (God's Part)
Air	Breathe	Live
Water	Drink	Live
Food	Prepare, Eat	Live
Christ Offered: Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:8	Accept: Jn. 6:28-29; Ac. 16:21	Saves Jn. 3:14-18
Gospel: 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4	Accept: Mt. 7:21	We Are Accepted: Acts 10:34-35
Special Revelation Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:13	Hear, Obey Ac. 15:7; Rom. 8:2	Saved: Jas. 1:21; 1 Pt. 1:21
Noah: Gen. 6:8,14,22	Build Ark: Heb. 11:7	Live: 1 Pt. 3:21
Abraham: Gen. 12:1-3; 22:1ff	Obeded: Heb. 11:8-10	Justified: Jas. 2:21-24
Israel: Ex. 12-15	Crossed: Heb. 11:28-29	Saved: Ex. 14:13-16,30
Naaman: 2 Kgs. 5:1-14	Dipped Seven Times	Cleansed
Blind Man: Jn. 9:6-7	Washed	Sight Rcvd.
Paul: 1 Tim. 1:13-15	Obeded: Ac. 22:16; 26:19	Sins Washed: Ac. 22:16
Pentecostians: Ac. 2:36-47	Received Word: Ac. 2:41	Saved: Ac.2:38,47
Eunuch: Ac. 8:26-39	Obeded: Ac. 8:36-39	Rejoiced: Ac. 8:39
Teaches: Tit. 2:11-12	Hear: Rom. 10:17	Draws: Jn. 6:44-45
Great Com. Mt. 28:18-19; Mk. 16:15-16	Must Obey: Ac. 6:7	Saved: Heb. 5:8-9
Spiritual Feast Prepared: Lk. 14:16-24	Accept: Mt. 11:28-30	Saved: Rev. 22:17

B. The Above Chart Shows That:

1. By his grace, God offers certain blessings to his offspring.
2. Each individual is required to believe that God will provide the blessings.
3. God mandates that each believer obey the conditions on which the blessings are offered.

II. DISCUSSION.**A. Faith is Produced by Testimony.**

1. The more certain the testimony, the stronger the faith.
 - a. The testimony of our physical senses are usually reliable in their realm, but there are limitations.
 - (1) Every experienced nose will quickly recognized the smell of a skunk, but there are other aromas that may be too subtle for many of us to identify. Without the sense of smell we cannot identify the difference in taste between a piece of an onion and a piece of an apple.
 - (2) Our hearing is an invaluable aid, but we can still misunderstand some spoken words.
 - (3) We may consider our eyesight as the most valuable sense, but some things we see are not what they appear to be.
 - (4) The same can be true with our senses of touch and taste.
 - b. But testimony of our Creator's word is far more reliable and certain than our physical senses.
 2. God offers testimony to us which is directed to our mind.
 - a. Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 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."
 - d. Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
 - e. Luke 24:46-47: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - f. Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 3. How is an unbeliever to come to accept Bible facts as true?
 - a. The testimony of the Scriptures, with the abundance of internal and external evidence, will prove to an open mind that the Bible truly is from God.
 - b. Mark 16:15-20: "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. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - c. Acts 2:36-41: "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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."
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- d. 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."
 - e. 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."
 - f. 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."
 - g. Acts 8:5: "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."
 - 4. The written word contains evidence and testimony.
 - a. It provides 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. Sufficient evidence is presented to produce sound faith, which results in obedience, salvation, hope, and full trust in God.
 - 5. There are many internal and external proofs which lead to the undeniable conclusion that the Bible is from God! These proofs include the following:
 - a. Fulfilled prophecies.
 - b. Scientific and medical statements that could not have been known except of divine revelation.
 - c. The unified contents of the Scriptures.
 - d. Historical and geographical statements that required divine knowledge.
 - e. No uninspired person would have written the Bible (condemns himself, etc.).
 - f. Its indestructibility (it has always had many deadly enemies).
 - g. Its impartiality.
 - h. Its incomparable moral and ethical standards.
 - B. We Must Believe in the God of Heaven.
 - 1. There is no way to explain the existence of the universe and life without God.
 - 2. The incredible complexities of the universe and of life.
 - 3. To establish the inspiration of the Bible, automatically proves the existence of God. The brief arguments listed earlier certify the Word of God.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Psalms 19:1-3: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."
 - 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."
 - C. We Must Believe that Jesus is the One He Claimed To Be.
 - 1. John 8:21, 24: "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come....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. He was from above (Heaven), not from this world:
 - a. John 8:23: "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world;
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- I am not of this world.”
- b. John 1:14: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
 - c. John 6:38: “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”
3. He spoke the Father’s words:
- a. John 8:26: “I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.”
 - b. John 12:49-50: “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”
4. God was with him:
- a. John 8:29: “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”
 - b. John 14:10: “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”
5. He did what pleased the Father:
- a. John 8:29: “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”
 - b. Matthew 3:17: “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
 - c. Matthew 17:5: “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”
 - d. Philippians 2:8: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
6. We must believe in the deity Christ. All of the Old Testament system hinged on this truth.
- a. He existed in the beginning, before time.
 - (1) Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God [plural word in the Hebrew text] created the heaven and the earth."
 - (2) Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."
 - (3) John 17:5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."
 - b. Christ is therefore eternal.
 - (1) Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting."
 - (2) John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - (3) John 8:58: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."
 - (4) John 16:28: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."
 - (5) He possesses the glory that pertains to Deity.
 - c. It thrills our hearts to read the following passage and see the awesome and beautiful majesty of Deity described.
 - (1) Isaiah 6:1-5: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six
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wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

- (2) But John's account of the gospel shows that the Person Isaiah described is Christ! "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him" (John 12:41).
- d. If we reject the truth of our Lord's deity, what hope could we have? If he is not deity, what good could he do us? But faith in Christ will solve spiritual problems and questions:
 - (1) What must I do to be saved?
 - (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) Luke 24:46-47: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - (c) 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."
 - (2) How shall I worship?
 - (a) 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."
 - (b) Acts 2:42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
 - (c) 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."
 - (3) Which church?
 - (a) Matthew 16:13-19: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 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. 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."
 - (b) 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."
 - (c) Romans 16:16: "....The churches of Christ salute you."
 - (4) How shall I live?
 - (a) Colossians 3:17: "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."
 - (b) Titus 2:11-14: "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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

D. Faith Produces Obedience.

1. Consider these Cases:
 - a. Acts 8:5: “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.”
 - 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.”
2. One can obey from the heart God’s commands only if he has faith.
 - a. We repent, confess Christ, and are baptized into Christ because of faith:
 - (1) Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
 - (2) Acts 8:35-38: “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”
 - b. We love others, pray regularly, give generously, and worship in spirit and in truth because of faith.
3. Faith causes us to obey even when there is no apparent reason.
 - a. Abraham left Ur and journeyed to Canaan because he believed what God said (Gen. 12).
 - b. Noah built the ark because he believed God’s instruction—even though no universal flood had ever occurred before.
 - c. Penitent believers are baptized although there is no apparent reason to do so—except that God said do it.
4. We obey even when there is no apparent connection between the thing commanded and the result promised.
 - a. Israel marched around Jericho thirteen times, believing that God would demolish the walls when they did their part.
 - b. Naaman dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan, trusting that the God of Israel would cleanse him of his leprosy as he was told.
 - c. Baptism:
 - (1) 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.”
 - (2) Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
5. We obey even when the need is not apparent and is contrary to experience.
 - a. Noah knew he could trust God’s word regarding the coming flood.
 - b. The blind man went and washed in the pool of Siloam because the Lord told him to do so if he wanted to receive his sight (John 9).
 - c. The same is true with baptism.
6. Faith causes obedience to every command exactly as given by the Lord.
 - a. Noah and Moses followed blueprints when they constructed the ark and the tabernacle.
 - (1) Genesis 6:22: “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”
 - (2) Hebrews 8:5: “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.”
- b. The Lord requires that baptism be an immersion in water for remission the of sins.
 - c. He gave sufficient details regarding our worship, our work, and living the Christian life.
7. We obey even when the thing commanded results in self-denial and sacrifice.
- a. Shadrach and his two friends obeyed God in the face of the fiery furnace.
 - b. Moses, Abraham, Paul, and multitudes of others obeyed despite opposition and persecution.
 - (1) Hebrews 11:31-38: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”
 - (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.”
 - c. Dedicated saints give liberally of their time, money, energy, and happily spend their lives for the Lord’s sake.
 - (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) Philippians 3:20-21: “For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself” (ASV).
 - (4) 1 Peter 1:3-9: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

E. Faith Results in Unshakable Trust.

- 1. The testimony of experience teaches faithful Christians to trust in God.
 - a. Farmers plant their crops, trusting God to provide the means for their growth and fruitful harvest.
 - b. Experienced drivers take to the road, following the rules and exercising caution, trusting a safe arrival at their destination.
 - c. Those with money are willing to deposit it in banks, trusting that it will be there when they need it.
 - 2. But 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
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- 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.”
3. Trust God to do what we cannot do [the following illustrations are adapted from Willard Collins]:
- a. An experience of an elderly farmer and his wife illustrates the wisdom of trusting in Providence. The couple were on the way to worship one Sunday morning, and discussed how much they ought to put in the collection. They only had one nickle and two pennies. They decided to keep the two pennies and give the nickle. Later that day, on the way home, they met a stranger going the other way. The stranger stopped them and said, “You probably don’t remember me, but ten years ago, when you had the store, I bought some groceries on credit. Here is the fourteen dollars I owe you.” If a Christian lives right, God will take care of him.
 - b. James A. Harding, a gospel preacher of an earlier generation, was known for his trust in God. He was scheduled to begin a gospel meeting in lower Alabama the next day, but he only had ten cents to his name. He told his wife he would start out that Saturday morning and go as far as the dime would take him. He paid a nickle to take a streetcar to the Nashville railroad station. He had walked around the station a few minutes, when a friend met him unexpectedly. He gave him twenty dollars to be used in the Lord’s work. Such experiences were common with brother Harding.
4. We have every good reason to trust God to reward faithfulness:
- a. Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
 - b. 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.”
 - 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.”
- F. Without Faith, the Jews of John Eight Were Lost in Sin (John 8:21-30).
- 1. They rejected the Savior: “Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. 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 8:21-24).
 - a. Their unbelief caused them to misunderstand the Lord’s teachings:
 - (1) John 5:22: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”
 - (2) John 5:25: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”
 - (3) John 5:27: “And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”
 - b. Their stubborn unbelief caused them to die in their sins (John 8:24).
 - c. Our Lord offered the only remedy for sin—his blood:
 - (1) Hebrews 9:22: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”
 - (2) Hebrews 10:4: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”
 - (3) Matthew 26:28: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”
 - (4) Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering
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of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

- (5) Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”
- (6) Ephesians 1:7: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”
- (7) Colossians 1:14: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”
- d. Since unbelief is sinful, and no sin can enter Heaven, then unbelief will keep the unbeliever from entering the home of the soul.
 - (1) Revelation 21:8: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”
 - (2) 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.”
2. Unbelief will do the same thing today that it did in the first century.
 - a. It will cause one to reject the only Savior; if we do not believe in Christ, we will seek out another *savior*.
 - b. It will cause one to misunderstand the Lord's teachings—and reject Christ and ignore the Bible.
 - c. It will cause one to die in his sins—reject Christ, reject his blood, and retain the guilt of sin.
 - d. It will cause one to be lost; one cannot die in sin and go to Heaven.
3. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is the best remedy for unbelief:
 - a. Consider:
 - (1) John 8:28: “Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.”
 - (2) John 12:32-33: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”
 - b. The cross is the only means of salvation: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:1-4).
 - c. His resurrection is the final great proof of his deity: “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4).
 - d. The story of the cross, his burial and resurrection will make believers in every age.

G. 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: “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” (Heb. 11:6).

III. CONCLUSION.

A. Saving Faith Produces Hope.

1. Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
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- a. Substance [*hupostasis*]: that which stands under and gives support.
- b. Faith stands under, supports, and gives confidence in the things we hope for.
- c. Faith: a firm belief, an unshakable conviction in something.
2. The faith that causes us to surrender to the Lord's will is the only saving faith.
3. Faith gives us victory over the grave, which results in a glorified body, and the eternal reward of Heaven.
4. Faith is truly the foundation of our spiritual hope.

B. Do You Have This Faith?

1. A shallow, superficial faith is not sufficient: "As he spake these words, many believed on him" (John 8:30).
 - a. Many of that audience believed on him, but it was a weak, non-responsive faith.
 - b. They had not surrendered their will to his.
 - c. They were still children of the Devil: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).
2. The Bible gives many examples of believers who were unsaved.
 - a. Certain chief rulers among the Jews: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).
 - b. King Agrippa: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:27-28).
 - c. All of those who believe but do not obey: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:14-26).

C. Chart:

Examples of Conversion

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47

Case	Faith	Repent	Confess	Baptism	Saved
Acts 2		36-38		36-41	Remission
Acts 8:5-12	12			40524	
Acts 8:35-39	36-37		37	38	Rejoiced
Acts 9:17-18				18	Washed: Ac. 22:16
Ac. 10: 34-48	43			48	Remission
Ac. 16:30-33	31			33	Rejoiced
Ac. 16:13-15	14			15	
Teaching Rom 10:14	Faith: Jn. 8:24	Repent: Ac. 17:30	Confess: Rom 10:10	Baptism: Rom 6:3-4	Saved: 2 Tim 2:10

The Sheep of His Fold

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Following Story Comes From a Writer Unknown to Me:

1. "A gentleman traveling in Syria, relates how he stopped to watch three shepherds who were at a well watering their flocks. The three flocks were all mingled together at the watering place. The traveler could see no difference between them, and he wondered how they would get them separated again without great trouble.
2. "But presently one of the shepherds stood forth and called out, *Menah*, the Arabic for *Follow me*. Thirty sheep immediately separated themselves from the indiscriminate mass and began to follow the shepherd up the hill.
3. "A second shepherd called out, *Menah*, and a second flock separated and followed him, while the rest of the sheep remained as unconcerned as if no one had spoken at all.
4. "The traveler was so astonished that as he saw the third shepherd preparing to depart, laying his hand to his crook and beginning to gather a few dates fallen from a palm beneath which he had been resting, he stepped up to him and asked: '*Would your sheep follow me if I called them?*' The man shook his head. '*Give me your shepherd's cloak and crook and let me try.*' the traveler said. He even wound the shepherds turban round his head and standing forth began to cry, '*Menah, Menah!*' but no sheep stirred. They only blinked at him lazily in the sunshine.
5. "'Do they never follow any one but you?' asked the traveler. '*Only when a sheep is sick; then the silly creature follows any one,*' the shepherd said. [This excellent illustration came through Glann Lee, an excellent gospel preacher and long-time friend].

B. God's People Are Frequently Described in the Bible as Sheep With the Lord Depicted as the Shepherd.

1. Some might think it insulting to be referred to as a sheep.
 - a. Sheep are not known for their courage.
 - b. Sheep are not thought of as being very intelligent—they cannot foresee danger.
 - c. Sheep are known to stray and get lost—they need guidance and supervision.
 - d. Sheep are not able to defend themselves very well—they need the shepherd's help.
 - e. Sheep are not known for their stamina in running long distances.
 - f. Sheep can get mighty dirty and may smell very bad—can you imagine a sheep wallowing in mud!
2. But sheep have well-known, pleasing characteristics.
 - a. They are gentle.
 - b. We think of them as being meek.
 - c. They are not mean and aggressive [some buck sheep have been made mean by young boys].
 - d. They follow their shepherd's voice—they trust him for protection and provisions.
 - e. They are usually harmless.
3. The traditional way of tending sheep required the services of a shepherd; without sheep, a shepherd cannot be a shepherd—the flock and the shepherd go together.
 - a. Christians are spoken of in the Bible as sheep.
 - (1) Psalms 95:7: "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."
 - (2) 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. Christ is set forth as being our Good Shepherd.
 - (1) John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
 - (2) 1 Peter 2:25: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

II. SHEEP IN THE BIBLE.

A. Tending to Sheep in Bible Times.

1. The sheepfold was a place of protection for the sheep at night and perhaps in times of danger.
 - a. "At night the sheep are driven into a sheepfold if they are in a district where there is danger from robbers or wild beasts. These folds are simple walled enclosures (Num 32:16; Judg 5:16; 2 Chron 32:28; Ps 78:70; Zeph 2:6; John 10:1). On the top of the wall is heaped thorny brushwood as a further safeguard. Sometimes there is a covered hut in the corner for the shepherd. Where there is no danger the sheep huddle together in the open until daylight, while the shepherd watches over them (Gen 31:39; Luke 2:8). In the winter time caves are sought after (1 Sam 24:3; Zeph 2:6). The antiquity of the use of some of the caves for this purpose is indicated by the thick deposit of potassium nitrate formed from the decomposition of the sheep dung" [ISBE, BibleSoft].
 - b. Sometimes thieves would try to climb over the rock wall to steal sheep, a practice to which our Lord made reference in John 10:1: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."
2. Sheep were an important feature of the Hebrews and others of that ancient time.
 - a. The first mention of sheep is found in Genesis 4:2: "And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."
 - b. Sheep were used in religious sacrifices from the early periods of human history.
 - (1) Genesis 4:4: "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."
 - (2) Exodus 20:24: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."
 - (3) Exodus 29:28: "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel: for it is an heave offering; and it shall be an heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, even their heave offering unto the LORD."
 - (4) Leviticus 9:3: "And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a kid of the goats for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt offering."
 - (5) Leviticus 12:6: "And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest."
 - c. Sheep was a prominent source of food: "Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses" (1 Sam. 25:18).
 - d. Wool was used for clothing and was used in the covering for the tabernacle (Lev 13:47; Ex. 25:5).
 - e. Sheep-shearing is referred to in Genesis 31:19: "And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's."
 - f. Sheepdogs were used in ancient times to help tend flocks: "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock" (Job 30:1).
 - g. We have this from *Smith's Bible Dictionary*: Shepherds in Palestine and the East generally go before their flocks, which they induce to follow by calling to them, comp. John 10:4; Ps 77:20; 80:1, though they also drive them. Gen 33:13. The following quotation from Hartley's "Researches in Greece and the Levant," p. 321, is strikingly illustrative of the allusions in John 10:1-16, "Having had my attention directed last night to the words in John 10:3. I asked my man if it was usual in Greece to give names to the sheep. He informed me that it was, and that the sheep obeyed the shepherd when he called them by their names. This morning I had an opportunity of verifying the truth of this remark. Passing by a flock of sheep I asked the shepherd the same question which I had put to the servant, and he gave me the same answer. I then had him call one of his sheep. He did so, and it instantly left its pasturage and its companions and ran up to the hands of the shepherd with signs of pleasure and with a prompt obedience which I had never before observed in any other animal. It is also true in this country that a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him.

- The shepherd told me that many of his sheep were still wild, that they had not yet learned their names, but that by teaching them they would all learn them."
3. Great men of the Old Testament were shepherds:
 - a. Abraham: "And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (Gen. 13:5-7).
 - b. Isaac and Jacob and Jacob's twelve sons: "And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers" (Gen. 47:3).
 - c. Moses—"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb" (Ex. 3:1).
 - d. David—1 Samuel 16:11.
 - e. The prophet Amos: "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake" (Amos 1:1).
 4. Christ is pictured in the New Testament as the Good Shepherd and his followers as his sheep.
 - a. John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
 - b. John 10:27-29: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

III. THE PARABLE [ALLEGORY] OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD—JOHN 10.

A. John 10:1-5:

1. Verses 1-5: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."
2. The ancient sheepfolds were open enclosures, consisting of rock walls with a door or gate through which the sheep and the shepherd could enter. As we have seen, the top of the walls were often covered with briars to discourage the entrance of wild animals or thieves.
3. The porter was the gate keeper who watched the sheep at night; the shepherd returned the next morning to take the flock to pasture and water. If anyone tried to enter the sheepfold by climbing over the wall, his intentions were evil—to steal or kill.
 - a. There was only one proper way to enter—through the door. The nature of one who tried to climb in over the wall would be obvious—he had evil intentions.
 - b. The shepherd was known by the porter and would be allowed to enter; the sheep knew the shepherd and would happily follow him. The sheep will not follow a stranger. "Dr. Thomason, in his great work, *The Land and the Book*, gives this vivid description of the matter from his own observations in the Holy Land: 'They are so tame and so trained that they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold, or from their houses in the villages just where he pleases. As there are many flocks in such a place as this, each one takes a different path, and it is his business to find pasture for them. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of corn which lie so temptingly on either side. Any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind them of his presence. They know his voice and follow on; but if a stranger calls, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and, if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. This is not the fanciful costume of a parable; it is simple fact. I

have made the experiment repeatedly" [Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Commentaries].

- c. The nature of a false teacher may be seen by his message; is it the true message of God's word or is it a message of error? "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:15-20). The fruit of a false teacher is his message.

4. The point of the Lord's story was to expose false teachers. The Pharisees and others false teachers had taken over God's sheep (the Jewish people), leading them away from God's truth (the Mosaic Law). Our Lord came to seek and save those who were lost (Luke 19:10). The religious false teachers hated and opposed him. False teachers of our day have led countless millions away from the truth, and hate and oppose us for teaching the truth. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

B. John 10:6-10:

1. "This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."
2. Those who came before our Lord arrived, claiming to be the true shepherd, were thieves and robbers. Here we understand him to especially have in mind the Pharisees and other false teachers of the time. From the time of Malachi to John the Baptizer there were many false prophets. All of these had contributed to the nation's apostasy. But our Lord speaks of some of the sheep who did not let themselves be led astray by the false teachers. These were relatively few in number.
3. The thieves and robbers came to steal and kill, but the Good Shepherd came that the sheep might have the more abundant life. Brother Woods offers this: "The word 'abundantly,' means bountiful blessings overflowing in extent—the rich supply only deity can give. (Psalm 33:1ff.) The Greek term used suggests the idea of a continuous overflowing—a never-ceasing supply of life for every faithful soul. All of this the thief would take away. We must not lose sight of the fact that the 'thief' in this narrative is the person who teaches that the way of salvation is some other than that Jesus gave. These specifically described here were selfishly motivated but the ones who are misled are lost whatever the motivation may be. The sheep which follow a stranger's voice are destroyed though themselves unaware of the motives of the false shepherd; their honesty and sincerity will be of no avail to them at the last great day" [Gospel Advocate Commentaries].

C. John 10:11-15:

1. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."
2. The dedicated shepherd would be willing to risk his life for the sheep. The mere hireling would flee when the wolves attacked—he was more interested in his own safety than in the welfare of the sheep. Our Lord is not like the hireling, but is aptly depicted as the Good Shepherd. He gave his life on the cross for the salvation of all who will believe and obey his will. He will protect them in this life, in keeping with the Father's will, and will bring them into eternal salvation in the next world.

- a. Matthew 20:28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
- b. 1 John 3:16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."
- c. 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."

D. John 10:26-29:

1. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."
2. Because these people our Lord is addressing did not believe in him, they were not his sheep. The Lord's sheep gladly hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. These unbelievers refused to believe in him thus would not follow. These had been deceived by false teachers. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4).
3. The sheep that belong to the Lord:
 - a. Will hear his voice.
 - b. He knows them.
 - c. They follow him.
 - d. He will give them eternal life.
 - e. They shall never perish.
 - f. No one shall snatch them out of his hand.
4. The blessings [eternal life, never perish, not be taken from God's hand] are conditional. The sheep hear the voice of the Lord and follow him. If they cease to listen to Christ or quit following him, they forfeit the blessings. We must continue to hear and follow.

