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SERMON OUTLINES

Vol. 2

By Tom McLemore

Published by

J. C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS

Winona/Singapore/New Delhi

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First Printing in U.S.A. 2,000 Copies.

Typesetting in Singapore.
Art work, Steve Choate

Order From: J. C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS
Rt. 2, Box 156
Winona, MS 38967
Phone (601) 283-1192

Introduction

Originally Bro. Tom McLemore gave me one manuscript of his sermon outlines. Being as large as it was, since the outlines were so full and long, I decided that we would divide them into two volumes. This, then, is Volume 2 of that set of outlines.

Having obtained a copy of this book, I would encourage you to go through the material, choose the subject or subjects you are going to use, and then make your own outlines. I am sure that in doing this, and of course adding other materials or leaving off certain points, that you will be making these lessons your own personal sermons and therefore they can be more easily delivered.

I am sure you would want to join me in thanking Bro. McLemore (who presently preaches for the Fanning Heights Church of Christ in Huntsville, AL) for making these sermon outlines available.

As the publisher, I would certainly pray that they will be widely used and be the means of doing only good.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
Seoul, Korea
Sept 16, 1986

Preface

These outlines represent the work of a young preacher in a local congregation. They were not produced by an expert in any sense, and it is hoped that they will be received with that in mind. The author feels that some good fresh approaches to needed subjects will be suggested by these outlines. Some are character studies, some are doctrinal discourses, while others are devotional lessons.

I want to thank J.C. Choate for his encouragement in producing these outlines for publication and for publishing them. He is a wonderful missionary and a great encourager of the work of the Lord.

Tom McLemore

January, 1984

Dedication

To me loving wife, Denise, and my two children, Jonathan and Amy, this book is affectionately dedicated.

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Identifying Christ And Christianity

Luke 9:18-24

Introduction

1. Things were happening in Palestine and everyone was talking about them - from the common people all the way up to King Herod. They were talking about the man who was making them happen ... *Jesus of Nazareth*.
 - a. Thirteen men had been going from village to village preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. They had been healing all manner of diseases, cleansing lepers, casting out demons, and even raising the dead.
 - b. Jesus of Nazareth was at an all time high in the popularity polls. His name was on every one's lips. (Cf. John 6:15.)
 - c. Along with everyone else, Herod was trying to figure out just who or what this Jesus was. (Lk. 9:7—9; Matt. 14:1; Mk. 6:14.)
 - d. Some time after Jesus and his disciples returned from preaching from village to village, Jesus taught multitudes the biggest part of "the day and then fed supper to 5000 of them with only five loaves and two fishes!
 - e. Having healed thousands in and about Galilee in the short time which followed, He then fed 4000 miraculously as before.
2. Yes, things were happening in Palestine and Jesus of Nazareth is making them happen. But "Who is He?" "What meaneth these things?" Jesus realized that it was time for his disciples to start understanding who He was and what He was about. (Read Luke 9:18-24.)
3. There are four key questions suggested in this text ... their answers reveal the identity of Christ and the identity of Christianity. Let's notice them.

Discussion

- I. Who do the people say Jesus is? (Vv. 18, 19.)
 - A. Since Herod had so wickedly put John to death, and since

John had made so many disciples and such an impact on Judea, people would naturally have attributed such phenomena to John risen from the dead. (Note: Like John, Jesus was a great preacher of repentance.)

- B. The people had expectations.
 - 1. *Elijah* — Mai. 4:5. (Jesus was a great miracle worker like Elijah.) They did not realize that John the Baptist had fulfilled this prophecy.
 - 2. "*Owe of the prophets*"
 - a. Cf. Matt. 16:14 - "Jeremiah" (Jesus was a man of tears and tender compassion like Jeremiah.) b. Cf. Deut. 18:18.
 - 3. Of course, all expected the Messiah and some recognized Jesus as He. (Lk. 4:40-41.)
- C. As today, these people viewed everything that was happening through the spectacles of their expectations rather than through reality. (Cf. Modern premillennialism)
 - 1. People saw Jesus of Nazareth according to what they wanted to see.
 - 2. People still do this, today. Rather than looking at Him through Scripture, they see Him as they would like Him to be.
 - 3. We learn well here that the majority is not the standard — the majority was wrong about Jesus.