E. John 10:16.

1. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."
2. The Lord addressed these remarks to Jewish people. The "other sheep" obviously would be someone other than Jewish—the only alternative would be Gentiles.
3. God had always intended to make Gentiles who would obey his will to be part of his great plan.
 - a. Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
 - b. Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."
 - c. Acts 2:39: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."
 - d. 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."
 - e. Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the

- promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”
- f. Acts 11:19-26: “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. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 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. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 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.”
 - g. Ephesians 2:11-16: “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 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; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”
 - h. 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.”
 - i. 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.”
4. Despite the fact that the obedient Gentiles would be brought in, there still would be only one Shepherd and only one fold.
- a. The Lord has only one kingdom.
 - (1) Daniel 2:44: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”
 - (2) Hebrews 12:28: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”
 - b. The Lord has only one body—“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4).
 - c. The Lord has only one temple.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: “Know ye not that ye are **the** temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile **the** temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”
 - (2) Ephesians 2:16-22: “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 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
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habitation of God through the Spirit.”

- d. The Lord has only one church—“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 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. 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” (Matt. 16:16-19).

IV. PROFITABLE APPLICATIONS.

A. Listen to the Shepherd’s voice.

1. The Shepherd knows his sheep: "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.....I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own....And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:3,14,16).
2. The Shepherd’s sheep know the *voice* of the Shepherd.
 - a. John 10:27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”
 - b. John 8:31: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”
 - c. John 12:48-49: “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. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.”
 - d. 1 Thessalonians 5:21: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

B. Follow the Shepherd Wherever He May Lead.

1. The Shepherd’s sheep follow only him.
 - a. John 10:4: “And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”
 - b. Psalms 23:1-2: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.”
 - c. Compare: “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).
2. More is involved than just hearing.
 - a. Luke 6:46: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”
 - b. Mark 4:14-20: “The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.”
3. Some fail to follow him.
 - a. 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.”
 - b. John 12:42-43: “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved

the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

4. Refuse to Follow the Stranger’s Voice.

- a. John 10:5: “And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”
- b. John 10:8: “All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.”

C. Always Remember That Great Blessings Come By Following the Good Shepherd.

1. The Good shepherd gives complete safety and contentment.

- a. John 10:9-10: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
- b. Psalms 23:4-6: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

2. The Good Shepherd gives peace.

- a. John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
- b. 1 Peter 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

V. **CONCLUSION.**

A. The Voice You Follow Determines Whose Sheep You Are.

1. Whose *voice* are you following?
2. Are you listening to Jesus?
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Revelation 3:20-22: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
3. Hear what Jesus says about...
 - a. Faith: “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).
 - b. Repentance: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).
 - c. Confession: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32).
 - d. Baptism: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).
 - e. Being faithful: “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22).

B. The Shepherd Psalm:

1. Psalms 23:1-6: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely

goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

2. The Basque Shepherd and the Shepherd Psalm [Condensed from The National Wool Grower - James K. Wallace, Reader's Digest, March 1958].
 - a. Old Ferando D'Alfonso is a Basque herder employed by one of the big Nevada sheep outfits. He is rated as one of the best sheep rangers in the state, and he should be; for back of him are at least 20 generations of Iberian shepherds. But D'Alfonso is more than a sheepherder; he is a patriarch of his guild, the traditions and secrets of which have been handed down from generation to generation, just as were those of the Damascus steel temperers and other trade guilds of the pre-medieval age. Despite a 30 year absence from his homeland he is still full of the religious fervor of his native hills.
 - b. I sat with him one night under the clear, starry skies, his sheep bedded down beside a pool of sparkling water. As we were preparing to curl up in our blankets, he suddenly began a dissertation in a jargon of Greek and Basque. When he had finished, I asked him what he had said. In reply he began to quote in English the Twenty-third Psalm. There on the desert I learned the shepherd's literal interpretation of this beautiful poem.
 - c. "David and his ancestors," said D'Alfonso, "knew sheep and their ways, and David has translated a sheep's musing into simple words. The daily repetition of this Psalm fills the sheepherder with reverence for his calling. Our guild takes this poem as a loadstone to guide us. It is our bulwark when the days are hot or stormy; when the nights are dark; when wild animals surround our bands. Many of its lines are the statements of the simple requirements and actual duties of a Holy Land shepherd, whether he lives today or followed the same calling 6000 years ago. Phrase by phrase, it has a well-understood meaning for us."
 - d. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.* "Sheep instinctively know," said D'Alfonso, "that ere they have been folded for the night the shepherd has planned out their grazing for the morrow. It may be that he will take them back over the same range; it may be that he will go to a new grazing ground. They do not worry. His guidance has been good in the past and they have faith in the future because they know he has their well-being in view."
 - e. *He maketh me to lie down in green pasture.* "Sheep graze from around 3:30 o'clock in the morning until about ten. They then lie down for three or four hours and rest," said D'Alfonso. "When they are contentedly chewing their cuds, the shepherd knows they are putting on fat. Consequently the good shepherd starts his flocks out in the early hours on the rougher herbage, moving on through the morning to the richer, sweeter grasses, and finally coming with the band to a shady place for its forenoon rest in fine green pastures, best grazing of the day. Sheep, while resting in such happy surroundings, feel contentment."
 - f. *He leadeth me beside still waters.* "Every shepherd knows," said the Basque, "that sheep will not drink gurgling water. There are many small springs high in the hills of the Holy Land, whose waters run down the valleys only to evaporate in the desert sun. Although the sheep need the water, they will not drink from these fast-flowing streams. The shepherd must find a place where rocks or erosion have made a little pool, or else he fashions with his hands a pocket sufficient to hold at least a bucketful."
 - g. *He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Names' sake.* "Holy Land sheep exceed in herding instinct the Spanish Merino or the French Rambouillet," went on D'Alfonso. "Each takes his place in the grazing line in the morning and keeps the same position throughout the day. Once, however, during the day each sheep leaves its place and goes to the shepherd. Whereupon the shepherd stretches out his hand, as the sheep approaches with expectant eyes and mild little baas. The shepherd rubs its nose and ears, scratches its chin, whispers affectionately into its ears. The sheep, meanwhile rubs against his leg or, if the shepherd is sitting down, nibbles at his ear, and rubs its check against his face. After a few minutes of this communion with the master, the sheep return to its place in the feeding line."
 - h. *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil. Thy rod and Thy*

staff they comfort me. “There is an actual Valley of the Shadow of Death in Palestine, and every shepherd from Spain to Dalmatia know of it. It is south of the Jericho Road leading from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and is a narrow defile through a mountain range. Climatic and grazing conditions make it necessary for the sheep to be moved through this valley for seasonal feeding each year.

- (1) “The valley is four and a half miles long. Its side walls are over 1500 feet high in places and it is only ten or 12 feet wide at the bottom. Travel through the valley is dangerous, because its floor, badly eroded by cloudbursts, has gullies seven or eight feet deep. Actual footing on solid rock is so narrow in many places that a sheep cannot turn around, and it is an unwritten law of shepherds that flocks must go up the valley in the morning hours and down toward the eventide, lest the flocks meet in the defile. Mules have not been able to make the trip for centuries, but sheep and goat herders from earliest Old Testament days have maintained a passage for their stock.
 - (2) “About halfway through the valley the walk crosses from one side to the other at a place where the path is cut in two by an eight-foot gully. One section of the path is about 18 inches higher than the other; the sheep must jump across it. The shepherd stands at this break and coaxes or forces the sheep to make the leap. If a sheep slips and lands in the gully, the shepherd’s rod is brought into play. The old-style crook is encircled around a large sheep’s neck or a small sheep’s chest, and it is lifted to safety. If a more modern narrow crook is used, the sheep is caught about the hoofs and lifted up to the walk.
 - (3) “Many wild dogs lurk in the shadows of the valley looking for prey. After a band of sheep has entered the defile, the leader may come upon such a dog. Unable to retreat, the leader baas a warning. The shepherd, skilled in throwing his staff, hurls it at the dog and knocks the animal into the washed-out gully where it is easily killed. Thus the sheep have learned to fear no evil even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for their master is there to aid them and protect them from harm.”
- i. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.* “David’s meaning is a simple one,” said D’Alfonso, “when conditions on the Holy Land sheep ranges are known. Poisonous plants abound which are fatal to grazing animals. Each spring the shepherd must be constantly alert. When he finds the plants he takes his mattock and goes on ahead of the flock, grubbing out every stock and root he can see. As he digs out the stocks, he lays them upon little stone pyres, some which were built by shepherds in Old Testament days, and by the morrow they are dry enough to burn. In the meantime, the sheep are led into the newly prepared pasture, which is now free from poisonous plants, and, in the presence of their deadly plant enemies, they eat in peace.”
 - j. *Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.* “At every sheepfold there is a big earthen bowl of olive oil and a large stone jar of water. As the sheep come in for the night they are led to a gate. The shepherd lays his rod across the top of the gateway just higher than the backs of his sheep. As each sheep passes in single file, he quickly examines it for briars in the ears, snags in the cheek, or weeping of the eyes from dust or scratches. When such conditions are found, he drops the rod across the sheep’s back and it steps out of line.
 - (1) “Each sheep’s wounds are carefully cleaned. Then the shepherd dips his hand into the olive oil and anoints the injury. A large cup is dipped into the jar of water, kept cool by evaporation in the unglazed pottery, and is brought out — never half full but always overflowing. The sheep will sink its nose into the water clear to the eyes, if fevered, and drink until fully refreshed.
 - (2) “When all the sheep are at rest, the shepherd lays his staff on the ground within reach in case it is needed for protection of the flock during the night, wraps himself in his heavy woolen robe and lies down across the gateway, facing the sheep, for his night’s repose.
 - k. “So,” concluded D’Alfonso, “after all the care and protection the shepherd has given it, a sheep may well soliloquize in the twilight, as translated into words by David: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*”

Are You Deceived?

Gal. 6:6-10

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. The Passage for This Lesson is One With Several Important Truths:

1. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:6-10).
2. The central lesson in the passage is "Sow to the Spirit."
3. Three major thoughts are present in this reading:
 - a. Christians are to support teachers: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (verse 6),
 - b. Christians will reap what they sow: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (verses 7-8).
 - c. Christians are to sow to the Spirit, and not sow to the flesh: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (verses 9-10).

B. In Connection with These Points, Paul Commands Us Not to Be Deceived.

1. This shows the possibility that even the most faithful Christians can be deceived.
2. It implies that there is a danger which results if we allow ourselves to be deceived.

II. DISCUSSION: What does it mean to be deceived? How may we be deceived?

A. The Word *Deceive* is From the Greek Word *planao* ("planet"): "To Go Astray, to Wander.

1. We can be led astray; we can lead another astray; we can lead ourself astray.
2. This word is used in Jude 13 (translated *wandering*): "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; *wandering* stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."
3. Our Lord, the Apostle Paul, and the inspired James all taught that: "We can be led astray; we can be deceived."
 - a. Matthew 18:12: "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"
 - b. Matthew 24:4-5: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."
 - c. Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
 - d. James 1:16: "Do not err, my beloved brethren."
 - e. James 5:19: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him."

B. The Possibility of Being Deceived Is a Real Danger to Us All.

1. It is forcefully shown by fact of the command given in our text (Gal. 6:7).
2. There are many Bible examples of people being deceived:
 - a. Eve:
 - (1) "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat? (Gen. 3:4-6).
 - (2) "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds

should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (1 Cor. 11:3).

- b. Isaac was deceived by his wife and son Jacob: “And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed” (Gen. 27:4-27).
- c. Jacob was deceived by Laban, who gave him Leah (instead of Rachel), and by his own sons, who beguiled him into thinking that Joseph was dead (Gen. 37).
- d. The old prophet deceived (lied to) the younger prophet (1 Kings 13).

3. Even honesty, zeal, and sincerity do not guarantee unerring correctness.

C. One May Be Deceived By Many Things:

- 1. Other people can deceive us: “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matt. 24:4).
 - a. False teachers can lead us astray by their false doctrines: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).
 - b. False teachers often have more zeal than we do; they appear very religious, spiritual, and concerned:
 - (1) 2 Timothy 3:5: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”
 - (2) 2 Timothy 3:13: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”
 - (3) Matthew 7:15: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”
 - c. We must put these teachers to the test, and examine their doctrines and practices, using the New Testament as the standard.

- (1) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
- (2) 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
- (3) 1 Peter 4:11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
- (4) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

D. We Can Be Deceived By Our Own Hearts.

1. The heart must be guarded, guided, and controlled:
 - a. Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."
 - b. Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee."
 - c. Matthew 12:34: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."
 - d. Matthew 15:19: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
 - e. 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."
 - f. Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
2. We can be influenced in the wrong direction by our own opinions, personal likes, feelings, family, fellow-workers, and friends.
3. One of the common errors we are prone to make is to decide on some idea or course of action, and then look for proof or support for our decision. We might even try to rationalize some verse of Scripture to justify our conclusion.
4. If we have an improper attitude toward the truth, we can deceive ourselves.
 - a. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12: "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (NKJ).
 - b. Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." At my request, a sectarian tried to give an interpretation of this passage in something like this fashion: "One who believes on Christ is saved, and he may be baptized if he decides to do so." He would not accept the plain words of the text, thus continued in his self-delusion.
 - c. 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." Those have accepted instrumental music in worship have deluded themselves with spurious rationalizations and faulty interpretations, and will not perceive the obvious conclusion of this passage.
5. Individuals may not properly weigh scriptural evidence, and reach a wrong conclusion. There are those who desperately want women to take leading parts in the worship and leadership of the local church. However, since the apostle wrote directly in opposition to this agenda, they may conclude that "Paul hated women!" But Paul wrote the commandments of God: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37. ASV).

E. The Following Cases Identify Several Matters in Which We May Become Deceived.

1. We can be deluded into thinking that honesty and sincerity are sufficient requirement to go to Heaven.
 - a. Acts 23:1: "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all

- good conscience before God until this day.”
- b. Acts 26:9-11: “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”
 - c. Cornelius was a good man, his honesty and sincerity are beyond reproach, and he was a worshipper of God, yet he needed something else: “And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:13-14).
2. Some have developed the theory that being a good moral person is sufficient to be saved and go to Heaven. Again, Cornelius was such, but he was not saved.
 - a. Acts 10:2: “A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”
 - b. Acts 10:22: “And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.”
 - c. If a good moral character was all that was necessary for one to be saved and go to Heaven, why did Jesus have to die? “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).
 3. Others may delude themselves to the point of believing that the unrighteous will somehow inherit the kingdom of God.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”
 - b. Colossians 1:12-14: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”
 4. We might deceive ourselves into believing that we can rub shoulders with evil companions and practices without contaminating our souls.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:33: “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (ASV).
 - b. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, And ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (ASV).
 5. Another danger is found in thinking that being a hearer only is enough to please God.
 - a. Ezekiel 33:31-33: “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.”
 - b. 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
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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.”

6. Some get the notion one can reach such a level of spirituality that he can live above sin. One cannot believe this doctrine and believe the Bible at the same time.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 10:12: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”
 - b. 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.”
 - c. 1 John 1:8: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
7. Another faulty view is that one can have God’s favor while rejecting God’s word.
 - a. 2 Samuel 12:9-10: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.”
 - b. Galatians 1:6-12: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
 - c. Hebrews 5:8-9: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”
 - d. 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.”
8. There are those who have deluded themselves to the point that they think they can get away with mocking God.
 - a. Galatians 6:7: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”
 - b. Ecclesiastes 8:11: “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.”
 - c. 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.”
 - d. Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21-22; 2 Kings 9), as well as Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), learned the hard way that God cannot be mocked with impunity.

F. Other Items Can Be Added to the List:

1. That there will be no day of harvest (judgment):
 - 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. Galatians 6:7-8: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

- c. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."
 - d. 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."
 - e. Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
2. That the sowing we do now has no relation to the future harvest:
- a. Galatians 6:8: "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
 - b. 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...."
 - c. That we can sow one thing and reap another:
 - (1) Romans 2:6-11: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God."
 - (2) 2 Timothy 4:14: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works."
 - d. That one can be religious but fail to bridle the tongue, and be pleasing to God.
 - (1) James 1:26: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."
 - (2) 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."
 - (3) James 2:1-12: "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Harken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."
3. That we can exalt ourselves, think more highly of our own worth, and belittle others, and retain God's good pleasure.
- a. Galatians 6:3: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."
 - b. Romans 12:3: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath
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dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

- c. Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”
- d. 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.”

III. CONCLUSION:

A. Deception Can Be Avoided.

1. The more we know of God’s word, the more faith we will possess—if we study sincerely.
 - a. Our study must be regular, careful, and prayerful.
 - b. We must adapt our attitudes, our thinking, our words, and our actions to what we learn.
2. By cultivating a genuine love for truth, we will earnestly desire to learn the whole truth, and shun every matter that is contrary to the truth.
3. By acknowledging that God’s word cannot be ignored or perverted.
 - a. Galatians 1:8-9: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
 - b. James 2:10: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”
 - c. 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.”
 - d. 1 Peter 4:11: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

B. Paul’s Profound Statements in Galatians 6:6-10 Cannot Be Over-Emphasized—We Must Not Be Deceived.

1. We have examined Paul’s inspired message, seen the meaning, and learned that anyone can be deceived.
 2. We have looked at the means by which deception can come, and had surveyed some cases of delusion.
 3. Having studied these matters, is there anything in your life that ought to be changed?
 4. Do you need to be restored?
 5. Do you need to become a Christian?
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Take Off That Weight!

I. INTRODUCTION.

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" (Heb. 12:1-3).
2. A significant number of Jewish Christians were on verge of turning back to the Mosaic Law; this was the occasion for the writing of the marvelous Book of Hebrews.
3. The inspired writer was guided to pen this epistle to prevent their apostasy.

B. The Writer Sought to Encourage the Saints to Continued Faithfulness.

1. The approach to motivating them to remain faithful was first to show the superiority of Christ.
 - a. Christ is superior to any of the angels.
 - (1) Hebrews 1:4-8: "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."
 - (2) Hebrews 1:13-14: "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"
 - (3) Hebrews 2:14-18: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."
 - b. He is superior to Moses.
 - (1) Hebrews 3:1-3: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house."
 - (2) Hebrews 3:5-6: "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."
 - c. Christ is superior to Moses' Law.
 - (1) Hebrews 8:6-13: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them

out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

- (2) Hebrews 9:12: “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”
 - (3) Hebrews 10:1-4: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”
 - (4) Acts 13:38-39: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”
- d. Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood.
- (1) Hebrews 9:1-10: “Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”
 - (2) Heb 9:11-17: “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 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.”
 - (3) Hebrews 9:24-28: “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world:
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but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

- e. The blessings Christ offers and the hope he extends are superior to those provided by the Mosaic Law.

- (1) Hebrews 8:6: “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”
- (2) Hebrews 7:19: “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”
- (3) 1 Peter 1:3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

- 2. He did so by discussing the examples of ancient saints who remained faithful despite the struggles, hardships and persecutions they faced (Heb. 11).

II. DISCUSSION: Weights Which Must Be Laid Aside Include:

A. We must Lay Aside Every Evil Practice.

- 1. Our text speaks of “the sin which doth so easily beset us.” In the context, that sin is probably the sin of unbelief (the writer has spoken of faith throughout chapter eleven, and the subject of unbelief has been discussed).
 - a. This sin is especially emphasized in 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.”
 - b. It is taught frequently:
 - (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.”
- 2. Each individual has some sin [s] to which he is especially tempted—everyone has some special weakness. What would be a great weakness to one, might not have any attraction to another. In either case, it must be set aside!

B. We Must Also Lay Aside Every False Doctrine and Unscriptural Practice.

- 1. God’s Word places definite restrictions on beliefs and practices.
 - a. Galatians 1:8-9: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
 - b. James 2:10: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”
 - c. 2 John 1:9-11: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”
 - d. 1 Corinthians 4:6: “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other” (ASV).
 - e. 1 Peter 4:11: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him

- do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”
2. We must have Biblical authority for every belief and practice.
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Colossians 3:17: “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.”
 3. The present world is characterized by confusion, disturbance and uncertainty.
 - a. Much of this is caused by the failure of men to recognize the same authority.
 - (1) There is no confusion in the economic world when all use the same weights and measures.
 - (2) There is unity instead of confusion in the sports world when all those involved will abide by the rules which pertain to their sport.
 - b. The political world is sorely divided, and that is due to the various parties following different standards.
 - c. The religious world is horribly splintered because the participants do not hold to the same standard of authority.
 - (1) There would be no religious division if all would heed God's word.
 - (2) Our study will show that the Bible is the only standard of religious authority today that God has given mankind.
 - (3) It is possible for us to know the difference between matters of faith and matters of opinion, or else there could never be even the possibility of unity of belief and practice.
 - d. Authority in religion derives from the author of that religion. Even false religions appeal to some authority. Moslems look to the Koran; Mormons bow before the Book of Mormon; denominations follow their Creeds, Disciplines, or Confessions.
 4. Authority is the right to command and expect obedience.
 - a. Inherent in authority is the power to reward obedience and punish disobedience.
 - b. This right obtains by virtue of the office, position, or relation of the one holding it.
 - (1) God has authority over us because he is the Creator; we are his offspring.
 - (2) He brought us into being and provides for us; we depend on him.
 - (3) Acts 17:24-28: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
 - (4) Matthew 5:45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - (5) 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. Authority divides into two categories:
 - (1) Primary authority, which rests with the one who has the right to command.
 - (2) Delegated authority, which is given by the holder of authority to subordinates.
- C. We Must Lay Aside the Old Testament as an Operative Law.
1. It was replaced by the New Testament; it was “nailed to cross” when our Savior died.
 - 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.”
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- 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."
- c. 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."
- 2. The Old Testament is very useful to us today for the 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. The New Covenant is now in effect, and applicable to every accountable person.
 - 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 to keep the Sabbath or the Old Testament feast days, nor do we offer animal sacrifices.
 - a. Romans 7:1-6: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."
 - (1) "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (vs. 6).
 - (a) The apostle Paul draws a contrast here with verse five. During the time when the Law was

- in effect, the passions (motions) of sin held sway; but now people are delivered (discharged) from the law of Moses.
- (b) Paul describes their deliverance from the law as their being dead to it. When one is dead to something, he is separated from it. The idea of *separation* is inherent in the word *death*: "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26).
- (2) He depicts their relationship to the Law as "being held" by it. But now they are released (delivered; discharged; cleared) from its hold.
- b. "In the oldness of the letter" is parallel with "in the flesh" (verse 5); each of these phrases refers to the Old Covenant (the Law of Moses). It is opposite to the "newness of spirit," which refers to the New Covenant. "The obedience to the Jewish law did not necessarily require the service of the spirit, or from the heart. Under Christ all service must be from the heart. The weakness of the law was that it condemned sin, but did not enlist and purify the heart" (Lipscomb, p.130).
- (1) These same descriptive phrases (*letter* and *spirit*) are used in 2 Corinthians 3 to draw a series of contrasts between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ. Some have taken a shallow view of these statements, drawing the erroneous conclusion that the Old Law required specific and minute obedience, but that the New Law demands only that we heed the *spirit* of the requirement. But the New Covenant is not less demanding than the old (Matt. 5:21 ff). In fact, it is more demanding.
- (a) Matthew 5:27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
- (b) Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need."
- (2) 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (ASV).
- (3) Galatians 1:6-12: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- (4) Hebrews 2:1-4: "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; 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; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
- (5) 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
- c. Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."
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D. We Must Lay Aside All of the *Acceptable* 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.”
 - a. Covetousness is not frowned on by many, and is not considered as gross. Rather, it is condoned and encouraged. But to live in these sins will result in condemnation!
 - b. Luke 12:15-21: “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”
2. Romans 13:13-14: “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Three couplets of polite sins named:
 - a. Rioting [revelling] and drunkenness.
 - b. Chambering and wantonness [sexual misconduct].
 - c. Strife and envying.
3. Sin is progressive: it spreads and deepens:
 - a. Proverbs 30:20: “Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.”
 - 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. Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - d. Psalms 1:1-2: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

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.”
 - a. We are to put away **all malice**.
 - (1) The word for malice is translated “wickedness” in the ASV. The word Peter used [*kakian*] means evil of all kinds, but here reference is to the desire to injure another.
 - (2) “The word ‘malice’ we commonly apply now to a particular kind of evil, denoting extreme enmity of heart, ill-will, a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification, or from a spirit of revenge—Webster. The Greek word, however, includes evil of all kinds” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - b. We are to put away **all guile**.
 - (1) Guile is the practice of craftiness for the purpose of hurting another or achieving some selfish

end. The word carries the idea of catching with a baited trap or hook. The word is from a Greek term which means a bait for fish (literally); any snare, cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching; any trick or crafty scheme; wile, treachery.