II. Who do you say Jesus is? (Vv. 2, 21.)

- A. Peter's answer is simple and represents the answer of the other eleven: "The Christ of God".
 - 1. "Christ" and "Messiah" both mean "anointed one".
 - 2. "Jesus Christ" is not a proper name but a restatement of Peter's affirmation.
- B. Where did this knowledge come from? The same place it comes from today.
 - 1. Matt. 16:17 — from heaven not from the people.
 - a. They had seen God work signs and wonders through Jesus and had heard Him teach.
 - b. Jesus had given them power over disease, demons, and death.
 - c. Who among those twelve would or could doubt that

- this was the Christ — the Messiah — the anointed One?
2. Cf. Jn. 20:30 - We know Jesus is the Christ in the same way the apostles did — God has revealed it to us.
- C. Notice that Jesus asked "Who do YOU say that I am?"
1. Faith is individual and personal.
 2. Christ demands a *decision* on your part. You cannot just follow the crowd, the family or friends and have a personal, meaningful faith.
 3. In fact, relatives, friends, or religious leaders are not our standard, but rather our personal examination of Christ. (Cf. Jn. 7:48.)

III. Who then does Jesus say He is? (V. 22.)

- A. Though the disciples knew that Jesus was the Christ, they had not yet come to understand who "the Christ" was — what it meant to be Christ.
1. Matt. 16:21-23.
 2. If you asked me who Lamar Alexander is, I could rightly say, "He is the Governor of Tennessee." If I met Governor Alexander one day and asked him what being Governor is like, he might say, "It is making decisions that affect thousands of Tennesseans ... It is work." I could interrupt and say, "I thought you just lived in the governor's mansion, went to social events, and made TV commercials." I know who Lamar Alexander is ... he is the Governor. But do I know who the Governor is ... what it means to be Governor?
 3. Likewise, the disciples knew that Jesus was the Christ, they just didn't understand who the Christ was ... what "Christ" was all about.
- B. Suffering servant of Jehovah. (V. 22.) Rejected by religious leaders and killed. That is how Jesus described who He is.
1. Referred to this several times in Luke. (Lk. 9:43-45; 18:31-34.)
 2. He was the Christ of prophecy:
 - a. Despised and rejected of men. (Isa. 53:1—3.)
 - b. Smitten according to the plan of God. (Isa. 53:4-6.)

- c. His death was seen by men as a tragic failure. (Isa. 53:7-9.)
- d. His death seen by God as a glorious success. (Isa. 53:10-12.)
- C. Cf. Luke 24:44-47. This is what believing in Christ is all about.

IV. Who does Jesus say you are? (Vv. 23, 24.)

- A. To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ.
- B. A person who follows Christ is one who:
 - 1. *Denies himself*. Strong word ... almost forget that he exists. Ceases to consider his own interest in the slightest degree.
 - 2. *Takes up the cross*.
 - a. Not sickness, family trouble, business reversal, or a thousand other things. Incorrect to refer to these as "the cross I have to bear." (May be a *thorn* but not a *cross*.)
 - b. Rather — a commitment to God's plan even if it means death.
 - c. The Jews in Galilee knew what the cross meant! (Cf. Acts 5:37,) Josephus says that several hundred of Judas' followers were crucified.
 - 3. *Daily* — that continual, never-let-up nature of the commitment.
- C. 1 Pet. 2:21-25. We have stripped this passage of its true meaning. We apply it generally while it is specific. The example Peter is talking about is that of *Jesus' suffering*.