- (2) Deceitfulness is strictly forbidden as sinful, along with all half-truths and scheming. "Behind-the-scenes-maneuvering" among members of the church is odious and sinful.
- (3) Guile is the opposite of sincerity.
 - (a) 1 Peter 2:22: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." [This was said about Christ, our model].
 - (b) 1 Peter 3:10: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile."
 - (c) John 1:47: "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"
- c. We are to put away **hypocrisies**.
 - (1) This word comes from an old word for stage-player, an actor, one who is merely playing a part. An actor plays a role; he is putting on a show for the entertainment of an audience. Though his words may express great love or anger, they are not intended to be sincerely meant.
 - (2) A hypocrite assumes a role that does not present his true nature. He hides his wicked purposes under the appearance of doing right.
 - (a) Mark 12:38-40: "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."
 - (b) Matthew 6:2: "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - (c) Matthew 6:5: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - (d) Matthew 6:16: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - (e) Matthew 24:51: "And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - (f) Matthew 15:7-8: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."
 - (g) Matthew 23:13-15: "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."
 - (h) Matthew 23:23: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."
 - (i) Matthew 23:25: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."
 - (j) Matthew 23:27: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's

bones, and of all uncleanness.”

(k) Matthew 23:29: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous.”

(l) A Christian must not merely appear to be following Christ, he must be sincerely following him in reality.

d. We must put away **envies**.

(1) Envy usually develops because of possessions or some other material situation. No one envies a poor man; neither does anyone envy one who is in ill-health, in prison, or in some other dire circumstance. Envy is directed toward one who is well blessed with material wealth or with some other desirable possession, circumstance, beauty, or advantage.

(2) Envy is a feeling of unhappiness because another has that which one desires for himself. This sinful attitude is the root of many evils.

(a) Envy was one of the sins behind the killing of Christ: “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Matt. 27:18).

(b) Envy on the part of the ten brothers moved them to sell Joseph into slavery: “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him” (Acts 7:9).

(c) Envy caused certain unbelievers to oppose Paul: “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people” (Acts 17:5).

(3) Envy is a mark of carnality: “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Cor. 3:3).

(4) Envy is identified as one of the works of the flesh: “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” (Gal. 5:21).

e. We must put away **all evil speakings**.

(1) There is a difference in speaking evil and speaking of one’s evil. To speak evil of another is to utter slanderous, defamatory remarks which are intended to harm the victim. The word is translated in 2 Corinthians 12:20 as “backbitings” and “speak against” in 1 Peter 2:12. The reference is to disparaging or belittling remarks about the reputation, worth, or character of another person.

(2) The expression “evil speakings” also includes filthy language and dirty jokes.

(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) Ephesians 5:2-3: “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”

(3) “It should be observed that the sins designated in this catalog are such as operate to destroy the brotherly relationship which begets and maintains love, and to create an attitude of mind and disposition of heart where malice, bitterness and hate reign instead. These evils are closely related and develop from each other. A malicious disposition leads to deception, deceit, envy and defamation; and the effort to conceal such produces hypocrisy. All such attitudes are utterly foreign to the Spirit of Christ, and to the principles which governed and motivated his life. All such must be resolutely *put away* if we are to have his approval and commendation” (Woods, *Commentary on 1 Peter*, p.54). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

f. Instead, we are to cultivate a desire for the milk of God’s word: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2).

F. We Must Lay Aside Our Excuses and Anxieties.

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 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.”
4. Philippians 4:6-8: “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. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

G. We Must Try to Lay Aside All Grief and Sorrow.

1. Despite the nature and severity of the problem which caused the grief and sorrow, life must go on. We cannot change history.
 - a. We ought not grieve over past mistakes and sinful words. Once done or spoken, they cannot be undone, even if we are able to make amends to some degree.
 - b. We ought not grieve over loved ones we have lost to the grim reaper.
 - c. We ought not grieve over evil deeds that were done; though the effects on others may be grievous, we are not able to *undo* the act.
2. 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).

III. **CONCLUSION.**

A. Into Even the Most Sheltered Life, Storms Can Enter.

1. We must not allow them to wreck our lives, destroy our peace of mind, or disrupt our service to God. One who continually “feels sorry for himself” is of little aid to the cause of Christ.

2. 1 Peter 1:3-9: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
3. James 1:2-5: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

B. As We near the End of Each Year:

1. Perhaps we can remind ourselves of these basic truths.
 - a. The same flame that melts wax, will harden clay.
 - b. The trial that destroys a man in world can make a Christian stronger.
 2. Review the past year:
 - a. Identify the mistakes we have made.
 - b. Resolve to enter the new year with fresh energy, a clean record, and a strong determination to improve.
 3. What better time than the present to:
 - a. Obey gospel.
 - b. Be restored!
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Powering-Down the Cross of Christ

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Apostle Paul Made a Profound and Broad Statement in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17:

1. “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. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor. 1:10-17).
2. He emphasized the necessity of unity among the followers of Christ.
3. Paul said he was not sent to baptize, but to preach the gospel.
 - a. He is not belittling baptism but emphasizing his mission to preach the gospel.
 - b. Others could baptize but not all were inspired to preach gospel. (At this point in time, the New Testament had not been put into written form).
4. He preached the gospel but not with words (speech) of human wisdom.
 - a. He did not use oratory or words of human wisdom which were popular among the Greeks; they used these methods to gain converts to their philosophies.
 - b. Paul did not use eloquence or rhetoric:
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 2:1-5: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 10:10: “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”

B. He Did Not Want the Cross of Christ to be Robbed of its Powerful Effects.

1. The success of our teaching must not be obtained by human talent or worldly strength.
2. The story of the cross is the drawing power: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:32-33).
3. The cross is of no effect if human wisdom causes the response:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:18: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”
 - b. 1 Corinthians 1:21-25: “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. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

II. DISCUSSION:

A. The Cross of Christ is the World's Only Hope.

1. God's eternal plan was to save lost humanity through the death of Christ.
 2. Judaism could not save, although it perfectly fulfilled the purposes God designed it to serve.
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- a. Hebrews 10:4: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."
 - b. Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."
 - c. Acts 13:38-39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."
3. We are saved through Christ.
- a. Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."
4. Salvation is only through Christ.
- a. John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 - b. 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."
 - c. "The way of the cross leads home...."
5. The wisdom of man nullifies the saving effect of the cross.
- a. The Gospel contains:
 - (1) Facts of the gospel (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ): "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
 - (2) Commands of the gospel (to believe in Christ, repent of sins, confess faith in the Savior, and be baptized into Christ):
 - (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) 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."
 - (c) Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 - (d) 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."
 - (e) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - (3) Promises of the gospel (remission of sins, all spiritual blessings, God's providential aid, and the hope of heaven):
 - (a) Remission of sins: "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" (Acts 2:38).
 - (b) All spiritual blessings: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).
 - (c) God's providential help:
 - i) Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - ii) Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

- iii) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - (d) The gospel contains **warnings** that we must heed.
 - i) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - ii) Luke 12:4-5: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."
 - iii) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
 - iv) Hebrews 2:1-4: "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; 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*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
 - v) 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."
 - b. The Gospel needs no dressing up; it needs to be preached and taught, believed and obeyed—with great conviction.
- B. The Cross Can Be Robbed of its Power in Various Other Ways.
- 1. By Premillennialism.
 - a. The partition which the Mosaic Law established between Jew and Gentile was removed by the cross.
 - (1) Ephesians 2:16: "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."
 - (2) Romans 10:12: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."
 - (3) Galatians 3:26-29: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
 - b. Premillennialism asserts that the death of Christ on the cross was not intended, that Christ came to establish an earthly kingdom and reign from David's throne in Jerusalem. But if our Lord had not died on the cross, the Law of Moses would have continued, with all its deficiencies, including
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the partition that divided Jews and Gentiles.

- (1) They think that our Lord's death was substituted for the promised kingdom when the Jews refused to accept Jesus as King. In fact, they tried to place him on the throne, which he firmly refused: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).
 - (2) The cross was planned from the beginning.
 - (a) Acts 2:23: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."
 - (b) Acts 3:18: "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."
 - (c) Revelation 13:8: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."
 - (3) Isaiah 53: He is described as the Suffering Savior, which beautifully depicts the nature of his sacrificial death on the cross.
 - (a) He suffers vicariously: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:3-9).
 - (b) He is given as a sin offering: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10).
 - (c) He would bear the sins of many: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:11-12).
 - (d) He would be enabled to make intercession for the offenders (Isa. 53:12).
2. By perverting the gospel:
- a. Galatians 1:6-9: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."
 - b. By adding to or taking from the Gospel will rob it of its unique power.
 - (1) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - (2) John 12:32-33: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."
 - (3) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto
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you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

- (4) 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. The truth can save, but truth with a mixture of poison cannot save—it will kill.
 - (1) John 8:31-32: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - (2) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- d. Paul preached a message that came from God—it was pure; but a perverted message is not God's message, and cannot save:
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 15:2: “By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”
 - (2) Hebrews 10:26-31: “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.”
 - (3) Hebrews 10:10: “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” [We are sanctified by the will of Christ (the New Testament); it must be without any perversion and it must all be present].
- 3. By unfaithful conduct of Christians.
 - a. A Christian who teaches (or practices) false doctrine, or who lives in sin, is an enemy of the cross.
 - (1) Philippians 3:18-19: “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”
 - (2) Matthew 12:30: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”
 - (3) John 15:14: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”
 - b. A Christian who forsakes the assemblies has a destructive effect on himself and others.
 - (1) 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.”
 - (2) Romans 2:21-22: “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit

- adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"
- c. A Christian who lives a worldly or ungodly life is doing much evil in his life and in his influence.
- (1) 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 6:17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."
 - (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) 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."
 - (5) Philippians 2:14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and questionings: that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain."
 - (6) 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."
- d. A Christian who causes discord among brethren, or passes harsh judgments against others, or who spreads tales (true or false), is destroying his own soul and causing much damage to his victims.
- (1) James 3:16: "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."
 - (2) Ephesians 5:1-2: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."
 - (3) 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."
- e. A Christian who fails to do his part in teaching the gospel to the lost is adding to the citizenry of Gehenna.
- (1) Revelation 21:8: "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (ASV).
 - (2) 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 also will forget thy children."

III. CONCLUSION.

A. The World Is Watching Our Manner of Life.

1. 1 Peter 2:11-17: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."

2. 1 Peter 3:2: “While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.”
 3. For the church to have the best influence on our unbelieving world, Christians are to live pure and attractive lives. “He who exhibits a stern and unbending disposition, though his life be an exemplary one, is lacking in the qualities which are described in the Bible as good” (Woods, p.67).
 - a. False charges were often brought against the Christians, as in Acts 17:6-7: “And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7). Peter calls on us to so-live that the enemy cannot have any real charge to bring against us.
 - (1) 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.”
 - (2) 1 Peter 4:4: “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”
 - (3) Titus 2:7-8: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”
 - (4) 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. “Wrote Tertullian (born about 160 A.D., died between 220 and 240 A.D.), ‘If the Tiber rises to the walls of the city, if the Nile does not irrigate the fields, if an earthquake takes place, if famine or the pestilence arise, they cry forthwith: Away with the Christians to the lions.’ Heathen writers, when not possessed of the bitterness of spirit and maliciousness of heart characteristic of those actively engaged in persecution of the church, were led by the popular feeling to speak of them in similar contemptuous vein, and to join in the condemnation which all but universally prevailed during the early years of Christianity. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny—all prominent and well-known Roman authors and historians—imbibed the prevalent spirit and described the early Christians as being possessed of a perverse and excessive superstition, wicked and deadly in its nature. In suffering such the disciples were simply experiencing that which Jesus had predicted would come to pass, and were following in his own footsteps, in demonstration of the adage that the servant is not above his lord” (Woods, p.68).
 - c. Echoing the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:16, Peter speaks of Christians so-conducting themselves as to elicit from the unbelievers the right response toward the Lord: that they, by the good works which they see in us, will also ultimately glorify God even as we do.
 - (1) Matthew 5:16: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 6:20: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”
- B. The Apostle Paul Was a Christian Wherever He Was.
1. He went to many places; was always a Christian in conduct and work. His many enemies were always looking for some inconsistency in his message and his practice. Our Lord was ever being examined by his deadly enemies, seeking some contradiction in his teaching and action.
 2. Some Christians put on religion like a garment; they are ready to discard it when they move, go on vacation, at work, or at social gatherings.
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3. One must be a Christian daily, wherever he may be.
4. We must make sure our teachings, lives, and words do not rob the cross of its power or glory.

What is the Cost of a Lost Soul?

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Picture These Common Occurrences of Life:

1. A man who knows nothing about the Bible, or does not believe it; he lives a sensual, worldly life that focuses only on this world.
2. A man willfully refuses to obey the gospel, even though he knows the penalty for his action.
3. A Christian knowing his duty to God but willfully neglects or refuses to do his duty.
4. One who learns the truth, obeys the gospel, and faithfully follows the Lord daily.

B. What Makes the Difference Between These Individuals?

1. Many reasons could be given for one who is living in disobedience to God: he has no knowledge, no faith, no love, is stubborn, loves sin; he does not know, does not believe, or does not care.
2. A more basic cause is this: the value that is placed on the soul.
 - a. Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"
 - b. 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?"

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Each of Us Possesses an Immortal Nature Called Soul or Spirit.

1. We are made in the image of God.
 - a. Genesis 1:26-27: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."
 - b. Acts 17:28: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
 - c. Like begets like; a camel can produce only another camel; a snake can produce only another snake; animals are not made in God's image, but humans are.
2. If we can learn what God's nature is, then we can see our own nature. In what sense are we made in God's image?
 - a. God is everlasting spirit:
 - (1) John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - (2) Romans 16:26: "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
 - (3) God has no flesh and bones—he is not a material being: "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" (Luke 24:39).
 - b. It is man's spirit that is made in God's image. But he needs a physical body to live on earth.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 15:50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."
 - (2) Colossians 1:15: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."
 - (3) Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - (4) 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?"
 - (5) 1 Corinthians 2:11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which

is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

3. The places to which the body and spirit go at death are not the same.
 - a. Matthew 27:59-60: “And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.”
 - b. Acts 2:27: “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”
 - c. Luke 23:43: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”
 - d. Ecclesiastes 12:7: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”
 - e. James 2:26: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”
 - f. 2 Corinthians 5:6: “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.”

B. Your Soul Is Your Most Precious Possession.

1. “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?” (Matt. 16:26).
2. It is precious because it had a divine origin.
 - a. Zechariah 12:1: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.”
 - b. 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. It is precious because it can commune with God while on earth.
 - a. We do this through worship.
 - b. No plant or animal has this prerogative! Can you image a corn stalk communing with God? Or a mouse or insect? Or a monkey or a whale?
4. It is precious because of the cost of its redemption.
 - a. The life and blood of Christ was the ransom paid:
 - (1) 1 Peter 1:18-19: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”
 - (2) Galatians 4:4-5: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”
 - (3) Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”
 - (4) 1 Peter 1:18-19: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”
 - (5) 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. Just who is Christ? God’s one and only Son.
5. It is precious because it is eternal.
 - a. Psalms 22:26: “The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.”
 - b. Moses and Elijah had been gone from the earth from many centuries, but they were still alive, and appeared in the transfiguration scene: “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his

brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.(Matt. 17:1-5).

- c. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive although they were gone from the earth even before the time of Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32).
- d. Lazarus and the rich man lived on after they died (Luke 16:19-31).
- e. An eternal destiny awaits every soul: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46).

C. You Can Sell or Trade Your Soul for Something Else.

1. You can exchange your soul for wealth and prosperity as some in the Bible did.
 - a. The rich young ruler: "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:16-22).
 - b. The foolish farmer: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15-21).
 - c. This is done when we engage in unethical or unlawful business, or by putting riches before God: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:24-25).
2. You can exchange your soul for the love of the world and worldly pleasures.
 - a. 2 Timothy 4:10: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world..." (2 Tim. 4:10).
 - b. Some love pleasure more than they love God: "Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4).
 - c. Moses is a great example: "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" (Heb. 11:24-25).
3. You can exchange your soul for popularity or friends.
 - a. Mark 15:15: "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified."

- b. John 12:42-43: “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

D. Exchanging Our Soul for Anything Else Is Always a Foolish Bargain.

1. Satan has no genuinely happy, contented old men or old women.
 - a. What hope does a sinful soul have?
 - (1) Ephesians 2:12: “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”
 - (2) Hebrews 10:27: “But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”
 - b. What consolation can the sinful world offer us when we lose a loved one?
2. The world will pass away, but the soul does not cease to exist.
 - a. The material world will be destroyed: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10).
 - b. The sinful elements of this world will be destroyed: “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” (1 John 2:15-17).
 - c. Even if we were to gain the world and popularity with sin, we would still lose.
3. Worldly gain must be left behind at death.
 - a. “How much did he leave? ALL.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 6:7: “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”
 - (2) Job 1:21: “And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”
 - b. Alexander the Great was a man who conquered the world, but left it empty-handed.
 - c. Howard Hughes had billions in money and property; he left it all behind; it offered him no consolation in the months leading up to his death.
 - d. If we gain the world at the expense of our soul, we lose both!

III. CONCLUSION.

A. The Loss of the Soul Is the Most Tragic of All Losses.

1. The lesser losses are bad enough.
 - a. We might gain the world but lose our health—too sick to enjoy the gain.
 - b. We might gain the world but lose our life—what profit then?
 2. The loss of the soul is a double loss.
 - a. We miss out (we lose) on heaven with all its glories.
 - b. We miss the spiritual blessings during this life: Peace, joy of hope, Christian home, fellowship with best people on earth, privilege of prayer, blessings of worship.
 3. The loss of the soul is an entire loss.
 - a. We might lose some battle, or lose our wealth, or be deprived of our property: but we still have our life, our family, our health, our friends, and another chance perhaps.
 - b. But if we lose our soul, what else is left?
 4. If we lose our soul, there is no compensation.
 - a. Fire might burn our house, but it can be replaced by insurance.
 - b. We might lose our eyesight, but we may gain a greater degree of hearing and feeling.
 - c. But if we lose our soul, that is nothing that can compensate for that loss.
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5. A lost soul cannot be reclaimed after death.
 - a. Lost friendship, health, property, money can be restored.
 - b. But no angel in Heaven, no demon in Gehenna, no man on earth can redeem a soul lost in torment.
 - c. Only in life can a sinful soul be saved:
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 6:2: "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."
 - (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) 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) Acts 10:43: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."
 - (5) Acts 16:30-31: "And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
 - (6) Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
 - (7) Romans 10:10: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
 - (8) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

B. Do You Value Your Soul?

1. As an alien sinner?
 2. As an erring saint?
 3. As a faithful child of God?
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“Please Do!”

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. We Need the Same Kind of Help our First Century Brethren needed.

1. They needed instruction, words of encouragement, and messages of admonishment.
2. Sometimes inspired men spoke sharply to them.
 - a. Galatians 3:1: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”
 - b. Galatians 5:15: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”
 - c. Titus 1:13: “This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.”
 - d. 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.”
 - e. James 4:1-4: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 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.”
3. But frequently they wrote in pleading tones, beseeching the brethren to do right.
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Romans 15:30: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”
 - c. 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.”
 - d. 2 Corinthians 10:2: “But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.”
 - e. Ephesians 4:1-3: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
 - f. Hebrews 13:22: “And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”
 - g. 1 Peter 2:11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts,

which war against the soul.”

B. This and Similar Statements Appear Many Times in the New Testament.

1. *To beseech* means “to call to one’s side and admonish; to entreat; to exhort; to plead with; to urge one to pursue the righteous course of conduct.”
2. Much more is involved than to make a mere request:
 - a. Mark 5:18: “And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.”
 - b. Acts 8:31: “And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.”
 - c. Acts 19:31: “And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.”
 - d. 1 Corinthians 16:12: “As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.”
 - e. 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.”
3. In the New Testament, whether we are being given a direct command or if we are besought, the effort is made by Divine Authority.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Christians Are Besought to Abstain From Fleshly Lusts.

1. 1 Peter 2:11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”
 - a. Faithful saints are aliens, strangers, and pilgrims in this world. We do not “fit in” with the sinful elements of society.
 - b. A stranger is an alien in a country, having no rights of citizenship.
 - c. A pilgrim is one who travels through a country that is not his own. Of Abraham, the Scriptures say: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9-10).
2. Christians are not at home in this sin-filled world, for we, like Abraham, look for the spiritual city of Heaven.
 - a. Philippians 3:20-21: “For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself” (ASV).
 - b. Hebrews 13:14: “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”
3. With the foregoing information, Peter is now ready to give the primary admonition of the verse: **abstain from fleshly lusts.**
 - a. To abstain is to hold back from, to refuse to participate in some activity that would be detrimental to the soul.
 - b. Fleshly lusts are also called works of the flesh.
 - (1) Galatians 5:19-24: “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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
 - (2) Romans 13:13-14: “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in

chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

- (3) 2 Timothy 2:22: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
 - (4) Titus 2:12: “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”
 - (5) 1 Peter 1:14: “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.”
- c. **Fleshly lusts war against the soul.**
- (1) These sinful lusts do not merely stand in opposition to the soul, but operate aggressively to the hurt of the soul.
 - (2) The ultimate consequence of this war against the soul is eternal ruin: “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” (Jas. 1:13-15).
 - (3) The soul is the spirit—the eternal part of us, the part that is made in God’s image. Man’s physical body dies and returns to the elements of the earth; the soul never dies in the sense that it goes out of existence. God never dies, and that part of man which is made in God’s image never dies. The soul dies only in the sense that it is separated from God. The key idea in “death” is separation: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jas. 2:26). The body separated from the spirit is dead; the spirit [the soul] separated from God is dead.
4. Many lusts are forbidden by this passage. The one of great prominence is fornication.
- a. Fornication includes all sexual sins; it pollutes and destroys individuals, families, societies and nations; it corrupts young and old; it wages deadly war against souls.
 - (1) 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.”
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 6:18-20: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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. Our country is running headlong into a sex-oriented society—indeed, it has already arrived! Television programs, movies, television commercials, advertisements, books, the acceptance of homosexual behavior—those who speak against such sinful practices are denounced as unloving, judgmental, and being a religious fanatic.
 - (1) Proverbs 14:34: “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”
 - (2) Psalms 9:17: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”
 - (3) Romans 1:18-32: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 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
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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. 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.”