Conclusion

- 1. How do you identify Christ and Christianity?
 - a. The suffering servant of Jehovah, despised, rejected of men.
 - b. Followers of Christ who have made a commitment will live by it even if it means death.
- 2. May God help us to come closer in our understanding of Christ and his way ... to know who He is and who we are.

Titles Of Jesus (1)

Introduction

1. There are many titles by which the Savior is called in the Bible.
2. In the next two lessons we want to look at a few of the more familiar ones.
3. Such a study will give insights into the nature of Jesus as well as enlighten us on our relationship and responsibility to Him.

Discussion

- I. "Lord." 1 Thessalonians 1:1.
 - A. A noun, properly an adjective which means "one having power or authority, hence, "owner" or "master."
 - B. Bible teaches Christ's ownership of us. (1 Cor. 6:19—20; Titus 2:14.)
 - C. Bible teaches Christ is "master," and we are his slaves or servants. (Rom. 6:17—22.)
- II. "Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 1:1.
 - A. A transliteration of the Heb. "Joshua," which means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah is the Savior." A common name among Jews.
 - B. Names often were given because of the significance of their meaning. E.g. "Jacob" — supplanter, lit. "Heel grabber". (Gen. 25:24—26.) Hence, *Jesus* the name commanded to be given the Son. (Matt. 1:21.)
- III. "Christ." 1 Thessalonians 1:1.
 - A. Means "anointed" Heb.: Messiah. High priests were anointed with oil, the prophets were called "the anointed of God" (with the Spirit.) Kings were anointed.
 - B. Applies to Jesus for He is King of kings. (1 Tim. 6:15.)
 - C. King in the line of David (Zedikiah the last until Jesus.)

Sits on David's throne which has been established in heaven. (Acts 2:25, 30, 36.)

IV. "Advocate." 1 Jn. 2:1.

- A. parakletos lit. "called to one's side or to one's aid." (Same word translated "comforter" referring to the Holy Spirit... Jn. 14:16, et. al.)
 - 1. Used of Counsel for the defense in courts of justice.
 - 2. Generally, one who pleads the cause of another.
 - 3. Yet, in order to understand Jesus' word as our "advocate", we must look at verse 2 - "propitiation".
- B. "Propitiation" - an expiation, a means whereby *sin is covered*.
 - 1. Thus as Christ is called to our side and aid as our counsel for the defense, he applies his blood to cover our sins so that they are no longer seen.
 - 2. Jesus thereby will make the evidence against us inadmissible.
- C. Only those baptized into his death (Rom. 6:3, 4) have this advocate to make propitiation for them.

V. The great apostle and high priest of our profession." Hebrews 3:1.

- A. Jesus is God's great Apostle.
 - 1. Apostle - "one sent forth."
 - a. Apostles of Christ — *personally sent forth by Christ*: the 12 and Paul.
 - b. Other apostles: Barnabas - Acts 14:14; Apostles of the churches - 2 Cor. 8:23; Epaphroditus - Phil. 2:25.
 - c. The word has a wide reference to anyone sent forth.
 - 2. Jesus personally sent forth by God. (Gal. 4:4.)
- B. Jesus is the High Priest of our profession.
 - 1. Not after the Levitical order (imperfect priesthood with imperfect sacrifices.)
 - 2. After the order of Melchizedek. (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 7:1-11.)
 - 3. In contrast to the Levitical priesthood — one time each year; Christ's work is *once*. (Heb. 9:12.)

VI. "Mediator." 1 Tim. 2:5.

- A. Mediator — lit. "a go-between" with the idea of making peace between two parties.
- B. Jesus the only mediator between God and man.
 - 1. Only one who possesses the nature and attributes of both God and men.
 - 2. Only one who could make the required sacrifice — a sinless savior.
- C. The idea of the pope or any other man mediating between God and men is preposterous as well as antisciptural and impossible.

Conclusion

- 1. These terms help us to understand what Christ has done for the salvation of the world. They describe the work which makes salvation available.
- 2. Yet, man must accept Christ, allow Christ to be these things to Him, by obeying the gospel.
- 3. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. Many unfaithful Christians need to use Him and be restored.

Titles Of Jesus (2)

Introduction

1. A preacher could preach for years and never exhaust the subject of the many faceted-Christ.
2. There are hundreds of titles descriptive of his nature and work given in the Bible.
3. In this second and final lesson in this series, we will examine just a few of the many titles of Jesus.

Discussion

- I. "Forerunner." Hebrews 6:20.
 - A. Used:
 1. Of military scouts who were sent before to take observations.
 2. Of one sent before a king to see that the way was prepared. (Isa. 40:3.)
 3. Of John the Baptizer in his harbinger work for Christ. (Matt. 11:10.)
 - B. Christ as our forerunner has prepared the way "through the veil".
 1. With His atoning sacrifice, Jesus entered heaven (typified by the Most Holy Place.) Note: At His death, the veil of the temple rent in twain.
 2. He has prepared the way for us. (Jn. 14:1— 3.) The hope of v. 19 — Heaven.
- II. "Author and Finisher of faith." Hebrews 12:2.
 - A. Author of faith.
 1. "Author" means - that which causes something.
 2. Christ the cause of the salvation of the obedient. (Heb. 5:8,9.)
 - B. Finisher of faith.
 1. Finisher — "one who completes or perfects a thing."
 2. Christ is the complete example of faith.

- a. Hebrews 11 provides some fine examples of faith.
- b. But Christ is *the* example of complete faith. (1 Pet. 2:21.) He faltered not even in the face of the cross. (Heb. 12:2.)

III. "Alpha and Omega."

- A. The first-last letters of the Greek alphabet, thus means 'the first and the last.' (Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13.)
- B. Used figuratively to stand for the *entirety* of anything.
 - 1. The Hebrews said of Abraham: "He kept the law from *aleph* to *tav*. (the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet.)
 - 2. "From A to Izzard" was an old colonial proverb in America with the same meaning. (Izzard was early American name for letter Z.)
- C. Christ is the *entirety* of things. (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:17, 18:2:3.)
- D. The meaning for us — Col. 1:28; 2:10.

IV. "The true vine." John 15:1-8.

- A. Vine used figuratively of Israel. (Psa. 80:8.)
 - 1. At onetime salvation was of the Jews. (Jn. 4:22.)
 - 2. Jews proved to be a wild and fruitless vine.
- B. Hence, Christ was planted as the *true* vine.
- C. Meaning:
 - 1. Denotes union with Christ in His church.
 - 2. As the vine supplies life to the branches, so Christ to Christians.
 - 3. A lesson of the error of denominationalism. They say each denomination a branch of Christ. But, verse 6 says MEN are branches.

V. "Stone - Cornerstone". Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-8.

- A. Idea comes from Psa. 118:22. "It has been suggested that this verse recalls a special incident connected with the rebuilding of the Temple. While the masons were pressing forward eagerly with their religious and patriotic task, a stone — one taken, perhaps from the ruins of the old Temple - was brought to them by the laborers. For some reason — its size, its shape, its color — it was put aside im-

patiently. But as the work proceeded they came to one of those sharp corners of Mount Moriah which always caused perplexity to architects. A stone of peculiar shape and strength was needed for the joining of the walls, and the architect examined stone after stone without finding one which met with his requirements. At last someone remembered the stone which had been thrown aside as unsuitable, and on experiment it was found to fit exactly." (Speakers Bible.)

- B. Christ was rejected by the Jews and by men in general. (Isa. 53:3; Jn. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:23.)
 - 1. Some men want to build upon worldly possessions (as the Rich Fool)
 - 2. Others want to build upon other men — Peter, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Joseph Smith, Herbert W. Armstrong, J.F.Rutherford.
 - 3. Christ is the only foundation! (1 Cor. 3:11.)
- C. If we receive Him, He gives the power to become sons of God. (Jn. 1:12.)