- c. The world is returning to the paganistic practice of old, including the legalizing harlotry, condoning homosexuality, and the acceptance of other pagan practices in the guise of freedom:
 - (1) John 8:34: “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
 - (2) 2 Peter 2:18-19: “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”
- d. Unbridled lusts destroyed ancient cities and nations such as Sodom, Greece, Rome, and Crete.
- e. Young people are being taught that these acts, beliefs, and practices are normal; what will the next generation do?
- f. Lusts will condemn the soul: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind” (1 Cor. 6:9).
- g. No wonder Peter pleaded with us all to keep on keeping back from such evil desires.
 - (1) Galatians 5:16-24: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
 - (2) 2 Timothy 2:22: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
 - (3) 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.”
 - (4) Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

B. Christians Are Besought to Warn the Unruly.

- 1. “And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all” (1 Thess. 5:14, ASV). “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 The. 5:14, KJV).

2. Thus, we are to admonish and warn those members who are disorderly or unruly.
 - a. We exhort you. The previous passage called on the saints to esteem their elders highly in love; here the apostle continues his admonishing words to the saints, calling on them to adhere to the four truths which follow in this verse.
 - (1) It is the obligation of elders to do the things prescribed here, but it is not limited to them. Paul's use of the word *brethren* shows that the items named are also the obligation of each Christian.
 - (2) There are very few things which are required of elders which are not also part of each saint's duty. In the case of these matters, each Christian has the obligation to warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak, and be patient toward all—in keeping with his opportunities and abilities.
 - b. Warn them that are unruly. “This the same word [”warn”] which in ver. 12 is rendered *admonish*. It is the duty of every church member...affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject” (Albert Barnes, p.57).
 - (1) To be unruly is to be disorderly [see margin]. The Greek term (from *ataktos*) “signifies not keeping order (*a*, negative, *tasso*, to put in order, arrange); it was especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate...” (Vine, Vol. 1, p.320).
 - (2) A disorderly Christian is an unfaithful child of God. He has not yet apostatized, but is in danger of doing so; the reason for the warning is to prevent his falling away.
 - (a) 1 John 5:16-17: "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."
 - (b) Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
 - (c) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
 - (d) 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 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."
 - (e) 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.” The word translated “unruly” in our text also appears in this passage, being translated “disorderly.”
 - c. Comfort the feebleminded. This word is better rendered “fainthearted.” “This refers to those who are easily disheartened and discouraged. They lack the energy and boldness in which the disorderly abound. They require constraint as the others require restraint. Sensitiveness to criticism, dread of persecution, a sense of failure to follow the will of the Lord, apprehensiveness concerning the future are among the causes that produce faintness of heart” (David Lipscomb, p.70).
 - d. Support the weak. The Bible cautions us all against overconfidence, and counsels us to obtain as much strength as possible.
 - (1) Matthew 26:41: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

- (3) "Those without spiritual strength, the weak in faith, and conscience who do not go forward. It is very conceivable that in so young a church there were yet people, who, like children, easily stumbled. We must hold on to them, not expect or leave them to stand alone" (Lipscomb, p.70).
 - (4) Romans 15:1: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
 - (5) The church is comprised of many individuals, but each has a genuine concern for all the others. "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" (1 Cor. 12:25-27).
 - e. Be patient toward all. To be patient is to be longsuffering. "Long-suffering is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate nor promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy and used of God....Christians must learn to be patient, forbearing, persevering, not easily discouraged in helping all men in their weakness and trials" (Lipscomb, p.70).
 - (1) Exodus 34:6: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."
 - (2) 1 Peter 3:20: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."
 - (3) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 3. These are *out of step* and involved with sin.
 - a. 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."
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
 - c. Any Christian has the right and the duty to warn wayward members, just as we would warn a little child that was about to get hurt. It is not a sign of hate but of love to issue warning. It is easy to criticize but it is harder to admonish. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:14-15).
 - C. We Are Besought to Strive Together In Prayers With And For Other Saints.
 1. Romans 15:30: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."
 2. *To strive* is to earnestly contend, to labor fervently.
 - a. Praying is much more than "saying a prayer." For prayer to be effective it must be more than mere statements; prayer is more than casually mentioned one time.
 - b. Prayer must be the fervent and earnest pleadings of the heart expressed more than once:
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Luke 18:1-7: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her
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continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"

- (3) Matthew 15:21-28: "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."
 - (4) James 5:16-17: "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. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months."
 - (5) Matthew 26:38-44: "Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 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. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."
 - (6) Luke 22:39-45: "And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow."
3. Paul urged the brethren to join him in earnest, fervent prayer.
 - a. Paul was asking them to pray in his behalf, but his request was not selfish in any sense. If Paul's efforts were blessed by God, the cause of Christ would be enhanced, souls would be saved, and the saints in Rome (and elsewhere) would be edified. The apostle was a tremendously valuable tool in the hands of God!
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 12:15: "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."
 - b. That he might be delivered from wicked unbelievers who sought to persecute Paul.
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 1:8-11: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the
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gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.”

- (2) 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2: “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”
- c. The apostle had an undying trust in the efficacy of prayer. He requested the prayers of his brethren wherever he went.
 - (1) Romans 15:30: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me."
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 1:11: "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf."
 - (3) Ephesians 6:18-19: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel."
 - (4) Colossians 4:3: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
 - (5) 1 Thessalonians 5:25: "Brethren, pray for us."
 - (6) Philemon 1:22: "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you."
- d. That the collection he had made among the Gentile saints would be accepted by the needy saints in Judea: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints” (Rom. 15:30-31).
- e. That he could come to Rome with joy and be refreshed by having fellowship with the saints in Rome: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed” (Rom. 15:30-32).

4. Our prayers need to be as specific and as fervent as theirs.

III. CONCLUSION.

A. We Are Besought to Endure the Word of Exhortation Given in the Scriptures.

1. Hebrews 13:22: “And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”
2. He pleads with the brethren that they would accept the word of exhortation which he has written in this relatively short epistle. Much more could have been written, but this was sufficient to accomplish the purposes in mind.
3. When the truth has been presented fully and clearly, the burden of responsibility shifts from the teacher to the student; the individual must examine the information, see that it is truth, and put it into practice in his life. If he has honestly investigated it, and has seen it is indeed the truth, if he is sincere, he will be obedient to what he has been taught.
4. No truth can be taught unless it is (1) presented clearly and (2) is received honestly. The teacher has no more obligation in the process than the student; the student has as much responsibility as does the teacher.

B. The Passages of Beseeching We Have Examined is in Fact God’s Plea to Each of Us.

1. The passages:
 - a. 1 Peter 2:11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”

- b. 1 Thessalonians 5:14: “And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all” (ASV).
 - c. Romans 15:30: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”
 - d. Hebrews 13:22: “And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”
2. He wants what is best for us:
- a. To shun fornication is not a sacrifice.
 - b. To warn unruly is not an act of hate or retaliation.
 - c. To pray earnestly together is not idle talk: “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” (Matt. 18:19-20).
3. Obeying the gospel is not an arbitrary or unfair list of requirements the Lord has given us.
- a. It is being submissive to God's plan by which he redeems us.
 - b. The Gospel reflects his infinite wisdom, grace, and love.
 - c. Obeying the gospel is for your benefit!
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Why Do Some Saints Return to the World?

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Many of Our Lord's Disciples Turned Back and Walked No More With Him.

1. John 6:51-66: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."
2. Why did these people go back, and walk no more with the Savior?
3. He spoke figuratively in verses 51-65, but they took it literally: "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you...?"

B. Jesus Asked The Twelve Disciples If They Also Would Go Away.

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. Because of their faith in the Lord, they would not turn back.
3. But through the ages, countless others have gone back. Why?
 - a. If we can answer this question, this information can keep us from falling away.
 - b. It will equip us to keep others from falling away.
 - c. It will give us a means of restoring some of the fallen.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Consider Other Hard Saying That Have Been Too Much For Some To Bear.

1. It was a hard saying to the disciples that he was to die:
 - a. John 6:51: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
 - b. Matthew 16:20-23: "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."
2. They thought he was to be an earthly king, which was disturbing to his followers who misunderstood

the nature of his kingdom: “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone” (John 6:14-15). His refusal to be an earthly king disappointed some; many today shun the truth that his kingdom is of a spiritual nature.

3. Some of them did not like what he said about being the bread of life: “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?” (John 6:35-42).
 4. As we have already noted, many of his erstwhile followers went back to the old way, and walked no more with the Lord; they lost their faith in Christ when they would not accept the demanding truth he told them (John 6:35-66). Many have this same weakness today.
 - a. Luke 8:13: “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”
 - 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.”
 - c. Matthew 12:30: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”
 - d. Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
 - e. 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.”
 - f. 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.”
 - g. Luke 14:33: “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”
 - h. 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.”
 - i. Luke 14:28: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?”
 - j. These hard sayings cause some to give up and turn back to their own destruction.
 5. There are many other reasons why disciples turn back today.
- B. Some Go Back Because Their Conversion Was Only a Surface Change.
1. They were not truly convicted of sin, or they did not truly believe the truth.
 2. “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13).
 - a. These are *sunshine soldiers* or *summer patriots*. In the early years of our country's history, the army depended largely on soldiers who volunteered for a specific length of time. When their enlistment was up, they left for home, regardless of much the army needed them. During the War of 1812,

when the enlistment of many of the volunteers from Kentucky and Tennessee neared, they prepared to leave. Andrew Jackson earned his nickname “Old Hickory” when he stood in front of the men with a weapon, threatening to shoot the first one who made a move to leave. They all stayed! But many in those early wars would fight when the weather was good or only in the summertime or only when the struggle was having success and was popular.

- b. The same is true with many uncommitted members. Regrettably, some in the Lord’s church can be trusted only when things are going well and popular, and the duty is easy.
 - c. When they are members of a strong, faithful local congregation which is at peace and prospering, they are always present. But when a problem arises, when false doctrine has to be opposed or sin is in the church, they are apt to fall away.
 - d. Frequently, such members are faithful in attendance and worship while they face no particular problem in their lives, but when financial woes, health problems, troubles with their family, or other such difficulties arise, their faith is too weak to withstand the trial.
 - e. Temptations assail every child of God, but each one of us can overcome the enticement. From the time of our initial obedience to the Gospel, we must build up our store of Biblical knowledge, and thus increase our faith. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).
 - f. Prayers should be frequently offered; attendance ought to be consistent; we must cultivate and exercise the Christian attributes constantly.
 - (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 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”
 - (3) 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.”
 - (4) 2 Peter 1:3-11: “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: 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; 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.”
3. With too many Christians, when little problems, sudden challenges, temptations, or opposition arise, and they are GONE! “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matt. 13:20-21).
- C. Some Go Back Because of Worldliness.
1. Consider these words of truth:
 - a. Luke 8:14: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”
 - b. 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.”
- c. 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.”
 - d. Titus 2:11-14: “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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
 - e. 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.”
 - f. 2 Timothy 4:10: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.....”
2. When weak members learn that they cannot pursue their worldly interests and Christianity at the same time, they give up their faith. “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22).
- D. Some Go Back Due to the Influence of Evil Companions.
1. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (KJV). "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV).
 - a. The apostle hastens to correct any possible misunderstanding of the last statement in the preceding verse (15:32). He denies the rightness of living by the code of sinners (i.e., the eat, drink, and be merry philosophy).
 - b. One who lived by that standard was grossly deceived. To associate with companions who live by that worldly philosophy would be corruptive to the saint's moral state. *Manners* is a reference to one's ethical conduct. *Communications* (companionships—ASV) refers to "an association of people, those who are of the same company" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.216). It is used in this verse with reference to an *evil* company.
 - c. The hope of a Christian is directly tied to the way he lives. Associating with evil people can destroy our standing with God, and cause us to lose our reward.
 - d. We must not underestimate the power of peer pressure [the influence of our friends, associates, and neighbors]. “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” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 2. Some choose their closest companions from those who are not Christians. Worldly friends make poor companions—and even worse husbands and wives.
- E. Some Move Into a New City Away from the Influence of Family and Christian Friends.
1. This may be the first real test of their faith—and they can fail miserably.
 2. This is likely a case of inherited faith; a surrogate faith can do the individual no good. They may do well when they are around close relatives and faithful saints, but when they are exposed to a setting where they have to act on their own personal faith, they fail—their faith is weak.
 - a. Ezekiel 18:20: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
 - b. Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must
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- believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
- c. 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.”
 - d. 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.”
 - e. Mark 4:40: “And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”
 - f. Luke 17:5: “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”
 - g. Ephesians 6:16: “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”
 - h. 2 Thessalonians 3:2: “And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”
 - i. 2 Timothy 2:18: “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”
 - j. Hebrews 4:2: “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”
 - k. Hebrews 10:22: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”
 - l. James 2:17: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”
 - m. 2 Corinthians 5:7: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”
- F. Wealth and Possessions Often Hinder Spirituality.
1. Not everyone has sufficient knowledge and strength of faith to see riches in their proper perspective.
 - a. 1 Timothy 6:9-19: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 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. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 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.”
 - b. 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.”
 - c. Luke 12:13-21: “And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose
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shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

2. Some more wise counsel:

- a. Proverbs 30:8-9: “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”
- b. Proverbs 28:11: “The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.”
- c. Proverbs 28:20: “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.”
- d. Jeremiah 9:23: “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.”
- e. James 2:5: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”
- f. 2 Corinthians 6:10: “As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”
- g. 2 Corinthians 8:9: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

G. Poverty Discourages Some, and Can Cause Some to Go Back.

1. Some may develop the mistaken idea that the Lord will provide wealth to the faithful—not so.
 - 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. 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. He provides the necessities to the faithful, but does not promise material wealth: “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” (Acts 14:17).
2. Lazarus was a righteous man but was poverty-stricken:
 - a. Luke 16:19-31: “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”
 - b. Proverbs 30:7-9: “Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far

from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

3. On the other hand, we are told about several people in the Bible who were wealthy and righteous.
 - a. Abraham: “And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai” (Gen. 13:1-3).
 - b. Abraham’s great wealth was passed on to Isaac and then on to Jacob—these were also wealthy men, yet faithful to God.
 - c. Job: “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses” (Job 41:12; cf. 1:1-3).
4. If all were rich, who would do the work? If all were poor, who would provide the work? “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all” (Prov. 22:2).
 - a. God is the maker of both the rich and the poor. This does not say that he pre-programmed some to poverty and others to wealth; it says that God is the Creator of both. Most are in poverty through no fault of their own, and many are rich at the expense of others (through craftiness, graft, or crime). Many are poor through their own apathy, and many are rich through diligent effort and wisdom.
 - b. There is no difference between the rich and the poor as to (1) their Creator, (2) their worth before God, (3) their need for salvation, and (4) their need for protection and guidance.
 - c. “The rich and poor meet together.” A well-balanced, smoothly-running economy requires both the rich man and the poor man. If all were rich, who would do the labor? If all were poor, who would provide the jobs? If all were middle-class, who would establish factories and businesses for jobs? and who would fill the menial roles? The rich and the poor (and the middle-class) need each other!
 - d. Also, in view of those unfortunate people who fall into such deep poverty that they are in danger of starvation, or have no place to live, how could they survive without the benevolence of those who have “this world’s goods?” “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Jas. 2:14-17).
 - e. As the rich can bless the poor by providing jobs and sustenance, so the poor bless the rich in doing the work the rich man cannot do. Neither should despise the other.

H. Frequently, Ties With a Former Sectarian Church May Cause Some to Forsake the Lord.

1. These close ties with family and friends are often very strong, and a weak Christian may ultimately give up their faith to return to their former status. Whether the apostasy is due to doctrinal error or sinful behavior, the result is the same—condemned souls!
 - a. Galatians 5:1-4: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”
 - b. Galatians 1:6-9: “I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema.”
 - c. 1 Corinthians 4:6: “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos

- for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other.”
- d. 2 John 1:9-11: “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.”
 - e. 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 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.”
 - f. Hebrews 10:26-31: “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.”
2. Sometimes members who are weak in knowledge are unable or unwilling to give up some of their sectarian errors or practice. They may long for them; they might not be willing to accept simple Bible truths regarding such things.
 - a. One of the most common false doctrines is instrumental music in worship. It is wrong because there is no New Testament authority for it.
 - (1) Many folks think that a practice or belief is permissible unless God has specifically forbidden the item. If that argument has merit, then we would have the right to serve cornbread and milk on the Lord's Table. But there is no authority for that perversion.
 - (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.”
 - (3) We are given the right and the requirement to sing our praise to God, but we do not have any authority to play instruments in worship.
 - b. Another prominent false doctrine is *premillennialism*. This system, which varies widely, asserts that Christ's death on the cross was not planned; it was a substitute for the kingdom when the Jews refused to accept Jesus as King. They think the kingdom is yet to come.
 - (1) Our Lord's crucifixion was planned from eternity: “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8; cf Isa. 53; Psalms 22).
 - (2) The kingdom has come: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14; cf. Mark 9:1).
- I. Working When the Church Assembles Can Wean One Away from the Lord.
 1. A man is obligated to take care of his family: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Some jobs require Sunday work. Air traffic controllers, policemen, medical workers, and many others, are required to work, manning their facilities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It may be necessary for the provider to work and not be able to attend all of the services of the church.
 2. There may be some cases where the Christian volunteers to work these shifts when he is not required
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to do so. In either situation, there is a danger that an indifferent attitude toward the assemblies may develop. The change may be so gradual, that it is not even recognized by the member.

3. If one could obtain other hours or another place of employment, that would be highly commendable. A good job, paying high wages is a poor substitute for the soul:
 - a. 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."
 - b. Hebrews 10:25: "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."
 - c. 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?"
 - J. Some Go Back Because They Do Not Take an Active Interest or Will Not Participate in the Services.
 1. It is easy for a weak member to lose himself in a large crowd of people; that is one of the inherent dangers in a big congregation (of course, there are many advantages).
 2. A faith that is not exercised will soon become weak, indifferent, and disappear. We must take great care lest we leave our 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).
 3. Every saint must be active:
 - a. 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."
 - 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."
 - K. Some Fall Away When Their Feelings Are Hurt, They Are Insulted or Criticized.
 1. Stronger Christians are duty-bound to encourage, strengthen, support, and be patient with those who are weaker.
 - a. Romans 15:1-3: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me."
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:14: "And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all."
 - c. If the stronger ones lived up to their God-given standards, weaker members would not be hurt or driven away. But weaker ones need to perceive their one obligations.
 - d. Consider this real-life case: A young couple had been baptized and were worshipping with a small congregation. After a few months, the lady was asked to teach a children's class. She did not feel qualified to teach, but instead of telling the brethren her situation, she quit—and her husband quit
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also. They were unfaithful for many years, during which time their children grew up without knowing the truth, and so did their grandchildren.

2. Sometimes, a local reprobate will drive weak Christians away from Lord. The reprobate will lose his soul, but so will those who allow themselves fall away. The church should follow the Lord's commandment, first with regards to the reprobate:
 - a. Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:15-17).
 - b. The faithful should make a sincere and determined effort to restore the weak members who have been influenced by the reprobate.
 - (1) Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
 - (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."
 - (3) 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."
 - (4) 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."
 3. Members who fall away, attend only on occasion, or quit attending altogether, or attend but live sinful lives, must also be disciplined.
- L. Some Weak Members May Not Like the Preachers, the Elders, or Others in the Church.
1. If these are in sin, the one being bothered by this situation needs to show them their error:
 - a. Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."
 - b. 1 John 3:16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."
 - c. 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."
 - d. James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
 - e. Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 2. If we quit the Lord's church because of reprobate leaders or members, we will have to spend eternity with the real reprobates, plus every other condemned sinner.
- M. Some Will Neglect the Worship and Study Assemblies, and Gradually Drift Away.
1. Hebrews 2:1: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them."
 2. We may start missing because of some poor excuse: we do not have proper clothing, no transportation,

etc. More quickly than one could imagine, he has apostatized.

- a. Hebrews 2:1-4: "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 recompence 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; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
- b. 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 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."
- c. Hebrews 10:25-31: "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."
- d. Compare: "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, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. 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" (Heb. 6:1-6).

III. CONCLUSION.

A. No One Ever Has a Proper Excuse for Shunning His God-Given Duty.

1. James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
2. 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?"
3. 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."
4. 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."
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. We All Have Every Reason to Obey the Gospel, Remain Faithful, Active, and Zealous.

1. Matthew 25:21: "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."
2. Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

3. Matthew 25:46: “And these [the disobedient] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”
4. 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.”
5. 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. Hear the Great Invitation:

1. 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.”
 2. 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.”
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If The Church Does Not Matter

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Consider a Few of the Common Attitudes Toward Lord's Church:

1. The church is not important for salvation or eternal life—anyone can be saved and go to heaven without ever belonging to a church or visiting a church building.
2. This sectarian notion is that one is saved by faith only, then he may join some church if he desires to do so.
3. Further, such folks say one ought not to preach anything about the church—since it is unimportant. This is certainly true of man-made churches, but is not true regarding the church of our Lord.

B. An Effective Way to Expose Error Is to Consider its Consequences.

1. If the church does not matter [has nothing to do with our salvation and hope of heaven], certain conclusions are inevitable.
2. Our purpose in this study is to cause us to have a greater love for the Lord's church.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. If Church Does Not Matter, Then the Blood of Christ Does Not Matter.

1. Christ's blood was the purchase price for his church:
 - 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 5:23-27: "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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
 - c. Our Lord did not make a bad bargain; the rule of fair exchange shows that he did not pay too much for the church (his spiritual body).
 - d. If the church is unimportant, his blood is unimportant; but his blood is extremely important—church is therefore equivalent in value!
 2. The importance of the blood of Christ—no blood, no forgiveness.
 - a. Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
 - b. Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - c. 1 Peter 1:18-19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."
 - d. 1 John 1:7: "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."
 - e. Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
 - f. Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."
 - g. Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - h. Compare: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make
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an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul....For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off" (Lev. 17:11,14).

B. If the Church Does Not Matter Then Salvation Does Not Matter.

1. We are saved in the Lord's church—we comprise the church, the body of Christ. We are saved when we enter the church.
 - 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. Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - c. 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
 - d. Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
 - e. 1 Corinthians 12:13: "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."
 - f. Ephesians 1:22-23: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
2. Being saved, being added to church, and to put on Christ are the same. To be added to the church is to be added to the Lord.
 - 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. Acts 5:14: "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."
3. Christ will give eternal salvation to the church:
 - a. 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."
 - b. Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

C. If the Church Does Not Matter, Then the Lord's Supper Does Not Matter.

1. The Lord's Supper is to be eaten at Lord's table in his kingdom: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).
 - a. The Lord's church is the Lord's kingdom: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 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. 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" (Matt. 16:16-19).
 - b. The Lord's Supper is eaten in the assembly of the Lord's church: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. 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. 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" (1 Cor 11:20-30).