VI. "Bishop of your souls." 1 Pet. 2:25.

- A. Bishop *episkopos*; lit. an overseer (from *epi* — *over*; *skopeo* — to look or watch.)
 - 1. Same word describes the work of elders of the church. (Heb. 13:17.)
 - 2. The elders are overseers, but Christ is *the* overseer.
- B. Blessed thought — Christ watches for my soul and yours. Able to aid when tempted. (Heb. 2:18.)
- C. A tremendous responsibility — an overseer to be *obeyed*. "There is an eye watching you."

Conclusion

- 1. This study has helped us to see more of who Christ is and our sure responsibility to Him.
- 2. Let us always remember just who it is with whom we have to do.

Exceeding The Righteousness Of The Scribes And Pharisees

Matthew 5:20

Introduction

1. The righteous shall scarcely be saved. (1 Pet. 4:17.) In addition, God demands righteousness of His children. (1 Pet. 1:15,16.)
2. What is righteousness? Means "right." Was once spelled "rightwiseness."
 - a. Must be right in relation to God.
 - b. Must be right in relation to others.
 - c. Must be right in conduct.
3. But *how "right" must one be?*
 - a. I remember a Bible class teacher who admonished an unruly student saying, "Now, just do *half way right* and all will be fine." But does that get it?
 - b. Jesus gave the *top line* — the mark for which to aim and strive: *God's Righteousness*. (Matt. 6:33; 5:48.)
 - c. Jesus also gave the *Bottom Line* (since we are so interested in just how *little* we must do to get by) — the very *minimum* for acceptance. (Matt. 5:20.)

Discussion

- I. Let us learn some general characteristics of the Scribes and Pharisees.
 - A. The Scribes.
 1. Professional scholars of the law of Moses - *experts* on the law; called "lawyers" and "doctors of the law."
 2. Highly respected by the people who called them "Rabbi" (my master, my teacher.) Demanded reverence above that due parents.
 3. Served as judges and on the Sanhedrin due to their legal expertise.

- B. The Pharisees.
 - 1. A fraternal order or religious society who followed the Scribes and practices what they taught.
 - 2. They adhered strictly to the law *as interpreted by the Scribes* and made it their goal to bring the people into conformity with it.
 - 3. They professed to have a monopoly on understanding of the law and claimed to be more religious than the rest.

II. Let us learn of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

- A. Had its good points which showed them to be extremely "religious."
 - 1. They prayed regularly. (Lk. 18:10.)
 - 2. They met regularly for worship. (Lk. 4:16.)
 - 3. They zealously evangelized. (Matt. 23:15.)
 - 4. They searched the scriptures. (Jn. 5:39.)
 - 5. They were enthusiastic. (Rom. 10:2.)
 - 6. They gave liberally. (Matt. 23:23.)
- B. But there were many points which disqualified them from having righteousness suitable for entrance and membership in the kingdom.
 - 1. They were impenitent. (Matt. 3:7.)
 - 2. They refused to submit to baptism. (Lk. 7:30; Matt. 3:15.)
 - 3. They were covetous. (Lk. 16:14.)
 - 4. They were hypocritical. (Matt. 23:13, 14, 23, 25, 26, 29): seven times.
 - 5. They loved to be seen and heard by men. (Matt. 6:1-5.)
 - 6. They were self-righteousness: they trusted in themselves. (Lk. 18:9.)
 - 7. They bound their tradition on others. (Matt. 15:1—9.)
- C. That is why Jesus said, "Except your righteousness exceed theirs, you shall in *no case* enter the kingdom of heaven."
 - 1. It was a form of godliness but denied the power of godliness.
 - 2. They were *religious* but not *righteous* for they were not *right*.

- III. Let us compare our righteousness with that of the Scribes or Pharisees.
- A. This is important, for if ours does not exceed theirs, we *cannot enter nor remain members* of the kingdom — "In No Case!"
 - B. It is obvious that many fall short of the good points of the Scribes and Pharisees.
 - 1. They were extremely religious.
 - 2. We only *seem* to be religious.
 - a. Irregular prayer.
 - b. Irregular attendance at worship.
 - c. Hardly evangelize, if at all.
 - d. Rarely study, if ever.
 - e. Indifferent, lukewarm attitude.
 - f. Refuse to give as we've been prospered.
 - C. It is obvious that many are guilty of the same failings as the Scribes and Pharisees.
 - 1. Refuse to repent of sin in their lives.
 - 2. Won't submit to baptism.
 - 3. Are covetous, hypocritical, and self-righteous.
 - 4. Love the attention of men.
 - 5. Bind their traditions on others.
 - D. From these considerations it becomes obvious that the majority not only *fail to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, but also *fail miserably below it!*
- IV. Let us ask, "How can our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees?"
- A. Must realize what righteousness *really* is in the sight of God.
 - 1. More than being religious, though that is a part.
 - 2. More than an outward but an *outward and inward* righteousness.
 - 3. Consistency in profession and practice.
 - 4. A stand for the right whether seen of men and rewarded or not. (Or even persecuted. Matt. 5:10.)
 - 5. Trusting in God rather than self. (Titus 3:5.)
 - 6. Living strictly by the Bible, not opinions or traditions.
 - 7. Study and practice of what is studied.

- B. Must *hunger and thirst* after it. (Matt. 5:6.)
- C. Seek it *first*. (Matt. 6:33.)

Conclusion

1. The purpose of our lesson is to help us realize how much we must grow in order to meet *the Minimum* of what God wants us to be. I am afraid that many will wake up on the day of judgment and learn this too late.
2. Let us stop being satisfied with a religion which falls far below the *bottom line*. Let us make the necessary steps to grow to where our righteousness will *truly* exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

FIVE SECRETS OF LIVING

(Lesson 1)

John 15:1-17

The Secret Of Living Is Fruitbearing

John 15:2,8, 16

Introduction

1. In John 10:10 we learn that the devil is a thief ... he tries to rob men of their lives.
 - a. Some he robs by getting them to *waste* their lives in selfish indulgence — food, sleep, sex, alcohol... you name it.
 - b. Others he robs by getting them to dwell on memories of past failures, fears of the future, feelings of unimportance, etc.
2. But, we also learn that abundant life is available! Jesus came that men might have it.
 - a. Right now, YOU are either *wasting* your life, *spending* your life, or *investing* your life. It is you who determine which course you will follow.
 - b. Jesus wants to show us how to *invest* our lives, to enjoy abundant life, and ultimately how to have eternal life!
3. In John 15:1—17 Jesus shows us, through His message on the Vine and the branches, *five secrets of living* ... Five secrets to having life and having it more abundantly. (Read Jn. 15:1-17.)
 - a. Abundant life can be ours *only* through a close relationship with Jesus.
 - b. This morning and the next four Sunday mornings, we will look at these five secrets to abundant life.
 - c. Today, let's notice "Secret No. 1: *The Secret of Living is Fruitbearing*, verses 2, 8, and 18.
4. As we come to look at what Jesus says, we are led to ask ...

Discussion

- I. What and who am I? Why am I here? (Jesus here gives the answer.)

- A. Not knowing the answers (the right answers) to these questions is the cause for much failure and frustration in life. Illus. Imagine a man calling a wrench a screwdriver and then trying to use it as a screwdriver!
- B. Jesus tells us what and who we are and why we are here:
 - 1. He is the vine and we are the branches.
 - 2. We are here to bear fruit!
- C. How does one become a branch in the Vine? As a penitent believer, one is baptized *into* Christ. (Gal. 3:26, 27.)
 - 1. When one becomes a branch he has a living relationship with Christ, the Vine. It is a relationship based on obedient faith.
 - 2. Like branches receive their life from the vine, the Christian receives his life from Christ. (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20.)
 - 3. Apart from Christ you cannot live, much less bear fruit.
- D. It is no mystery as to why we are what we are and why we are here:
 - 1. We are living in a world of people starving for spiritual reality.
 - 2. It is only by Christians bearing fruit that this hunger can be satisfied.