- c. The Lord's Supper is to be eaten on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week: "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" (Acts 20:7).
2. The Lord's Supper is not important if the church does not matter.
 - a. If that is the case, the efforts and preparations to inaugurate the Lord's Supper are wasted and unnecessary.
 - b. If the Supper is unimportant, its observance is a waste of time and money.
 - c. But the Lord commanded its observance.
3. Therefore, the Lord's church is important.
- D. If the Church Does Not Matter, Then the Kingdom of Christ Does Not Matter.
 1. As noted above, the kingdom is the church.
 - a. 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."
 - b. John 3:5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 12:13: "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."
 2. Spiritually, there are only two kingdoms a responsible people can be in: the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of Satan.
 - a. Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
 - b. Which kingdom does God want us to enter? When we obeyed the gospel, he delivered us from the power of darkness [he removed us from Satan's control] and translated us into the kingdom of his Son.
 3. Redemption is in Christ's kingdom; the kingdom and the church are identical; therefore the church is important!
- E. If the Church Does Not Matter, Then the Gospel of Christ Does Not Matter.
 1. The gospel produced the church of Christ; the church does not exist where the gospel is not known.
 - a. Luke 8:11: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."
 - b. 1 Peter 1:22-23: "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."
 - c. 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."
 - d. Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 - e. Romans 10:13-17: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and

- bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
2. The gospel has facts, commands, promises and warnings:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”
 - c. 2 Peter 1:3-4: “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: 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.”
 3. 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.” The gospel is extremely important, therefore, the church is important!

III. CONCLUSION.

A. Does the Church Really Matter to You?

1. No, if you do not support it.
2. No, if you are disinterested in its success.
3. Yes, if you are willing to enter it, support it, defend it, and put it first: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

B. Since the Church Does Matter, Is it Important to You?

1. What will YOU do with Christ and his church?
 2. For YOUR benefit, and for the benefit of HIS cause—Obey the Gospel!
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God's Answer to Human Turmoil

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Two People or Two Groups of People Often Develop Friction or Serious Discord.

1. Perhaps every husband and wife will experience discord at times; those who want to have a good marriage, will resolve the difficulties quickly. There is no reason for a Christian couple to have a quarrelsome marriage or ever divorce. Two saints can get along quite well if each is faithful.
2. Sometimes hard feelings, misunderstandings, religious error, or sin may create dissension between Christians. Again, if each Christian is as faithful as he must be, those problems can be settled for the benefit of all.
3. God had to legislate unity; it does not naturally occur.
 - a. Psalms 133:1-3: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."
 - b. 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."
 - c. Ephesians 4:1-3: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
 - d. Some people have an argumentative disposition; they must work harder at being peace-loving and gentle than others.
 - e. Some are gentle and peace-loving by nature, and find it easy to get along with almost everyone.
 - f. Every Christian can and must learn and exercise this peaceable disposition.
 - (1) Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."
 - (2) Philippians 2:12-14: "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. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings."
 - (3) Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

B. How Can Discord Be Prevented or Cured?

1. Human wisdom cannot provide a certain answer.
 - a. The causes of problems between individuals include such things as anger, malice, pride, selfishness, and lust.
 - b. Human wisdom, therefore, is not likely to give a dependable cure to discord.
 2. Dissension cannot be cured by ignoring the problem. There are cases, of course, when the discord may safely be set aside (not brought up).
 3. The Bible (not human psychology) is a Christian's authority (answer book).
 - a. John 2:25: "And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." [Since the Lord made mankind, he knows their strengths and weakness, thus is able to supply what is needed].
 - b. John 16:30: "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."
 - c. Matthew 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"
 - d. Luke 19:41-43: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou
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hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side.”

- e. 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.”
- f. 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.”

II. DISCUSSION:

A. Kindness is a Necessary Quality to Be at Peace With Others.

1. Ephesians 4:31-32: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”
2. Being kind is more than not doing evil.
 - a. One may not be kind even though he does not physically abuse another, or cheat someone, or does not verbally abuse someone else.
 - b. A mannikin never abuses anyone, not even another mannikin. It does not steal or curse or commit sacrilege. But it does not show kindness either.
 - c. Harshness must be disposed of, and kindness must be added in its place.
3. Kindness is a friendly, gracious, gentle, cordial, and courteous disposition and practice.
 - a. A kind person has an agreeable disposition; he is not sour, crabby, or cross or morose.
 - b. Genuine kindness must be behind our words and our deeds—even those directed toward an enemy.
 - c. Snide or cutting remarks are entirely foreign to the Christian character.
4. Discord often comes from how we say something than from what we say.
 - a. The inflections in our voice can be altered to make the common expression mean something entirely different than the surface meaning of the statement.
 - (1) “I love you.”
 - (2) “Pass the biscuits.”
 - (3) “Good morning.”
 - b. Obviously, if we use a kind tone of voice as we speak to our spouse and brethren, there will be much less cause for discord.
 - (1) Proverbs 15:1: “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”
 - (2) 1 Samuel 25:3-11, 37-38: “Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?....But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote

Nabal, that he died.”

5. The tongue is described in Proverbs 18:21 as being able to deliver either death or life. James 3:5-6 shows that the tongue can kindle a great fire, though at the first the fire is very small. We wield the mighty power of the tongue when we respond to the things others speak to us. Many wars, strifes, blows, and estrangements could have been avoided by a prudent reply to someone's angry words. Many injuries, physical and emotional, could have been prevented.
 - a. Judges 8:1-3 is an example of soft words defusing a bad situation: "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that."
 - b. James 3:5-6: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

B. Being Tenderhearted is a Necessary Quality to Be at Peace With Others.

1. Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 - a. Verse thirty-one gave a negative requirement; this verse provides a positive admonition. Instead of nourishing bitterness, etc., we are to be ready to forgive.
 - b. Instead of having anger, we are to maintain a tender heart. Instead of malice, we are to be kind to each other.
2. Having a tender heart is to possess compassion, a consideration of another's feelings, being merciful and full of sympathy.
 - a. Luke 7:13: "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."
 - b. Luke 19:41: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."
 - c. 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."
 - d. 1 Peter 3:8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."
3. Little things commonly ruin marriages.
 - a. A harsh tone of voice, a grouchy attitude, an unsympathetic disposition and public putdowns are to be avoided by husbands and wives, especially if they are Christians.
 - b. Discord and hard feelings result from these hurtful practices; they can quickly drive a wedge between people.
4. Let us try to cultivate a tender heart, and be compassionate and considerate to all others.
 - a. Colossians 3:12: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering."
 - b. Romans 12:15: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

C. Having Forbearance is a Necessary Quality in order to Be at Peace With Others.

1. Consider these great truths:
 - a. Colossians 3:13: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."
 - b. Ephesians 4:2: "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."
2. To forbear another person is to bear with, to endure, to tolerate, to overlook small matters that come up between you and the individual.
 - a. Occasionally, a harsh word may slip from the other's mouth; we are to overlook, ignore, and hold

- no grudge. “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (1 Pet. 2:1).
- b. Sometimes the other person may have a manner of speech, or a nervous habit, or a different way of doing something. We are to overlook such matters.
 3. No virtue is more needed than in modern society than forbearance (longsufferance).
 - a. Everyone is different; it is easy to irritate each other.
 - b. We can find enough imperfections in anyone to make ourselves bitter, give up on humanity, and shun New Testament Christianity.
 - c. More good can be done by forbearance than by great deeds. Which is more beneficial to a farmer—the Angel Falls or a small creek? Or, a gentle, continuing rain, or a great flood?
- D. Having a Forgiving Attitude is a Necessary Quality in Order to Be at Peace With Others.
1. Consider again:
 - a. Ephesians 4:31-32: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”
 - b. Colossians 3:13: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”
 2. Unless we are willing to forgive those to sin against us, we cannot have fellowship with God.
 - a. How often shall we forgive an offending brother? “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matt. 18:21-35).
 - b. We cannot erase from our memory the knowledge of the injury we have suffered at the hand of our brother, but we can put the hurt out of our thoughts.
 - c. We do not bring it up again or let it keep returning to our minds. God does not!
 - (1) Hebrews 8:12: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”
 - (2) Hebrews 10:17: “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”
 3. We will surely get along well with our spouse and fellow-saints if we maintain a forgiving attitude.
 4. In forgiving someone who has sinned against us, we do not ourselves remove his guilt; that is God’s work. But when the offender repents, we remove the roadblock the offense has erected between the two of us.
 - a. Mark 11:25: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”
 - b. Luke 17:3-4: “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he
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repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”

E. Having Humility is a Necessary Quality in Order to Be at Peace With Others.

1. More great truths:
 - a. Romans 12:16: “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.”
 - b. Romans 12:3: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”
 - c. 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.”
2. If we are humble, we will acknowledge to ourselves and to others that we do not know everything and cannot do everything. We know that we have limitations, weaknesses, and are in need of Heaven’s help, as well as assistance from our brethren occasionally.
 - a. We are willing to listen to the advice and wisdom from our spouse and from other saints. We are not too proud to take counsel from others. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19).
 - b. No one has a monopoly on wisdom, knowledge, good ideas, or ability.
 - c. We must dispose of the attitude that says, *I could have told you* or *You should have listened to me*.
3. Humility will keep us from feeling superior to others.
 - a. This excellent trait can remove friction from a marriage and can promote harmony in the church.
 - b. Romans 12:16: “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.”
 - c. Philippians 2:3-4: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”
 - d. Genesis 13:7-11: “And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.”

III. CONCLUSION:

A. These Principles Are Summed up in the Golden Rule:

1. 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.”
2. Luke 6:27-38: “But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not,

and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

3. How do you want to be treated?
 - a. With kindness, sympathy, forbearance, forgiveness, and with humility.
 - b. This is the standard you must meet in dealing with others.
 4. Indeed, we ought to be even better to others than they are to us.
 - a. Romans 12:19-21: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” This is a practical principle that works.
 - b. A man had a lazy, unconcerned wife. He started bringing her a cup of coffee when he saw she needed one; before long, she started returning the favor. Their marriage improved greatly by simply practicing the basic rule of the Gospel.
 - c. Exercising this same rule in our relationship with fellow-workers, neighbors, and relatives, will improve each of these associations.
- B. These Principles Are God's Answers to Human Turmoil.
1. They will work as surely as the plan of salvation works.
 2. When an alien sinner obeys the gospel, the barrier of his guilt will be expunged from his soul, and he can stand in wonderful fellowship with Heaven
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Can You Find Any Legitimate Fault With the Church of Christ?

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Complaints Are Often Made About the Lord's Church.

1. Many who have already rejected the truth, or who have been prejudiced against the church, are heard to say, "They think they are the only ones who are going to heaven." Such misguided folks think of us as "self-righteous."
 - a. The truth is that only those accountable people who obey the word of God will be saved and go to heaven.
 - b. Also, none of us thinks that membership in the church of Christ automatically guarantees eternal salvation in heaven.
2. Many who are members of the church also have some harsh things to say against the local congregation:
 - a. "The elders and preacher are too negative, make too many demands on the members, and emphasize the wrong things."
 - b. If the local leaders are faithful, they will not be too negative or too demanding, and will only place the emphasize on scriptural truths.
 - c. Maybe the complaining members just do not understand the truth. Or maybe the leaders do not keep the congregation aware of why they do what they do.
3. Modernists and Liberals in the religious community, and even in the Lord's church itself, have many complaints to offer against the Lord's body:
 - a. Regarding worship: Some of them want it to be more exciting and interesting; they want to be entertained by the presentations of drama and skits; they want to make the services more appealing to worldly-minded people and sectarians.
 - (1) John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - (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."
 - b. Regarding the messages presented: Some of them demand all-positive preaching, complain against using too much scripture, and expect the teaching to address modern wants.
 - (1) 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
 - (2) 1 Peter 4:11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."
 - (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. Regarding the plan of salvation: Many of them want us to play down baptism, emphasize God's grace and love, and virtually eliminate references to obedience.
 - (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) Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
 - (3) Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
 - d. Regarding fellowship with the sectarians: Some of them believe the members of the sects are sincere, that they are honest, that their prayers are heard by God, and that these folks are fully acceptable to the Almighty.
 - (1) Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather

reprove them.”

- (2) 2 John 1:9-11: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

e. Regarding the interpretation of the Bible: Some of them want to ignore the difficult information, that only the gist of a passage is to be discussed (not the details); they frequently refer to the "core gospel."

- (1) 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.”

- (2) Acts 17:11-12: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.”

B. The Lord’s Church Has Always Been Criticized, Opposed, Persecuted and Discouraged.

1. Our brethren in the first century were driven from their homes, jobs, businesses, and relatives.

a. Acts 8:1: “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

b. Acts 28:22: “But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.”

2. Why? What's wrong with the church of Christ? Is there anything?

II. DISCUSSION:

A. Is There Anything Wrong or Unscriptural With What We Are Trying to Accomplish?

1. Is there any legitimate complaint that anyone can raise against our aims (purposes)? All of our aims (purposes) are scriptural and right. No one should complain against them.

2. One of our purposes is to restore pure New Testament Christianity in our world. Surely no one would find fault with this aim!

a. Proverbs 22:28: “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” [God has given us his revealed, confirmed, and preserved word, but the majority knows little about it].

b. 1 Timothy 4:1: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” [This and other warnings were given by New Testament prophets and the apostles of Christ regarding an upcoming apostasy; but the brethren did not take heed].

c. Jeremiah 6:16: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” [As Israel went astray and did not want to return to God’s way, so many today are lost in sectarian error and sin, and do not want the truth; it is our purpose to persuade them by teaching the Bible].

d. We are trying to call people back to God’s ways:

- (1) 1 Peter 4:11: “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; is any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

- (2) 1 Corinthians 4:6: “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other.”

- (3) Colossians 3:17: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

3. Another of our purposes is to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent [these verses are from the American Standard Version].

a. 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.”

- b. 1 Peter 4:11: “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; is any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”
- c. 1 Corinthians 4:6: “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other.”
- d. Colossians 3:17: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
4. Our aim is to preach the pure gospel to whole world:
 - 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. Ephesians 3:3-8: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 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. Ephesians 4:12: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (ASV). [Perfecting the saints is to edify them in the faith; the work of ministering is helping the needy, and the building up of the Lord’s body is evangelization].
5. Another purpose we intend to accomplish is to edify the members of the church by teaching them the fulness of God’s word:
 - 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. 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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
 - c. Romans 16:25-26: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”
 - d. Ephesians 3:8-11: “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; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 - e. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”
 - f. Ephesians 4:12: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (ASV). [Again, perfecting the saints is to edify them in the faith; the work

of ministering is helping the needy, and the building up of the Lord's body is evangelization].

6. Another of our aims is to help those who are in need of the essentials of life.
 - a. Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - 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. Matthew 5:42: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."
 - d. Ephesians 4:12: "For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (ASV). [Perfecting the saints is to edify them in the faith; the work of ministering is helping the needy, and the building up of the Lord's body is evangelization].
- B. Is There Anything Wrong or Unscriptural With the Name (the Designation) By Which We Are Known?
 1. The New Testament gives no formal name by which the church is to be called. However, there are certain terms by which it is described.
 2. We use the scriptural designations:
 - a. Romans 16:16: "...The churches of Christ salute you."
 - b. 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." [Since the church our Lord established belongs to him, we may accurately designate it as *the Lord's church* or *the church of Christ*.
 - c. Acts 20:28: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (ASV). Here, it is forthrightly designated as *the church of the Lord*. [In the KJV of this verse, it is called *the church of God*—the *God* meant is Christ, for it was he who shed the blood by which the church was purchased].
 - d. 1 Corinthians 1:1-2: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." [The church is called *the church of God* here because God originated the plans for it and acted to bring it into existence. *The church of God* and *the church of Christ* are identical].
 - e. The church is also referred to as the *kingdom*, and in Matthew 16:16-19, the two terms are used interchangeably, showing that they are the same: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 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. 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" (Matt. 16:16-19).
 - f. The *church* and *the body of Christ* are likewise identical.
 - (1) Ephesians 1:19-23: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - (2) Ephesians 5:23-27: "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....Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or

- wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
- (3) Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”
 - (4) Colossians 1:24: “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”
 - g. These designations are not denied by the sectarians. They understand that these terms are entirely scriptural.
 - h. The names [designations] given shows the true relationship of Christians to Christ—they belong to him.
3. Most of the names the sectarians use are not found in the Scriptures—something that usually surprises their members.
 - a. This fact has caused them to argue that there is nothing in a name—an argument that is foolish. Does it matter whose name is on the deed to your property, or on the title of your car, or the name on your bank account?
 - b. Would it bother you if your wife wore the name of another man?
 - c. There is definitely something in a name.
 4. There is obviously nothing wrong with the name we wear—Christian.
 - a. James 2:7: “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?”
 - b. 1 Peter 4:16: “But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (ASV).
- C. Is There Anything Wrong or Unscriptural With the Worship We Offer Unto God?
1. It is natural for man to worship; but how should he worship; whom should he worship?
 - a. Should a man worship according to his personal feelings, or according to what his parents practiced, or according to the majority of people where he lives?
 - b. Since the God of the Bible is the only true and living God, what does He want? It is entirely up to him, for he is the object of our worship.
 - (1) John 4:22-24: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 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.”
 - (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.”
 - (3) 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.”
 - (4) 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. God has specified items for our worship:
 - a. We are to sing songs of praise:
 - (1) The requirement to sing automatically excludes whistling, humming, drumming, and using mechanical instruments of music.
 - (a) Ephesians 5:18-19: “...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.”
 - (b) 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) 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.”
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- b. We are to eat the Lord's Supper on the Lord's day, each week:
 - (1) 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) 1 Corinthians 11:20-30: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. 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. 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."
 - c. We are to teach and study God's word in the assemblies:
 - (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. We are to pray during the worship assemblies:
 - (1) 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing."
 - (2) Acts 2:42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
 - (3) 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."
 - (4) 1 Timothy 2:8: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."
 - (5) 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith."
 - e. We are to give of our means during the Lord's day assemblies:
 - (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."
- D. Is There Anything Wrong or Unscriptural With the Plan of Salvation We Teach?
1. Our salvation is by the grace of God, through faith:
 - a. Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."
 - b. Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of
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- God.”
- 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.”
 2. God’s grace is extended to mankind by the gospel, which is his plan to make man righteous:
 - a. 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.”
 - b. 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.:
 - c. Romans 5:21: “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - d. Psalms 119:172: “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”
 - e. 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.”
 - f. 1 John 3:7: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”
 3. Blackstone, who wrote a definitive treatise on Law, defined law as “that which forbids the wrong and commands the right.”
 - a. But that is precisely what God’s grace does: “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” (Tit. 2:11-12).
 - b. Thus, the gospel of Christ forbids us to do that which is wrong, and requires us to do that which is right.
 4. Faith is our response to God’s Law: we believe and obey what he says:
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Hebrews 5:9: “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”
 - c. James 2:14-26: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”
 5. There are certain items which our Lord requires us to take in order to be saved:
 - a. We must believe his word, including the fact that he is the Son of God:
 - (1) 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
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- damned.”
- (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.”
- b. We must repent of our past sins, resolving to live for Christ henceforth:
- (1) Acts 17:30: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”
- (2) Luke 13:3: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
- (3) 2 Corinthians 7:10: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”
- (4) Acts 3:19: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”
- c. We must be willing to confess with our mouth the faith we have in our heart:
- (1) Matthew 10:32: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also 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 8:36-37: “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.”
- d. We must be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins:
- (1) Galatians 3:26-27: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- (2) Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
- (3) 2 Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”
- (4) 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.”
- (5) Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
6. Since the plan of salvation we teach and practice is directly from the New Testament, there can be nothing wrong with what we tell aliens to do in order to be saved from their past sins.
- E. Is There Anything Wrong or Unscriptural With the Work We Teach Christians To Do?
1. We teach converts to be willing workers for the greatest cause on earth—serving Christ.
- a. Titus 3:1: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.”
- b. 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.”
- c. Titus 2:11-14: “For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.”
- d. 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.”
2. We teach converts to keep themselves unspotted from world:
- a. James 1:27: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless
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- and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
- b. 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.”
 - c. 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.”
3. We teach converts to do all that is within their ability and opportunity to teach gospel to the lost:
- a. Matthew 28:19-20: “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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” [Notice, the apostles were teach converts to observe all things the apostles were commanded to do, which include teaching the gospel to the lost].
 - b. Ephesians 4:12: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (ASV). [The perfecting of the saints is the edifying the redeemed; the work of the ministry is helping the needy; the building up of the body of Christ is converting the lost].
 - c. Acts 8:4: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” [Our brethren spread out from Jerusalem, preaching the word wherever they went].
 - d. Compare: “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 15:19). [Paul fulfilled his great work of preaching the gospel far and wide].
4. We teach converts to help those who are in need of the physical necessities:
- a. Galatians 6:9-10: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”
 - 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. James 2:14-16: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”
 - d. Ephesians 4:12: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (ASV). [The perfecting of the saints is the edifying the redeemed; the work of the ministry is helping the needy; the building up of the body of Christ is converting the lost].
5. We teach converts to do all they can to assist others to develop spiritual maturity:
- a. 1 Corinthians 14:20: “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”
 - b. 1 Corinthians 16:13: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”
 - c. 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. 2 Peter 1:3-11: “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: 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; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to
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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.”

- e. 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.”
- f. 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.”
- g. 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.”
- h. Ephesians 4:12: “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (ASV). [The perfecting of the saints is the edifying the redeemed; the work of the ministry is helping the needy; the building up of the body of Christ is converting the lost].

III. CONCLUSION:

A. The Gospel System is Perfect.

1. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the standard:
 - a. John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
 - b. James 1:25: “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”
 - 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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
 - d. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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.”
2. But the church is comprised of imperfect people who are trying to improve.
 - a. Some members through weakness fail to do right
 - b. Some members may be insincere at times.
 - c. No one should denounce the whole church because of some weak members.
 - d. There are a many bankers, lawyers, doctors, farmers, and folks from other professions, in jail; but they do not represent all.
 - e. In every generation of God’s people there have been weak and hypocritical ones, including such men as Judas, Ananias (Acts 5), and Diotrephes (3 John).
 - f. For every sinful member of the church, there are many who are spiritual giants.
3. What's wrong with the church of Christ? None of the things we have discussed!
4. But members are imperfect; we occasionally fall short of the perfect standard.

B. What is Right With the Church of Christ?

1. It was designed, planned, and established by the Almighty:
 - a. Isaiah 2:2-3: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
 - b. Ephesians 3:8-11: “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; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly

places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2. The Lord’s church is God's house, his family which upholds his truth:
 - a. 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. The Lord's church has been commissioned with the responsibility of maintaining the truth in its original purity, doing all within its power to instill the truth in each generation, and to defend the truth when unbelievers assail it.
 - c. We do no one any good if we communicate to them a perverted gospel. We do not live up to our God-given obligations if we pass on to future generations a message that is polluted with error. We have failed in our duty if we allow perverters to run amok in the church, weakening it in its knowledge, belief, and practice of the truth.
 - d. We have been given stewardship of the truth, which can save precious souls if it is fully taught to others. We must be wise and strong enough to accept and fulfill this great responsibility.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 6:20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 4:1-2: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
 3. The Lord’s church is the body of Christ:
 - a. Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”
 - b. Ephesians 1:22-23: “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
 4. The Lord’s church is comprised of the redeemed, and is destined for glory: “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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:23-27).
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The Savior's Tears

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. John 11 Reports the Story of the Death and Resurrection of Lazarus.

1. Lazarus and his two sisters (Mary and Martha) were special friends of our Lord.
2. A message came to the Lord that Lazarus was grievously sick; his sisters sent for Jesus, who was beyond Jordan.
 - a. John 10:40: "And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode."
 - b. John 11:1-4: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."
3. By the time Christ arrived at Bethany, his friend was dead: "Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already" (John 11:17).

B. A Survey of John 11:19-32 Reveals the Background Leading up to Our Lord's Tears:

1. When the message came about Lazarus' illness, the Lord delayed starting to Bethany: "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John 11:6-10).
 2. The Lord told the apostles that Lazarus was asleep, meaning that he was dead: "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:11-16).
 3. Arriving at Bethany, they found a crowd of Jews gathered to comfort the sisters, whose brother had died four days earlier: "Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:17-21).
 4. Martha mildly rebuffed Christ by saying if he had been present, Lazarus would not have died: "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:21-28).
 5. After speaking with the Lord, Martha went to tell Mary: "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha
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met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:29-32).

C. Our Lord Shed Tears at the Tomb of Lazarus.

1. John 11:33-36: "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!"
2. He groaned and was troubled (margin, *he troubled himself*). "The word translated 'groaned' conveys the notion of anger, indignation; angered and indignant with what or whom? The unbelieving Jews who affected grief but were so bitter toward him that they would ultimately accomplish his death say some; but this view seems forced and far-fetched with nothing in the immediate context to support it. More likely, our Lord was indignant with death itself which brought such sorrow to himself and to the sisters whom he loved. The word 'troubled' translates a term meaning to shake, shudder, and this points up the intensity of feeling expressed in the word 'groaned.' So indignant was Jesus that he shook!" (Guy N. Woods, *Commentary on John*, p.241).
3. Jesus wept.
 - a. This was different from the wailing of Mary (vs. 31; another Greek word is used). "The verb rendered 'wept' means to shed tears; a different term is used (*eklausen*) when he cried (sobbed) over Jerusalem. (Luke 19:41.) In sympathy for the sisters of Lazarus he shed tears; over the wicked city and people he engaged in crying and lamentation. See, also, Heb. 5:7. Great though his sorrow was at the tomb of Lazarus, his grief was far more manifest over the loss of souls than of the death of the body. Too, Lazarus was soon to be raised and the sorrow of the sisters would be turned into joy; there was no such hope for the rebellious people and nation of the Jews. They were soon to seal their doom by instigating his death on the cross. Though he silently grieved it was nonetheless deep and strong and those who observed were quick to detect this" (Woods, pp.241f).
 - b. He did not weep because Lazarus had died; he knew he would raise him, and had deliberately delayed his coming to Bethany: "When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11:4-6).
 - c. Our Lord did not even have to be present to raise Lazarus. He healed the nobleman's son from a distance: "So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house" (John 4:46-53).
4. His tears showed his great compassionate heart! His tears implies grief. He grieved in compassion and sympathy with Mary and Martha.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Concern and Grief Are Often Expressed in the Bible.

1. God was oftentimes grieved over humanity's follies and troubles.
2. He was grieved with the wicked of Noah's generation: "And it repented the LORD that he had made

- man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. 6:6).
3. Likewise, he grieved when Israel sinned: "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest....But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" (Heb. 3:10,11,17).
 4. He was also grieved over Israel's sufferings:
 - a. Exodus 1:13-14: "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, *was* with rigour."
 - b. Exodus 2:23-25: "And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them" (ASV).
 - c. Exodus 3:7-10: "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."
 5. He was grieved when Ammon oppressed Israel: "Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: **and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel**" (Judg. 10:9-16).
 6. He was compassionate toward Israel under Syrian oppression: "And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet" (2 Kings 13:23).
 7. He also expressed it in:
 - a. Psalms 78:36-40: "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!"
 - b. Psalms 86:15: "But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."
 - c. Psalms 145:8: "The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."
 8. God is gravely concerned about men today, and so must we be: "Beloved, let us love one another: for
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love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:7-11; cf. John 3:16).

B. Great People of the Bible Were Full of Tears and Compassion.

1. Jacob:
 - a. Genesis 33:4: "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept."
 - b. Genesis 37:35: "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."
 2. Joseph was one of the most tearful men the world has ever known.
 - a. Wept over his sinful, suffering brothers: "And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes" (Gen. 42:24).
 - b. He wept in his private chambers over his family: "And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there" (Gen. 43:30).
 - c. He wept aloud and unashamedly: "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard" (Gen. 45:1-2).
 - d. He wept as he greeted his brothers: "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him" (Gen. 45:15).
 - e. He wept when he was reunited with his father: "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while" (Gen. 46:29).
 - f. He wept when his father died: "And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him" (Gen. 50:1).
 - g. He wept with his brothers following Jacob's death: "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Gen. 50:15-21).
 3. David was a man who expressed sorrow and grief.
 - a. He wept when he met his friend Jonathan: "*And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20:41).
 - b. He wept when Amalek destroyed Ziklag: "And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; And had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way. So David and
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- his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep" (1 Sam. 30:1-4).
- c. He wept on learning of the death of Saul and Jonathan: "Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword" (2 Sam. 1:11-12).
 - d. He wept at the funeral of Abner: "And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept....And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" (2 Sam. 3:31-32,38).
 - e. He wept when his little son was ill: "Then said his servants unto him, What thing *is* this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" (2 Sam. 12:21-22).
 - f. He wept over Absalom: "And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*....And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is*. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:29,32-33).
4. Jeremiah often wept, and is known to us as the "Weeping Prophet."
 - a. Jeremiah 9:1: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"
 - b. Jeremiah 13:17: "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."
 - c. Jeremiah 48:32: "O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach *even* to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage."
 - d. Lamentations 1:16: "For these *things* I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed."
 5. Mary Magdalene wept at the tomb of Jesus: "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre" (John 20:11).
 6. Paul the apostle was a man of tears.
 - a. Acts 20:19-20,31: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house...Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."
 - b. 2 Corinthians 2:4: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly with you."
 7. The apostle Peter wept over his denial of Christ: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly"

(Matt. 26:75).

8. Our brethren of the first century wept:

- a. Acts 9:39: "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them."
- b. Acts 20:37-38: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more...."

C. Christ the Son of God Was a Man of Tears, Sorrow and Compassion.

1. He was prophesied to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3).
2. He wept over Jerusalem:
 - a. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).
 - b. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37).
3. He wept in regards to his divine mission: "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" (Heb. 5:7).
4. He was filled with compassion toward the lost: "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" (Matt. 9:36).
5. He had compassion toward the great multitude which followed him: "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14).
6. The Lord was concerned over the hunger of the multitude: "Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way" (Matt. 15:32).
7. He was touched by the plight of the widow of Nain: "And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).
8. He wept in sympathy and compassion with Mary and Martha over their grief and loss.
9. Our Lord is sympathetic and compassionate toward our losses, troubles and grief: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

D. Christ Had Much Grief over the Actions of Men During His Earthly Ministry.

1. The great majority rejected him: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12).
 - a. Most people still shun him and his word:
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of

- sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."
- (4) 2 Timothy 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
 - (5) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - (6) 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
- b. In the brotherhood today, many Christians are rejecting him: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).
- (1) His laws governing marriage, divorce, and remarriage are rejected: "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).
 - (2) His entrance requirements into the kingdom are being watered down and changed when men teach salvation is by grace only; or claim people can follow manmade doctrines and still be saved.
 - (3) His pattern for the worship and work of the church is altered by some.
 - (4) Many congregations want to hear only pleasant speeches by dynamic speakers which contain little truth, nothing negative, and have little instructional value; God is not glorified by such presentations, and souls are not saved or edified by such weak shows.
 - (5) Some are openly advocating false doctrine and aggressively denouncing the truth.
- c. Many of the Lord's people are spiritually weak, live ungodly lives, and bring much reproach upon the Lord by covetousness, indifference, and lack of love.
2. The Lord was grieved over the unbelief of those who knew him.
- a. His fellow-citizens of Nazareth: "And he went out from thence, and came into his own country.... And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching" (Mark 6:1-6).
 - b. Even his own apostles: "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told *it* unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (Mark 16:12-14).
3. He was grieved over the actions of some of his apostles.
- a. Peter, who denied him:
 - (1) Luke 22:31-32: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
 - (2) Luke 22:60-62: "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."
 - b. Judas, who betrayed him:

- (1) Psalms 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me."
- (2) John 13:18,21: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me....When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."
- c. He was grieved over the sins of those who were crucifying him: "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots" (Luke 23:34).
4. Our Lord grieves over the affairs of the world, our nation, and his church today.
5. He is gravely and sincerely concerned over our sorrows and troubles.
 - a. "Does Jesus Care?"
 - (1) Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin."
 - (2) Hebrews 13:5: "*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."
 - (3) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 - b. When you have some serious illness, or trouble, or suffer over difficulties in the church, or face the debilitating loss of a loved one—the sympathetic and compassionate heart of Christ weeps with you.

III. CONCLUSION.

A. God Is Mostly Concerned about Our Spiritual Well-being.

1. He is concerned enough with our physical well-being that he gives us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons" to nourish and sustain us; he placed in nature the various cures for our ills; he oversees our lives with his providential care.
2. But his primary concern for us is that we obey his word, live pure lives, serve him and worship him properly, so that heaven can be our eternal home!
 - a. Luke 10:19-20: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:7-8: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. 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."
 - d. Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
3. Christ sacrificed his life for our souls:
 - a. John 10:17-18: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."
 - b. 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."

B. God and Christ Grieve and Sorrow Today.

1. He grieves over the sins of his children even as we do over those of our children.
2. He wept for others, not for himself: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23:27-28).
3. He is touched by our griefs today:
 - a. Hebrews 2:17-18: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."
 - b. Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin."

C. Pertinent passages.

1. Psalm 126:5-6: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."
 2. Psalm 56:8: "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"
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Will You Help Make the Church Stronger?

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Physical Strength Is Highly Respected by Men.

1. Modern men and women lift weights, to strengthen their bodies and promote a better general health. One who is out of trim or overweight is scorned by some.
2. Sports stars, soldiers and animals frequently are in contests to show their strength.
3. We all admire strong healthy bodies; this usually means the individual is in good health.

B. The Lord is Especially Interested in Spiritual Strength.

1. Consider these truths:
 - 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."
2. 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...."
3. The aim of all Christians must be to make the church strong! This can be done by strengthening each member.

II. DISCUSSION: These Things Are Essential to Make the Church Stronger:

A. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Be Filled With Good Biblical Knowledge.

1. Consider these truths:
 - 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."
 - e. 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."
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2. Without knowing God's word, we cannot know right from wrong, or truth from error.
 3. We can gain knowledge during the public services of the church when the Bible is studied; the purpose of classes is to learn more; one purpose of worship is to increase our knowledge.
 4. We can learn more about the Bible through our private studies. Reading and meditating on the Bible will increase our understanding of God's will; we can glean much knowledge by reading sound books and publications from our brethren.
 5. We must put forth personal effort if we expect to learn: "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 cultivate 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 continuing study, our knowledge will gradually fade away: "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).
- B. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Be Filled With Strong Faith and Trust.
1. Consider these truths:
 - 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."
 2. The Roman saints were not commended because of big buildings, large membership, or great wealth, or big programs.
 - a. They were commended because of their faith!
 - b. When we study the truth, greater knowledge is accumulated, which produces greater faith, and serving God faithfully produces greater trust in him:
 - (1) Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
 - (3) 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."
 - (4) 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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - (5) James 1:2-8: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

3. Why were Moses, the Twelve, Paul in Athens, and Stephen at Jerusalem all able to do what they did? They knew the truth, they were utterly convinced of the rightness of the truth, they were completely committed to the truth, and were willing to present the truth, regardless of the consequences.
 4. What will enable us to fulfill our obligations to God: We must know the truth, believe the truth, be fully committed to live by the truth, and spread the truth—regardless of the consequences.
 - 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. 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. John 8:31-32: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - d. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: “And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”
 5. What will keep us from sin?
 - a. Psalms 119:11: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
 - b. 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.”
 - c. 1 John 2:1: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”
 - d. 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.”
 - e. Psalms 37:31: “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”
- C. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Be Filled With Fervent Love.
1. Consider these truths:
 - 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.”
 - h. 1 Peter 4:8: “Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins” (ASV).
 2. There are some strange ideas about love today:
 - a. Some think that love demands we overlook sin and tolerate error—even the most egregious sin and the most atrocious of error.
 - b. But it is not *love* to allow some precious soul remain in sin or error with issuing a word of

- warning.
- (1) 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...."
 - (2) Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
3. If we love God, we will serve him out of desire, not from dread.
 - a. John 14:15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
 - b. John 15:13-14: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."
 - 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. If love each other, we will seek their best good.
 - a. Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."
 - (1) Paul summarizes the point of this passage by saying, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Stated positively, he teaches that love seeks the best interests of its object.
 - (2) If we love another person as we ought, we will not wish him any harm, we will do him no harm, our words and deeds toward him will be such as we would want for ourselves (Matt. 7:12).
 - (3) "The law requires me not to murder my neighbor, not to steal from him, not to commit adultery against him, not to desire his goods; in a word, not to do him harm of any kind; and if I love him, I will not do him any. Hence, the love of my neighbor is the fulfillment of the law towards him" (Moses Lard, *Commentary on Romans*, p.406).
 - b. Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 5. Genuine love will make 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. "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).
- D. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Be Unspotted From the World.
1. The church is unspotted as each member keeps himself unspotted.
 - a. 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."
 - 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. 2 Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."
 - d. 1 Timothy 5:22: "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."
 2. The word *church* means "the called-out ones." Each member has been called out of the world, added to the body of Christ (the church), and is separated from the world. We still live on the earth but we

are not part of the world (the sinful society around us).

- a. Acts 2:47: "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
- b. Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
- c. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."
- d. Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
- e. 1 Timothy 5:22: "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."
- f. 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."
- g. 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."
- h. 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."

E. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Have Zeal and Devotion.

1. Consider these truths:

- a. John 2:13-17: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."
- 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."
- c. 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."
- d. There has never been a more zealous follower of Christ than the apostle Paul. His zeal and devotion to the Lord remains unsurpassed.
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Romans 15:17-20: "I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and

wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation."

- (3) 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."
2. The brethren in Laodicea were not zealous: "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: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:15-19).
3. In every generation of Christians, there are those who are the indifferent, irreverent, inattentive, and inactive. Such members do not contribute to the strength of the church. The zealous minority in a local congregation does most of the work and contributes most of the offering. But the Lord expects and demands such from every member, according to the individual's abilities and opportunities.
 - a. Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 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."
4. We must each hunger and thirst for righteousness, knowledge, faith, love; we each must be truly interested in and dedicated to the progress of the Lord's Cause!
 - a. Hebrews 12:12-15: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."
- F. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Have a United Membership.
 1. No congregation can be strong if the members pull against each other, have strife, develop bitterness.
 - a. 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.”

- b. Ephesians 4:31-32: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”
2. Consider these truths:
 - a. 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.”
 - b. 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.”
 - c. Ephesians 4:3: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
3. The individual strands of a rope are weak, but when several of them are entwined, they are much stronger than the sum of the single strands. A team of horses can pull a heavier load than the sum of the weight they can pull separately. There is strength in unity!

G. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must have Strong and Plain Preaching.

1. The preaching a local congregation receives must be wisely balanced.
 - a. Positive preaching is essential, or else the brethren will become discouraged. Negative preaching is essential, or else the brethren will become bitter.
 - (1) If we fed a child only ice cream and cotton candy, his health would be destroyed. If a saint is fed a steady diet consisting only of positive notions, he will be weak and sure to fall.
 - (2) If we fed a child only on steak, his health would suffer for lack of other essentials. If a saint is fed a steady diet consisting only of negative notions, he will be weak and sure to fall.
 - b. Our Lord frequently presented negative lessons—which were necessary to correct sin and error; he presented positive truth—which were required for man to know his duty.
 - (1) Matthew 23:13-24: “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! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

- (2) 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."
 - (3) 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."
 - (4) 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."
 - (5) 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 is also needed between *doctrinal* and *practical* lessons; we need to be taught and reminded of the basic truths of the Gospel, but we also need instruction in 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, and fancy programs may attract crowds, but these will starve, weaken, and destroy a local congregation.
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (ASV).
 - b. 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."
 - c. Jude 1:20-21: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude draws a contrast between the sensual men of the above verses and the saints to whom he was writing. He directs them to build themselves up on their most holy faith. "Building" is a reference to their growth in Christianity. With faith as the foundation, they were to construct a spiritual building:
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."
 - (2) 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.”

(3) Ephesians 2:20-22: “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.”

(4) Ephesians 3:17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.”

(5) Colossians 2:7: “Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

5. Clear, strong Bible preaching will not drive away those who want to do right!

H. For The Local Church to be Strong, It Must Be Filled With Active Members.

1. Physical inactivity destroys our physical bodies.

- a. I knew a fine gentleman many years ago who developed crippling arthritis. His joints swelled greatly and caused intense pain when he tried to walk. He spent his time sitting in a chair or in the bed. In a few months, he could neither walk nor stand, and soon passed away.
- b. We have read of certain ascetic types who spent years sitting cross-legged on the floor; their legs became utterly useless.
- c. An arm that is bound up in a sling for an extended period of time, loses much of its strength.
- d. A mind that is hypnotized by too much mind-numbing television will lose its thinking and reasoning powers.
- e. A mind that has been corrupted by foolish concepts, which require our mental processes to accept a tenet which we know to be false, will soon be incapable of “thinking straight.” Compare: “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. 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” (Rom. 1:20-26).

2. Spiritual inactivity will destroy the individual’s soul and the local church. As a physical body without physical exercise grows weak and subject to diseases and ailments, so a local congregation that is not active will grow weaker and is subject to other spiritual diseases and ailments.

3. Each member can do something, some more than others. If we bury our talent or leave it undiscovered, our very souls are in great jeopardy! Consider the parable of the talents:

- a. “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. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that

which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:24-30).

b. In contrast to this, consider our faithful brethren in the first century:

(1) Acts 2:37-47: “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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

(2) Acts 4:32-37: “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, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

4. What if all the members of a congregation were inactive? The church would be destroyed and the members would be lost!

5. A working church is happy and becomes a wonderful blessing to others—brings great honor to God.

III. CONCLUSION:

A. A Strong Congregation Requires These Characteristics:

1. Knowledge of the Bible.
2. Strong faith and trust in God.
3. Fervent love.
4. Unspotted from the world.
5. Zeal and devotion.
6. United membership.
7. Strong preaching and teaching.
8. Active membership.

B. There is Always Room For Improvement in Every Congregation.

1. Consider these truths:
 - a. Titus 3:1: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.”
 - b. 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.”
 - c. Hebrews 10:14: “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”
2. Congregations have many experiences with the passage of time:
 - a. We have great success.

- b. We sometimes lose members who move away.
 - c. We lose others due to apostasy.
 - d. We lose others due to death.
 - 3. But we must always be active.
 - a. Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 3:5-7: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."
 - C. Let Each of Us Rededicate Ourselves to the World's Greatest Mission!
 - 1. May each of us be as the Jews were in Nehemiah 4:6: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."
 - 2. May each of us accept the counsel of Paul in Galatians 5:7: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?"
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Two Deaths Too Many

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Reality of Death is Frightening and Fascinating.

1. Do you remember the occasion when you first learned about death?
2. Do you remember a time when you did not know that you would die some day?
3. Do you remember the first dead body you saw? What impression did it have on you?

B. The Subject of Death and Dying Has Always Been of Interest to Us.

1. The basic meaning of death is *separation*. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"(Jas. 2:26).
2. Most think of death only in the physical sense.
 - a. However, there are several types of death.
 - b. In this study, we will examine five death discussed in the Bible, plus the worst death of all.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Physical Death.

1. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the realm of earthly life:
 - a. 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."
 - b. James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
 - c. Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
2. The experience of death is an appointment we must each meet:
 - a. Hebrews 9:27-28: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
 - b. This truth does not mean that the exact instant of our death has been fixed; it simply signifies that death is appointed for all to experience (cf. Isa. 38).
 - c. Of course, we understand that those who are alive on the earth at the Second Coming of Christ will not die the usual sense; they will be instantly changed for a physical body to a spiritual body.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 15:50-53: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."
 - (2) 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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."
3. It is both wise and scriptural to be ready at all times for this experience:
 - a. Isaiah 38:1-6: "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy

days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.”

- b. Matthew 24:36-42: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

B. We Can Be Dead Because of Age or Inactivity.

1. Abraham and Sarah were beyond fatherhood and motherhood:
 - a. Genesis 17:17-19: “Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?....And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”
 - b. Romans 4:19: “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb.”
2. One can be *dead* (figuratively) by being separated from the ability or strength to do former things which he could easily do in the past.
 - a. A man could play football with strength and skill in his younger days, but due to age, injury, or serious disease, he is *dead* to playing that game any more.
 - b. A person in the midst of talent and skill may be able to be a master musician, but he can lose his ability and skill due to a debilitating disease or injury; he is *dead* to his former abilities.
3. Many fear old age with the loss of the various abilities it brings. In a figurative sense, we can lose our former abilities and skills we are *dead* to them.

C. Dead in Sin.

1. The Bible pictures a sinner as spiritually dead, but we were not born in that condition:
 - a. Genesis 8:21: “And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.”
 - b. Ecclesiastes 7:20: “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”
 - c. Ecclesiastes 7:29: “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”
 - d. Ezekiel 18:20: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
 - e. Ezekiel 28:15: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”
 - f. Matthew 18:3: “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
 - g. Matthew 19:14: “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”
2. To be *dead in sin* is to be separated from God, to have no spiritual life:
 - a. Isaiah 59:1-2: “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”
 - b. Ephesians 2:1-3: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had

our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

- c. 1 Timothy 5:6: “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”
 3. In this state one has no fellowship with God, but is alone in the world.
 - a. Ezekiel 18:20: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
 - b. Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
 - c. John 9:3: “Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”
 - d. Proverbs 28:9: “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.”
 - e. Psalms 66:18: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”
 4. One who is living in sin is *dead* IN sin and trespasses; the only hope is in Christ.
 - 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 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.”
 - c. Ephesians 2:11-13: “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”
 - d. Ephesians 5:23-27: “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. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
 - e. Galatians 3:26-27: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- D. We Are Dead to Sin When We Become Christians.
1. Consider these truths:
 - a. Romans 6:1-8: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”
 - b. Colossians 3:3: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
 - c. Colossians 2:20: “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances.”
 - d. 2 Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”
 - e. 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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2. Our guilt is removed when we obeyed the gospel from the heart:
 - a. Romans 6:17-18: "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."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."
 - c. Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - d. Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - e. Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
 3. When we become Christians, we are made alive by the Lord: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:11-13).
 - a. Prior to baptism, we were dead in sin. "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1-3).
 - b. The Colossians were Gentiles, consequently they were uncircumcised. The Gentiles were generally guilty of all manner of sinful conduct, much of it stemming from their corrupted religions. Their sinful condition was largely due to their Gentile upbringing.
 - c. Without the gospel of Christ, they would have lived and died in sin; their eternal destiny would have been disastrous. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).
 - d. However, the gospel was brought to Colossae, and these men and women had obeyed it. God had quickened them thereby, and forgiven them all their trespasses.
 - (1) Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus."
 - (2) Ephesians 2:11-13: "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
 4. When we obey the Gospel, we are separated from the practice of sin and are no longer under the dominion of sin:
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- 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. Romans 6:12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."
- c. Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
- 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."
- e. 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."
- f. 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."
- g. Hebrews 12:12-15: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

E. We are Dead to the Law of Moses.

1. We no longer are under bondage to this Old Testament law:
 - a. Romans 7:1-7: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."
 - b. Galatians 2:19: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."
 - c. Galatians 3:24-25: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."
 - d. Galatians 5:4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."
 - e. Acts 15:10: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

- f. Hebrews 8:13: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."
 2. Our new law is one of faith, love and liberty.
 - a. Romans 3:27: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."
 - b. Romans 8:2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
 - c. Galatians 6:2: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."
 - d. James 1:25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
 - e. James 2:8-13: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."
 - f. Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
 3. We are under law or else sin would not be possible:
 - a. Romans 4:14: "For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect."
 - b. Romans 5:13: "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."
 4. But Christ took the Mosaic Law out of the way, replacing it with his law, the Gospel.
 - a. Romans 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." [Our Lord was the object toward which the Law of Moses pointed].
 - b. Ephesians 2:15: "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."
 - c. Colossians 2:14: "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."
- F. The Second Death.
1. This separation is the eternal separation from God and righteousness which those sent to *Gehenna* (Hell) will suffer.
 - a. Revelation 20:14-15: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
 - b. Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
 - c. Revelation 2:11: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."
 2. The awful punishment is unchangeable and never-ending, and from which there is no escape.
 - a. John 8:21: "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."
 - b. 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."
 - c. Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - d. Mark 9:43-48: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better
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- for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”
3. Must obey the Gospel in this live and remain faithful to our Lord if we wish to avoid the Second Death.
 - a. John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 - b. John 10:10: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
 - c. John 8:36: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”
 - 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 Thessalonians 1:6-10: “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”
 4. The Second Death has no power over faithful Christians:
 - a. Revelation 2:11: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”
 - b. John 10:27-29: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”
 - 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.”