II. What is this fruit that God wants us to bear?

- A. Naturally, winning others to Christ and helping them grow. (Rom. 1:13.)
 - 1. The life provided by the Vine flows through the branches enabling fruit to be produced.
 - 2. You talk about *abundant* life! — No joy is comparable to leading a soul to Christ.
 - a. Only one that comes close: Having children (after all God told them to be fruitful and multiply.)
 - b. The winning of a soul to Christ is often referred to in the scriptures in terms of begetting, e.g., Paul and Timothy; Peter and Mark.
- B. Practical holiness of life. (Rom. 6:22.)
 - 1. The theme of Rom. 6 is victory over sin and holiness of life is the fruit of that victory.
 - 2. This victory is experienced as a result of being in the Vine! (Rom. 8:1-4.)
- C. Sharing what we possess. (Rom. 15:28.)

1. Acts 2:44, 45 — the example of the early "branches".
 2. Christians are encouraged to share what they possess with those in need.
 3. After all, when the branch is *receiving* life from the Vine, it cannot help but *give!* It exists for this reason.
- D. Christian character. (Gal. 5:22, 23.)
1. We all want to improve ourselves ... weaknesses we want to remove and strengths we want to develop ...*But how?*
 2. By being branches in the Vine. (2 Cor. 5:17.)
- E. Good works. (Col. 1:10.)
1. Again, that is why we exist! (Eph. 2:8—10.)
 2. The result of salvation is always service. (Matt. 5:16.)
 3. *Wherever* a branch is he can produce good works. (School, home, work, etc.) Cf. 1 Cor. 10:31.
- F. Praising and thanking God. (Heb. 13:15.)
1. Certainly the branch that is in close union with the Vine longs for and deeply enjoys worship services. Whereas, it is no wonder that dead branches do not!
 2. Faithful worship, i.e., fruit of our lips, such as prayer, singing, etc., is the *natural* fruit of one in close union with the life giving Vine.

III. How much fruit does God want me to bear?

- A. Did you notice how Jesus said ... "fruit ... more fruit ... much fruit"?
Fruitbearing is a continuous, increasing matter!
- B. But how is this increase possible?
1. Cultivation. God, the husbandman "prunes" us. As we live in the Vine, God's word teaches us and we grow. Day by day the branches develop; day by day the fruit is produced. The "pruning" better fits us to bear fruit.
 2. The fruit we bear has seed in it for more fruit. As others partake of this fruit, they also begin to bear fruit.

Conclusion

1. The secret of living is fruitbearing.
 - a. God did not create you and Christ did not die for you so that you might wither on the vine ... so that you might go through life *getting!*

- b. God created you and Christ died for you that you might invest your life by bearing fruit ... *by giving*.
2. If you will yield to Christ and permit His life to produce fruit through you ... if you will by faithful obedience be a branch in the True Vine, you *will really* live!
3. Are you willing to be a branch?

FIVE SECRETS OF LIVING

(Lesson 2)
John 15:1-17

The Secret Of Fruitbearing Is Abiding

John 15:4-7

Introduction

1. John 10:10 — Christ came to provide life — abundant life. The devil is a thief trying to steal it from men.
2. We noticed last Sunday that the secret of abundant living is fruitbearing, from John 15:1 — 17.
3. Today as we look further at Jesus' message on the Vine and the branches, we learn the second secret of abundant living: *The Secret of Fruitbearing is Abiding*.
4. It is obvious that the secret to fruitbearing is abiding ... Jesus uses the word "abide" 12 times in John 15.