III. CONCLUSION.

A. How Many Ways Have You Died Thus Far?

1. Every accountable person has committed sin, therefore has died spiritually:
 - a. Ecclesiastes 7:20: “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”
 - b. Ecclesiastes 7:27: “Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account.”
 - c. Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
 - d. Although all accountable person fall victim to sin, some fall far deeper into sin than others. There are many who do not depart very far from God’s moral standard—but they have nevertheless departed. There are many more who go into sin at an early age, and keep going deeper and deeper into sin.
2. If you have obeyed the gospel you have died to sin—you are not guilty of sin, you do not practice sin.

B. Two Deaths Too Many.

1. Being dead in sin—when there is a Savior to deliver us.
2. Being dead in *Gehenna* —when that awful destiny can be avoided.

C. You Can Avoid the Second Death:

1. If you will obey the gospel.
 - a. Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be

- damned.”
- b. 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.”
 - c. Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
2. If you will live faithfully in Christ to the end of your earthly days.
- a. 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.”
 - b. Revelation 2:10: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”
 - 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.”
- D. The Invitation is a Call to Die To Sin:
- 1. To die to the guilt of sin.
 - 2. To die to the practice of sin.
 - 3. To die to the dominion of sin.
 - 4. To die to the consequences of sin.
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What Do I Owe Myself?

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Each Person must Give Account of Himself.

1. Romans 14:10-11: "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."
2. Each one is responsible before God personally, as an individual: "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" (Mark 12:30).
3. Each is obligated also to others: "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself..." (Mark 12:31).
4. But each individual is also responsible to himself.
 - a. Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."
 - 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."
 - c. 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."
 - d. Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

B. There Are Some Things Which I Owe to Myself.

1. These are things which no one else can do for me.
2. These are duties which every Christian owes himself to do.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Each Christian Once Was Lost, But is Now Saved.

1. Each saint obeyed the Gospel:
 - 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 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - c. 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
 - d. Ephesians 2:1: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."
 2. I owe it to myself to keep myself in that saved state.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Jude 1:21: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."
 3. Whenever a Christian stumbles or returns to a life of sin, for his own good, he must repent, confess his sins, and ask God for forgiveness.
 - a. James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
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- b. Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
- c. 1 John 1:8-10: "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."
- d. 1 John 1:7: "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."

B. Each Christian Once Lived in Darkness.

- 1. Having obeyed the Gospel, he now walks in the light.
 - a. Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
 - b. 1 Peter 2:9-11: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."
- 2. We owe it to ourselves to continue walking in the light.
 - a. 1 John 1:5-7: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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."
 - b. 2 Corinthians 4:1-4: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 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. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

C. Each Christian Was In the World, But Has Been Called Out of the World and Added to the Lord's Church.

- 1. We have been cleansed from all the stains we accumulated while in the world, our guilt having been cleansed by the blood of the Redeemer.
 - a. Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - b. Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - c. Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."
 - d. Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
 - 2. We owe it to ourselves to keep our souls unspotted from the world.
 - a. 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."
 - 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 1:7: "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."
 - 3. We retain our saved and cleansed condition by following the Lord's will to the fullest of our strength and ability.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always
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abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

- b. 2 Peter 1:3-11: “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: 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; 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.”

D. Each Christian Was Once In Bondage to Sin, But Christ Has Set Him Free.

1. John 8:30-37: “As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
2. We owe it to ourselves to stand fast in our freedom.
 - a. Acts 15:10: “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”
 - b. Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”
 - c. Galatians 5:7 “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?”
 - d. Hebrews 10:26: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”
 - e. 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 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.”
3. Only Christ can provide freedom from the guilt, the practice, and the ultimate consequences of sin.
 - a. John 8:36: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”
 - b. John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - c. John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

E. Each Christian Was Once Ignorant, But Now We Are Disciples.

1. As a student (learner, pupil) of Christ, I owe it to myself to learn all I can about his will.
 - a. John 8:30-32: “As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - b. Hebrews 5:12: “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.”
 - c. Hebrews 5:14: “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. 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.”

- e. 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."
 - 2. No one is able to learn all the truth that is in the Bible.
 - a. If so, there would be no challenge for us ever to study God's word any more.
 - b. We would turn to some other source of information, and most likely lose our souls.
 - c. If we knew every particle of truth in the Bible, we would think of ourselves as equal to the Bible, and maybe even exalt ourselves above the Bible.
 - F. Each Christian Was An Unbeliever Once, But Now We Believe and Have Obeyed the Gospel.
 - 1. As a saved believer, we owe it to ourselves to maintain our faith.
 - a. Romans 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."
 - b. Luke 8:13: "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."
 - c. 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."
 - 2. If physical strength is not maintained, it will deteriorate into weakness; if faith is not kept growing, it will deteriorate into weakness. In the first case, the physical body will begin to atrophy; in the second case, the soul will begin to shrivel.
 - a. Mark 9:17-27: "And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."
 - b. Luke 17:5: "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith."
 - 3. The key to great faith lies in increasing our knowledge of God's word; we learn the truth so that we can practice the truth. We study the Bible in order to be more obedient. As we walk in harmony with the Gospel, we learn to trust the Lord.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - 4. Among the blessings we thus obtain is this: we may take our troubles, pains, sorrows, and other such things, to the Lord—and leave them there!
 - 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. 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."
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- c. 1 Peter 5:5-6: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

G. Each Christian Was a Sinner Before Conversion, and Lived In Willful Disobedience to God.

1. We repented of our past sins when we obeyed the Gospel; we owe it to ourselves to continue to be obedient to our Heavenly Father.
 - a. Romans 6:17-18: "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."
 - b. Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
 - c. Revelation 2:5: "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."
 - d. Revelation 3:19: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."
 - e. Ephesians 2:1-4: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."
 - f. Ephesians 2:11-13: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
2. While repentance can be a very difficult and painful experience, it for the best good of the penitent person.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 7:8-10: "For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (ASV).
 - b. Jonah 3:1-5, 10: "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them....And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

H. Before Our Conversion, Each Christian Was a Wild Branch, Separated From the True Vine.

1. John 15:1-6: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 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. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch,

and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

2. We have been grafted into the Vine.

- a. Romans 11:17-24: “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?”
- b. Paul is speaking especially to Gentiles (11:13), hence the wild olive tree represented the Gentiles; and since he has been discussing the Jews and Gentiles, the natural branches are Jews. Thus, the believing Gentiles and the believing Jews both partook of the same spiritual root and enjoyed the same spiritual blessings provided by the root.
- c. Paul admonishes the Gentiles not to boast against the natural branches. In Christ, neither the Jew nor the Gentile was elevated above the other, but all were on the same spiritual standing (Gal. 3:26-29; Matt. 23:8-12). The Gentile converts were not to boast against those unbelieving Jews who were broken off; to do so would lead to their being cut off, too.
- d. One in Christ who thought he could boast because of his spiritual attainments had forgotten that he was borne by the root; he did not bear the root. In other words, we did not save ourselves, but were saved by the grace of God. There is no room for boasting despite our wonderful standing with God.
- e. Those Jews and Gentiles who had obeyed the gospel had been grafted into the root (a figure representing acceptability with God; being part of his spiritual tree). Even so, the believing Gentiles were not to boast against the unbelieving Jews. Through the Jews came many blessings. Abraham is in a sense our forebear; Jesus came through the Jewish nation; the Old Testament Scriptures were given through the Jews; the first teachers of the gospel were Jews, the writers of the New Testament Scriptures were Jews [Luke may be an exception]. We owe much to the Jews! In America, the church today owes much to the pioneer preachers who suffered many privations and persecutions in order to preach the whole counsel of God and plant the church in our land. We are "warming by fires which we did not build."

3. We owe it to ourselves to abide in the Vine.

- a. Romans 6:3-4: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”
- b. 1 John 3:24: “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

I. Before Our Conversion, Each Christian Had Little or No Love For the Lord, But Now We Love Him.

1. If we love God, we will worship him sincerely. Men always worship that which they deem to be greater than themselves. No one worships something or someone that is inferior to the worshipper. Our brethren in the past, and in many places today, can show those who worship some inanimate object, the folly of doing so. The idol is merely a material object that has no life, no power to bless or curse, or even to defend itself. It is the height of folly to worship such an item.
2. We owe it to ourselves to remain in his love.
 - a. John 14:21: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

- b. 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 3. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).
 - a. Love of God here is God's love for us. We keep ourselves in his love by shaping our lives and hearts by his will. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:9-10).
 - (1) "In John 14:15, the Lord said, 'If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments,' where it is clear that he meant, 'Your love for me is to be seen in the keeping of my commandments.' There, the love under consideration is that which the disciples have for the Saviour; here, the love is that which the Lord has for his disciples. By keeping his commandments, we also abide in his love; thus, (1) those who bear fruit abide in the vine; (2) those who love the Lord keep his commandments; (3) those who keep his commandments abide in his love. And all who thus do, walk in the light. (1 John 1:7.) A comparison is drawn between the love Christ has for his followers and the love which the Father has for him. It is significant that the Lord does not ask his disciples to do that which he himself does not do. As it was necessary for him to keep the commandments of his Father to abide in the Father's love, so is it necessary for the disciples to keep the Lord's commandments to abide in his love. The motivating factor in each case is love" (Woods, *Commentary on John*, p.326).
 - (2) In telling them to keep themselves in the love of God, human response is clearly included in the salvation process. God provides the means and place of salvation; our part is to remain faithful to his word.
 - b. If a Christian fails to do so, he cuts himself off from the provisions of salvation.
- J. Before Our Conversion, We Had Little or No Love for the Truth, But Now We Cherish God's Word.
 1. We owe it to ourselves to maintain a strong love for his Truth.
 - a. John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - b. 1 Peter 1:22: "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."
 2. One who does not love the Truth will surely die lost! "And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12, ASV).
 - a. These who are being described by Paul did not have a love for the truth; a love for the truth could have led them to salvation, but since they did not love the truth, they are doomed to banishment from God in eternity.
 - b. The truth of which Paul speaks is the truth of God's word.
 - (1) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - (2) The truth is precious. "Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23).
 - c. The truth can be known; it is attainable: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).
 - d. Even a Christian can depart from the truth and lose his soul. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20)
- K. Before Our Conversion, We Christians Were Lost in Sin, Separated From the Grace of God.
 1. Now we possess the benefits of his grace.
 - a. Ephesians 2:1-7: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had

our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

- b. Titus 2:11-14: “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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 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. We owe it to ourselves to keep within the limits of God’s grace.
 - a. Galatians 5:1-4: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”
 - b. Ephesians 2:8-10: “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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

L. Before Our Conversion, Each Christian Was Indifferent to the Lord's Way.

- 1. But now we see the great importance of spiritual things.
 - a. Some did not even believe in the existence of God, the Deity of Christ, or the Inspiration of the Bible.
 - b. Some believed that this life is all there is to a man’s existence—thus many live as though there is no such thing as right or wrong, or truth and error.
 - c. Some believe in God, Christ, and knew the Bible—but did not have enough conviction or courage to obey the Gospel.
- 2. Each faithful Christian does he best to maintain his interest in spiritual things.
 - a. Matthew 12:30: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”
 - b. Hebrews 2:1-4: “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 recompence 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; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”
 - c. 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.”
 - d. 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.”

M. Before Our Conversion, We Were On the Broad Way, But Now We Are On the Narrow Way.

- 1. Each Christian owes it to himself to remain on this way, knowing it is the only right way.
- 2. Consider these truths:
 - 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. 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.”
 - c. 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.”
 - d. Jeremiah 6:16: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”
 - e. John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 - f. John 6:44-45: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”
- N. Before Our Conversion, We Lived Our Lives by Walking After the Flesh.
1. Each faithful saint walks *after the Spirit*. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:1-6).
 - a. The statement of the verse places a limit to the blessing: who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The verb *walk* is commonly used in the Bible to depict the way one lives (Eph. 4:1-3; 5:1-2,8; 1 Th. 4:1,12).
 - b. To walk after the flesh is to live in obedience to the lusts of the flesh; to serve earthly concerns, rather than heavenly. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh..." (verse 5). "But there is a general impression that God demanded a more rigid obedience to his law under the Jewish dispensation than under the Christian. It is imagined that through the death of Christ in some way an indulgence from God was secured by which man might be allowed greater license in neglecting the law of God and in going his own way. This is a fatal mistake" (Lipscomb, p.141).
 - (1) Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
 - (2) Hebrews 2:1-4: "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; 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*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
 - (3) 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."

- c. To walk after the Spirit is to live in obedience to the word which was revealed by the Holy Spirit. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5).
- 2. To walk after the Spirit is to our eternal advantage; we owe this to ourselves.
 - a. Galatians 5:24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."
 - b. Romans 8:13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."
 - c. 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."
- O. Before Our Conversion, We Were an Unused Stone, But Now We Are Part of the Lord's building.
 - 1. Each faithful, mature saint must never defile the Lord's spiritual building, the church.
 - a. Ephesians 2:18-22: "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 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."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." [The temple here is the Lord's church]
 - c. 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." [The temple here is the individual Christian].
 - 2. We owe it to ourselves to remain as pure in heart, life, word, and disposition as possible; this is to our eternal welfare.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
 - c. Hebrews 12:14-15: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."
 - d. 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."
 - e. 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."

III. CONCLUSION.

- A. Before Our Conversion to Christ, We were Without God and Without Hope and in the World.
 - 1. Consider these truths:

- a. Ephesians 2:11-13: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
 - b. 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."
 2. Now that we have been converted to Christ, we are to continue in the hope of the gospel. Faithfulness to Christ is so obviously taught in the Bible that we can only wonder at the reason many deny it! Paul's clear point in Colossians 1:22-23 is this: They will be presented to Christ in a holy condition, without any cause for blame or reproof, **if they continued in the faith, grounded and settled, and did not move away from the hope of the gospel.** If they moved away from the hope of the gospel, they could not be presented unto Christ in the holy state Paul described.
 - a. One cannot move away from the hope of the gospel if he has never had the hope of the gospel. No one can lose what he has never possessed.
 - b. 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."
 - c. Hebrews 10:26-27: "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."
 - d. 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 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."
 3. To be "grounded and settled" in the gospel is to be spiritually mature. To be grounded is to be set on a sure foundation; to be settled is to be firm and steadfast.
 - a. Matthew 7:24-25: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."
 - b. Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love."
 - c. 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."
 - d. 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."
 4. The hope of the gospel is salvation in heaven. We have actual forgiveness of sins when we obey the gospel (Acts 2:36-41); we receive the continuing cleansing of our sins by the blood of Christ as we live in harmony with the gospel (1 John 1:7-10). Faithfulness to Christ in this life results in salvation
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in heaven.

- a. 1 Peter 1:9: "Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls."
- b. 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."

5. The condition to receiving eternal salvation was to continue in **the faith**. In God's arrangement, there is only *one faith* (Eph. 4:4-5); that faith is the gospel system (Jude 3; Gal. 1:23; Acts 6:7). In man's arrangement, there are many faiths, but each of these has man as its only authority! There is no authority in the New Testament for multiple *faiths*. To go beyond the authority of God's word is to cut ourselves off from God and Christ, and thus to forfeit heaven!

- a. Colossians 3:17: "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."
- b. 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

B. Before Our Conversion to Christ, We Were On the Way to Torment by the Way We Lived.

1. But now, we are doing the best we can to remain in the saved condition and are earnestly seeking that eternal abode of the soul in Heaven.
2. Consider these truths:
 - a. 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?"
 - b. Acts 2:40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
 - 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. 1 Peter 1:3-9: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time....be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
 - f. 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."
 - g. 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. Review of the Major Points of This Lesson:

1. I was lost but now am saved.
2. I was once in darkness.
3. I was in the world, but have been called into Lord's church.
4. I was in bondage to sin, but Christ set me free.
5. I was ignorant but now I am a disciple.
6. I was an unbeliever but I now believe and have obeyed the gospel.
7. I was a willful sinner in disobedience to God.
8. I was a wild branch separated from Christ the true vine.
9. I once did not love the Lord but now I love him.
10. I once I did not love the truth, but now I love and cherish the Word of God.
11. I once was lost without the grace of God.

12. I once was indifferent to the Lord's way.
 13. I once was on the broad way, but now am in the narrow way.
 14. I once lived my life walking after the flesh.
 15. I was once an unused stone now am part of Lord's spiritual building.
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Are Your Affections in a Safe Place?

Col. 3:1-2

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Most of Us Frequently Misplace Things.

1. It might be as simple as putting down a water glass or coffee cup and not knowing where you left it.
2. It might be much more important, such as failing to keep up with your little child in a big store.

B. The Word *Affection* Denotes a *Warm Attachment, Love, Fondness*

1. Can anyone divide their affections between two or more spouses? We can love two or more children equally well, but the very nature of marriage makes the love between husband and wife exclusive.
2. "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" (Matt. 6:24).
3. The *heart* is the center of our affections. The nature of the individual is determined by the condition of the person's heart. What is in a man's heart determines the kind of person he is or will become. If we fill our minds with godly thoughts and motives, a godly person we will be. But the converse is also true: evil thoughts and motives will corrupt us. One who has an evil mind is sure to do wickedly. One cannot think wrong and do right.
 - a. Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee."
 - b. Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
 - c. Matthew 12:34-37: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 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."

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Our Affections Should Be Properly Placed.

1. On things above:
 - a. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 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" (Col. 3:1-3).
 - b. We have been raised from the watery grave of baptism, having died to the practice and guilt of sin, therefore we are to focus our thoughts, purposes, and emotions on heavenly matters.
2. Before our conversion, we lived in sin, were interested primarily in earthly affairs, and devoted our time and energy to serving ourselves. In that condition, we could not enjoy the good pleasure of God.
 - a. 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."
 - b. Romans 8:5-8: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."
3. Now that we have been converted, our interests are identical to those of Christ. Our destiny is to live forever in heaven with our Lord, so we are to center our minds on the things of Christ, and not on earthly concerns.
 - a. Romans 8:12-13: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body,

- ye shall live."
- b. 1 Peter 4:1-2: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."
 - c. 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."
4. Our love is to be focused on God, Christ, Heaven, and our eternal reward.
- a. Psalms 123:1: "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us."
 - b. 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."
 - c. 2 Peter 3:8-14: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
5. Our affections and mind ought to be centered on holy and pure things: "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. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:6-8),
6. Our affections should be greatly concerned with the law of God:
- a. Psalms 119:97: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."
 - b. Psalms 119:127: "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."
 - c. Psalms 1:1-2: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."
 - d. Psalms 19:1-14: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be
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desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

e. Romans 7:22: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

B. Our Affections Are *Not* to Be Placed on Some Things.

1. We must not be primarily concerned with our own self.

a. We are to concerned with the welfare of our soul, how we treat others, and how we served God.

(1) Romans 12:3: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

(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) 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.”

(4) 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.”

(5) 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.”

b. But we are not to be self-centered.

(1) Luke 18:9-14: “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

(2) Acts 8:9: “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one.”

(3) 2 Timothy 3:2: “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.”

2. We are not to place our affections of money.

a. 1 Timothy 6:10: “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

b. Mark 10:20-25: “And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust

- in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”
- c. Acts 5:1-11: “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”
 3. We must not place our affections on sinful or worldly pleasures.
 - a. Earthly pleasures are short-lived: “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” (Heb. 11:24-25).
 - b. Following sinful pleasures leads to death, spiritual and eternal.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 5:6: “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”
 - (2) 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.”
 - (3) Compare: “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” (Gal. 5:19-21).
 - c. Living in sinful pleasures will separate us from the Holy God:
 - (1) 2 Timothy 3:1-8: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”
 - (2) Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”
 - (3) Hebrews 12:14-15: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”
 4. While each Christian is to live with great confidence, his trust is in the Lord; he does not seek to be preeminent over others.
 - a. Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” [Christ has preeminence over
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- all that are in his spiritual body; only the Father is greater than he—in authority].
- b. Romans 12:3: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”
 - c. Philippians 2:3: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”
 - d. Matthew 5:3: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
5. We must not place our esteem on the world: “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” (1 John 2:15-17).
- a. The world of this passage is the sphere or world of evil; that order of things which stands opposed to God and godliness. We are forbidden to love this *kosmos* which is opposed to God. The love of John 3:16 is that of divine compassion, the redeeming mercy which God has for lost mankind. The love of our text (1 John 2:15) is the emotion of selfish desire, greed, worldly pride—having desire for those sinful elements that pertain to the society of men.
 - b. The prohibition of our text is emphatic—we are not to love the world, neither the things of the world. We are not to love even a specific or particular part of the sinful world. The rich young ruler’s problem was that he loved his riches and would not therefore dedicate himself to serve the Lord with his whole heart.
 - c. Love for the world and love for God are mutually exclusive.
 - (1) 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.”
 - (2) 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.”
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 6:17-18: “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.”
 - (4) 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.”
 - (5) 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.”
6. We must not place our affections on receiving the praise of men:
- a. John 12:42-43: “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”
 - b. Our Lord was immensely popular through much of his public ministry, but the time came when the multitudes turned against him; men are commonly fickle in praising others.
 - (1) Matthew 21:8-11: “And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”
 - (2) Luke 23:16-25: “I will therefore chastise him, and release him. (For of necessity he must
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release one unto them at the feast.) And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

- (3) Only a few days after giving our Lord a triumphant welcome to Jerusalem, some of these same people cried for his crucifixion.
7. We must not place our interest in the wages of unrighteousness: “Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15).
 - a. This passage shows that the evil men under consideration are fallen Christians, apostates from the faith. Peter shows this by reporting that they had forsaken the right way and had gone astray. One cannot leave a road without having been on that road; one cannot go astray unless he was once all right. The term go astray means to err—it is used also in these verses:
 - (1) Matthew 22:29: “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”
 - (2) Mark 12:24: “And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?”
 - (3) Mark 12:27: “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.”
 - (4) James 1:16: ‘Do not err, my beloved brethren.’
 - b. The right way is the way of God’s truth—the Gospel system.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 4:1: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”
 - (2) 2 Timothy 4:2-4: “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.”
 - (3) Acts 16:17: “The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.”
 - (4) Acts 13:5-12: “And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”
 - (5) John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 - c. When these false teachers adopted their sinful practices, they followed in the steps of Balaam

(Num. 22-24; 31:16; 25:1ff). Balaam was more interested in obtaining money from unrighteous activity than from doing that which was right. The evil men Peter described also loved the reward of sin and error. “Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD” (Num. 31:16). Balaam was later slain for his wickedness (Num. 31:8).

III. CONCLUSION.

A. Our Affections Must Not Be Placed On:

1. On self.
2. On money.
3. On Pleasure.
4. On Preeminence.
5. On the world.
6. On the Praise of men.
7. On the Wages of Unrighteousness.

B. Our Affections Must Be Placed On:

1. On things above.
2. Upon the law of Lord.
3. Upon Pure and Holy Things.

C. Where Are Your Affections Placed?

1. If they are not on spiritual items, you need to make a change.
 2. That change for an alien is to obey the Gospel:
 - a. Believe on Christ.
 - b. Repent of past sins.
 - c. Confess faith in the Lord.
 - d. Be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.
 3. That change for an erring saint is:
 - a. Repent of the wrong-doing.
 - b. Confess it to God.
 - c. Ask God for forgiveness.
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On These Truths We Are Agreed

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Differences Between Religious Groups Are Commonly Known.

1. "Variety is the spice of life," but only in harmless things are they acceptable.
2. Some beliefs and practices are harmful to the soul—those which are unscriptural are deadly, and must be opposed by those who know and believe the truth.
3. There are many differences between us and various sectarians on fundamental subjects as the plan of salvation, scriptural worship, the identity of the church; and the organization and work of the church, eternity, the end of time events, and God's grace and Law.

B. While There Are Many Differences, There Are Also Many Points of Agreement.

1. On the basic principles of the Bible, we often find general agreement.
2. In this study, we shall show some of these, plus how disagreements arise.

II. DISCUSSION.

A. One God.

1. This is the most fundamental truth of the Bible.
 - a. Isaiah 44:6: "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."
 - b. Exodus 3:4-6: "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."
 - c. Exodus 3:14: "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."
 - d. Psalms 90:1: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."
 - e. Exodus 20:2-3: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 - f. Ephesians 4:6: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."
2. Most of the religious world in our country accepts these truths; there is wide agreement on this matter.
3. It is only when someone speculates or pushes an opinion that disagreements arise.

B. One Lord Jesus Christ.

1. This is another basic truth in the Bible.
 - a. Ephesians 4: "One Lord...."
 - b. Colossians 2:9: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
 - c. 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."
 - d. Romans 1:4: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."
2. These truths about Christ are widely accepted in America:
 - a. His Virgin Birth: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:18-21).
 - b. His eternal nature.

- (1) Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
- (2) John 8:58: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."
- (3) John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."
- (4) John 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."
- c. His divine Sonship to the Almighty:
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Matthew 3:17: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - (3) Matthew 17:5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
- d. His mediatorship between man and God: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).
- e. His being the only Savior.
 - (1) John 6:68: "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."
 - (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."
- f. His resurrection: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor 15:19-20).
3. Those who accept these plain truths can be in agreement; but when someone denies them and speculates regarding Christ, division will surely arise.

C. One Holy Spirit.

1. No one speaks of *two Holy Spirits*: "There is one...Spirit..."
2. There is general agreement on the fact of ONE Spirit.
3. Speculations foment strife and division; the Holy Spirit is not responsible for divisions.
 - a. The Shakers said that marriage was sinful, but the Holy Spirit said the opposite: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).
 - b. The Mormons said that a man could have many wives, but the Holy Spirit denied this false doctrine:
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 7:2: "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." [Notice: one for each].
 - (2) Matthew 19:3-9: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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." [Only one spouse is allowed].

- c. False teachers say baptism has nothing to do with salvation, but the Holy Spirit said differently:
 - (1) 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."
 - (2) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
- d. Some people assert that miracles are being wrought today, but the Holy Spirit declared that they would cease.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 13:10-13: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
 - (2) Ephesians 4:11-16: "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (ASV).
 - (3) When the last apostle died, and last person died upon an apostle had conferred a spiritual gift died, the exercise of miraculous powers ceased.
 - (4) The primary purpose of miracles was to certify the speaker and confirm his message. That great end has been accomplished.
 - (a) Mark 16:20: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - (b) Hebrews 2:3-4: "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; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
- 4. We are in agreement about the Holy Spirit if we do not read into the inspired word any speculations, such as the use of instrumental music in worship, Calvinism, Premillennialism, Pentecostalism, Denominationalism, etc. Agreement exists only if every one follows the Bible, and rejects opinions, and speculations.

D. One Bible.

- 1. There was general agreement in the past that the Bible is the inspired word of God, that no changes are permitted to it, that it is the will of God for all of humanity, that it is the rule by which we are to live our lives on earth, and the only guide to lead us to Heaven.
- 2. Disagreements are caused by presumptuous speculations and opinions. Many claim to have received new revelations from God, but these invariably contradict the Bible. Others allege that new translations are better than the old, tried and true versions. But the new "Bibles" are usually filled with mis-translations, and have human doctrine inserted into the text.
- 3. We must reject these speculations and perverted translations. We can have agreement only if we believe and follow only the Spirit-given message of the Bible.

E. One Gospel.

- 1. In the past, few would say there is more than one God-given system. But since so much modernism, liberalism, and political correctness are pressed upon many of our countrymen, it is now commonly

- thought that we may pick the “God” we want to worship, the “religion” that best suits our desires, and follow a standard of morality that is pliable and pleasant.
2. It is likely the case that the majority in our country still understand that Islam, Hinduism, Animism, etc., are human systems. Most in the United States still accept the Gospel as the only right system.
 - a. Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
 - 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. 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.”
 - d. Acts 3:22-23: “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”
 - e. 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.”
 - f. 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.”
 - g. 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.”
 3. Various false systems are now being accepted, and the Gospel is falling into disgrace, as the Bible strongly predicted:
 - a. 1 Timothy 4:1-3: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”
 - b. 2 Timothy 3:13: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”
 - c. Acts 20:29-31: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”
 - d. 1 Peter 4:14: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”
 - e. 2 Peter 2:1-3: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”
 4. If we all believe, understand and follow the Bible, only then we will be in agreement.
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F. One Body of Christ.

1. No one speaks of bodies or kingdoms of Christ—not if they believe the New Testament.
 - a. Ephesians 4:4: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.”
 - b. John 10:16: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”
 - c. Romans 12:4-5: “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”
 - d. Ephesians 2:13-16: “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; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”
2. Concerning the church of the Bible: Christ is its head, it is his body, it is his kingdom.
 - a. Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”
 - b. Ephesians 1:22-23: “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
 - c. Matthew 16:16-19: “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 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. 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.”
 - d. Colossians 1:13-14: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”
3. The Bible is the only authoritative source book of information on the body, the church, the kingdom. When people speculate, disagreements arise; when we all stay with the Bible on this subject, we remain in agreement.
4. There are many speculations, including these:
 - a. That denominations comprise the body of Christ; but there is no evidence and no proof; this erroneous view ignores what the Bible teaches concerning the church.
 - b. That the church and the kingdom are different institutions; but there is no evidence and no proof; this faulty view ignores what the Bible teaches regarding the subject.
 - c. That the kingdom does not now exist; but this assertions denies plain Bible truths.
 - (1) Colossians 1:13: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”
 - (2) Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

G. Justification is by Faith.

1. Bible teaches that we are saved by faith:
 - a. Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. 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.”
 2. But it is mere speculation to teach that we are saved by faith alone.
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- a. We are not justified (saved) without faith: “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” (Heb. 11:6).
- b. We are not justified by faith alone: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24).
3. We are not justified without the grace of God, or without the blood of Christ, or separate from the truth of the Gospel, or without repentance, or without baptism into Christ.
 - a. 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. Hebrews 9:22: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”
 - c. 1 Peter 1:18-19: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”
 - d. Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”
 - e. 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.”
 - f. John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - g. 1 Peter 1:22-23: “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.”
 - h. Acts 17:30: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”
 - i. Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
 - j. 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.”

H. Baptism Requires Much Water.

1. Consider these truths about baptism:
 - a. Ephesians 4:5: “One Lord, one faith, **one baptism.**”
 - b. Acts 10:48: “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”
 - c. John 3:23: “And John also was baptizing in AEnon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”
 - d. Acts 8:36-38: “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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”
2. Speculations abound regarding baptism:
 - a. That the mode of baptism may be by sprinkling, by pouring or by immersion. The majority have accepted the application of a small amount of water and call that baptism. But....

- (1) Colossians 2:12: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."
 - (2) Romans 6:3-5: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."
 - (3) Acts 8:36-39: "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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."
 - (4) The first case of sprinkling as a substitute for baptism occurred in 251 A.D. It was not "officially" accepted by the apostate church until 1311 A.D.
 - b. The subjects of baptism has falsely included infants by the majority. But baptism is in order to obtain remission of sins; infants and little children have no sin (Ezek. 18:20).
 - (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."
 - (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) 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
 - c. The purpose of baptism for the remission of sins has been denied by the majority, but consider these passages:
 - (1) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - (2) Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - (3) 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
 3. Only when people depart from the divine pattern for baptism does disagreement arise.
- I. The Name God's People Should Wear is Christian.
1. A multitude of names invented by human thinking has plagued the religious world since shortly after the first century. Virtually every conceivable name has been invented.
 - a. If you ask the average person what his religion is, he is more than likely to respond by giving his denominational name.
 - b. Frequently, we startle others who ask of our religion and we reply "Christian." They then ask what kind of Christian, never having learned that there only one kind of Christian!
 2. Consider these truths:
 - a. Isaiah 62:2: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name."
 - 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."
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- c. 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."
- d. Acts 26:28: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."
- e. 1 Peter 4:16: "but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (ASV).
- 3. Disagreements and strife arise when unscriptural names are used. Why not drop all man-made names? Why not accept and use only the names given in the Bible?
 - a. Christians follow Christ; they are the children of God; they have been adopted into God's family.
 - b. We are also servants of Christ; we serve only our Master.
 - c. We are disciples; we are students of the Master Teacher; we learn his will and follow it completely.

III. CONCLUSION.

A. There Are Many Things in Which There Is Much Agreement.

- 1. We have listed some of these things.
- 2. We have shown that disagreements arise only when someone departs from the truth.
- 3. We can have 100% agreement if everyone rejected all speculations and opinions, and followed the will of God.
 - a. Philippians 3:16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."
 - b. John 17:20-21: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
 - c. Acts 4:32: "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."
 - d. Galatians 1:6-11: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man."
 - e. 2 John 1:9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
 - f. 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other?" (ASV).
 - g. 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."
 - h. James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

B. We Cannot Walk with God If Not in Full Agreement with Him.

- 1. Consider these truths:
 - a. Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
 - 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. 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.”
 - d. 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.”
 2. God requires the following of alien sinners—that they learn the gospel, believe in Christ, repent of their past sins, confess their faith in Christ, and be immersed into Christ for the remission of sins.
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Luke 13:3: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
 - c. Romans 10:10: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
 - d. 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.”
 3. God requires the following of erring Christians—to repent of sin, confess their sin, and pray for pardon.
 - 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. 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
 - c. 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.”
 4. God requires each Christian to follow Christ faithfully:
 - a. 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.”
 - b. 1 John 1:7: “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.”
 - c. Revelation 2:10: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”
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Christ, the Glorious Light in a Dark World

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Many figurative descriptions are given of Christ.

1. Being a Divine Personage, human language cannot adequately define Him. His power, his personality, his nature, his work are infinite; they are beyond our comprehension.
2. He is as infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent as Almighty God is.
3. Romans 8:31-39: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

B. Our Lord Uses Seven "I Am" Statements in John to Depict His Nature.

1. I am the Bread of Life: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:35-40).
2. I am the Light of the World: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come" (John 8:12-20).
3. I am the Door: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9).
4. I am the Good Shepherd: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14).
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).
6. I am the Way, the Truth, the Life: "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).
7. I am the True Vine: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1).

C. We Presently Are Studying the Concept That Christ is the Light of the World.

1. How important is physical light to one lost in a deep cave?
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2. How important is the spiritual light Christ gives to one lost in the depths of sin?
3. How important would light be to one lost in hell?
 - a. Matthew 8:12: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - b. Matthew 22:13: "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - c. Matthew 25:30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

II. DISCUSSION.

A. Certain Manifestations of God to Man Included Light.

1. Moses and the burning bush: "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed: (Ex. 3:2).
2. Moses descended Sinai with his face glowing: "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him" (Ex. 34:29-30).
3. The pillar of fire signified God's presence: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Ex. 40:34-38).
4. The presence of God at the mercy seat:
 - a. Exodus 25:22: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."
 - b. Leviticus 16:2: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat."
 - c. Psalms 80:1: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."
5. God is clearly manifested in the person, attitudes, words and actions of Jesus:
 - a. Matthew 1:23: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."
 - b. John 14:9: "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

B. Jesus is Spoken of as Light.

1. The word was used of our Lord even in prominent prophetic statements about him.
 - a. Isaiah 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."
 - b. Luke 1:78-79: "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."
 - c. Luke 2:32: "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."
2. He began his ministry with allusions to light.
 - a. Matthew 4:16: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the

region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” [Compare: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isa. 9:2)].

- b. John 1:4-7: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.”
3. Light was a key ingredient in his transfiguration scene.
 - a. Matthew 17:1-6: “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”
 - b. Mark 9:2-10: “And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.”
 - c. Luke 9:28-36: “And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.”
4. One is condemned if he rejects the light: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:19-20).
5. The climax of this background is reached in John 8:12: “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

C. Our Lord is Depicted as Light in Certain Old Testament Statements.

1. He is called the bright and morning star: “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev

22:16).

2. He is called the Sun of righteousness: “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal 4:2).
 - a. Like the literal sun, he has universal influence: “But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom 10:18).
 - b. As the literal sun is center of our solar system, so he is center of the inspired revelation.
 - c. As the sun has healing power, so does our Lord: “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings...” (Mal. 4:2).

D. There are Significant Ways in Which Our Lord is the Light of the World.

1. He is the moral light of world.
 - a. Modern societies have plunged into deep moral and spiritual depravity. It appears to many that the sinful situation in our world could hardly get any worse. But think about the world of Noah’s time:
 - (1) “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:5-8).
 - (2) Knowledgeable men have calculated that the population of the world in Noah’s generation was about two hundred million people. Out of that vast population, only eight precious souls were saved from the destruction of the universal flood. We have far more than eight righteous people even in our own nation, without counting the great numbers in foreign places.
 - b. But our world is presently in an awful moral state! That being the case, think how much worse it would now be without the great influence of the Gospel of Christ!
 - c. The New Testament teaches forcefully that the majority of mankind will die lost.
 - (1) Matthew 7:13-23: “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. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 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.”
 - (2) Luke 13:22-30: “And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall

be last.”

- d. The morality in our nation from the founding of the United States until modern times was very high—much greater than virtually in any other nation under the sun. Why? Because the Bible and God were highly respected and loved. The basic principles of our nation were Biblical tenets which were believed and accepted by the great majority.
 - (1) What happened since those early days? During the twentieth century, many preachers among the sectarians gave up their belief in the Bible. For a long time, they had rejected what the Bible taught regarding the Lord’s church, the plan of salvation, and worship (among others things). It was inevitable that, sooner or later, they would reject what the Bible teaches on moral and spiritual matters.
 - (2) With each succeeding generation, from the 1930s onward, the moral standard in America fell lower and lower. In the 1960s, the children of the *baby-boomer* generation rejected marriage and sexual morality. They rebelled against parental authority, school authority, civil authority, and God’s moral authority.
 - (3) With the rejection of God’s word, in education, in government, in the business world, and even in the religious world [generally], it is not surprising that morals have plummeted. Full national rights for same-sex people to enter *marriage* is only around the corner; the courts have given clear indications that we must accept yet this great step downward.
 - (4) We may fearfully anticipate in the near future that preachers and teachers will be forbidden to denounce homosexuality as sinful. While we cannot know the future, knowing the past gives us little hope for the government’s toleration of the work of God’s people as this century unfolds.
 - (5) There seems to be a growing interest among a large portion of the population toward sound, conservative principles in politics, government, education, and in financial concerns. Let us all fervently pray that this tendency might develop a much greater interest in studying the Word of God!
2. He is the intellectual light of world.
 - a. Ignorance, superstition, violence, moral depravity, and other such degradations abound where Christ and his gospel are not known.
 - b. In those nations and societies where the gospel has had a significant influence, the population in general follows a much higher level of morality and honesty.
 - c. Through the power of his gospel, our Lord has had a great influence on art, music, law, culture, education, and literature. Unfortunately, in our time when *political correctness* has been enforced by government, the younger generation is ignorant of these moral principles of the gospel which has had such an uplifting effect on previous generations. Attitudes, words, actions, morality, etc., which were commonly known and practiced in the past, are largely unknown by many today.
3. He has exalted lot of women: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).
4. His principles destroyed the roots of slavery—in ancient and modern times.
5. His moral standard is known around the world, and through the centuries has been recognized as the greatest. The religion invented by Mohammed has been a scourge on humanity since it violently was thrust upon the human family.
6. He is the spiritual light of the world.
 - a. He has all authority in the spiritual realm: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18).
 - b. His word is the final message from Heaven:
 - (1) “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”

(Rev. 22:18).

- (2) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).
 - (3) "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).
 - c. He reveals in his gospel everything we can know about life, immortality, and eternity: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:9-10).
 - d. He is the only light of the world. Consider the societies where the Gospel has not gone.
 - (1) Would you like to live in Haiti?
 - (2) How about Somalia?
 - (3) Life would not be pleasant in a Muslim country.
- E. Ones Who Follow the Gospel Lead an Exalted Life, the Best Possible Way to Live.
1. The Israelites in the wilderness followed the cloud of fire.
 - a. Without this special guidance, that generation would have been lost in the wilderness. In the present context, the Jews had just commemorated the wilderness warnings at the feast of tabernacles: "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand" (John 7:2).
 - b. During this feast, they dwelt in booths or tents during feast days, as forefathers had in their wilderness travels.
 - c. The Israelites who failed to follow the cloud, perished: "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night" (Ex. 13:21).
 - d. Those who fail to follow Christ will perish:
 - (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) Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - (4) Acts 3:22-23: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."
 2. We follow Christ by adhering to his roadmap (the New Testament).
 - a. We cannot literally follow him down Main Street! But we can obey his word and follow his example.
 - b. He leads us by his example:
 - (1) "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."
 3. He directs us by his word:
 - a. Consider:
 - (1) John 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Our spirit (our soul) gives life to the fleshly body (Jas. 2:26); the Gospel give life to our spirit (our soul). "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21).
 - (2) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom
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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. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

- b. Following him requires complete trust:
 - (1) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."
 - (2) John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (ASV).
 - (3) Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."
 - c. Our Lord requires full obedience:
 - (1) Hebrews 5:9: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
 - (2) Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
 - (3) 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."
 - (4) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
 - d. He requires continuing faithfulness:
 - (1) 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
 - (2) Ephesians 5:8: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."
 - (3) 1 John 1:7: "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."
4. Walking in the light has certain benefits.
- a. We have fellowship with Christ and with one another, and his blood continues to cleanse us as we remain faithful: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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" (1 John 1:6-10).
 - b. Following him causes us to love our brethren: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him" (1 John 2:9-10).
 - c. Following Christ makes us to be sober minded and alert: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do

others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:5-11).

- d. Another superb quality obedience to Christ provides is a clear and pure conscience:
 - (1) John 3:19-21: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
 - (2) 1 Peter 3:21-22: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."
- e. The pathway of following our Lord is clearly marked and safe, and the destination is certain:
 - (1) Psalms 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
 - (2) Isaiah 35:8: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."
 - (3) 2 Peter 1:1-11: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 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: 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; 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."

F. Faithful Christians Walk By the Light of Life.

- 1. We reflect his light.
 - a. God works through man:
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 2:15-16: "For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (ASV).
 - b. In this sense, we are "the light of the world."
 - (1) Matthew 5:15-16: "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."
 - (2) Philippians 2:15: "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."

2. What is the meaning of “light of life”?

- a. Light is necessary to life on earth; without the sun, no life on earth would be possible. Direct sunlight kills bacteria; the sun provides warmth for our comfort and to enable us to survive cold; the sun provides the essentials for plant life; and, of course, it illuminates the world so we can see.
- b. Without the “healing” from our spiritual “Sun” (Christ), there would be no life for our soul:
 - (1) Malachi 3:2: “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.”
 - (2) 2 Timothy 1:9-10: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”
 - (4) Acts 4:11-12: “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
- c. The light Christ gives through the Gospel makes it possible for us to see what is right and what is wrong, to perceive truth and identify error.
 - (1) 1 John 1:6-7: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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.”
 - (2) 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.”

G. The Pharisees Rejected His Message and Charged Him With Selfish Motives.

1. John 8:13-20: “The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.”
2. He proved his claim by many miraculous demonstrations:
 - a. 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.”
 - b. Mark 16:17-20: “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”
 - c. Hebrews 2:1-4: “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 recompence 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; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
3. His eternal home was heaven and he was to return there following his earthly mission: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go" (John 8:14).
 - a. His enemies did not know this, and would not believe him even though he wrought many miracles to prove his identity and testimony.
 - b. His testimony was fully verified by his miracles, by his sinless life, and by his marvelous words. Also, he fulfilled scores of Old Testament prophecies. Every honest, clear-thinking individual can know that Christ is the Savior.
 4. Christ had an intimate union with the Father: "Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me" (John 8:15-16).
 - a. He did not come to condemn the world (all accountable people had already condemned themselves by sin).
 - (1) John 3:17: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
 - (2) Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - (3) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - b. At the end of time, God will judge the world through his Son:
 - (1) John 5:19-22: "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."
 - (2) 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."
 - (3) Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
 5. There is perfect agreement between God and Christ.
 - a. Consider: "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (John 8:17-18).
 - b. The Mosaic Law required the testimony of two witnesses to condemn a criminal.
 - (1) Deuteronomy 17:6: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death."
 - (2) Matthew 18:16: "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."
 - c. God bore audible witness to the Sonship of the Messiah:
 - (1) Matthew 3:17: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - (2) Matthew 17:5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
 - (3) John 12:28: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."
 6. Our Lord's enemies demanded to know where his Father was.
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- a. Jesus said they did not know either the Father or his Son. We are able to know God by knowing and believing his revealed word.
- b. The only way to Father is through the Son:
 - (1) John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 - (2) John 14:9: "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"
 - (3) Matthew 11:27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."
- c. They asked their question in derision, but the Lord did not retaliate with a harsh response.
 - (1) 2 Timothy 2:25: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."
 - (2) 1 Peter 2:21-25: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

III. CONCLUSION.

A. What is Christ Worth To Us?

- 1. How do we rate him?
- 2. Do we frequently and regularly think of him?
- 3. What is our reaction to him? We must either believe or reject his claims.

B. Consider These Passages:

- 1. Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
 - 2. Psalms 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
 - 3. Psalms 119:130: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."
 - 4. John 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."
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