Discussion

- I. What is the significance of the concept of Abiding?
 - A. It is more than just obedience to the gospel Just becoming a member of the body of Christ (though these are essential and important.)
 1. Cannot be a branch in the Vine without:
 - a. Being born again, of water and the Spirit. (Jn. 3:3, 5.)
 - b. Being in Christ. (Gal. 3:26,27;! Cor. 12:13.)
 2. Yet, a person may be "in Christ" and yet be "taken away", (v. 2a; Cf. Heb. 6:4-6.)
 3. Many will be deceived on the day of judgment because they did not realize what "abiding" is all about, (v. 6; Matt. 7:21-23.)
 - B. Abundant life is not possible by merely being a branch but by *abiding* as a branch in Christ.
 1. The secret of abundant living is fruitbearing.
 2. Only by *abiding* in Christ can a branch bear fruit.

3. Therefore, abundant life is impossible short of abiding in Christ.
- C. Well, then, what IS the significance of the concept of *abiding*? What's it all about?
 1. Means maintaining a closeness, a communion, a personal relationship with Christ ... *knowing* Him. (1 Jn. 5:20.)
 2. Means maintaining a fellowship ... a "working-together" relationship with Him. (Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 3:9.) Notice, He says, "Abide in me and I in you."
 3. Means maintaining a strong desire to do His will. (Psa. 40; 8; Mk. 14:36.)

II. How do I know if I am abiding in the Vine?

- A. John 15 provides the results of abiding in the Vine ... tests which determine whether or not one is abiding.
- B. Consequently, by providing these tests, we are informed on the subject of *how* one abides in Christ,
- C. How do I know if I am abiding in Christ? What is the evidence?
 1. Cleanness.
 - a. Through the word of Christ, (v. 3.)
 - b. Through a walk in the light. (1 Jn. 1:7.)
 - c. Through confession of sins. (1 Jn. 1:9.)
 2. Christ and His words abiding in us. (vv. 4, 5, 7; cf. Gal. 2:20.) Can't have one without the other.
 - a. Means we walk as He walked. (1 Jn. 2:6.)
 - b. Means we do not practice sin as a way of life. (1 Jn. 3:6,9.)
 - c. Means abiding in the teaching, the doctrine of Christ. (2 Jn. 9; Jn. 8:31-32; 1 Jn. 2:24.)
 3. Bearing much fruit, (v. 5.)
 - a. Includes winning souls, practical holiness of life, sharing what we possess, Christian character, good works, and praise and thanksgiving.
 - b. You cannot bear much fruit without abiding in Christ yet, you cannot abide in Christ without bearing much fruit.
 4. The "pruning" of the Father, (v. 2.)
 - a. The Father cuts away from our lives anything which

- hinders the production of fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. b. This is His corrective discipline. (Heb. 12:7—11.)
5. A growing sense of one's own weakness, (v. 5.)
 - a. Must be humble, realize that we are *branches* and Christ is the Vine; without Him we can do nothing.
 - b. This enables us to be fruitful in that we realize that "we can do all things through Christ which strengthens us." (Phil. 4:13.)
 6. An active prayer life. (v. 7.) and answer to prayer.
 7. Increasing love for God and others, (vv. 9, 12.)
 - a. Love the first fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:21, 22.)
 - b. Purified *unto* genuine love of the brethren. (1 Pet. 1:22.)
 8. Inner joy. (v. 11.)
 - a. The world can provide entertainment, and even a bit of happiness, but only Christ can give joy. (cf. Psa. 16:11.)
 - b. One of the first signs of backsliding — not abiding in Christ — loss of spiritual joy. (Psa. 32:3.) Note: when David was restored, his joy was restored. (Psa. 51:12.)

Conclusion

1. Are you abiding in Christ? If you were put on trial for *abiding* in Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict you?
2. Since abiding in Christ is the secret to fruitbearing, we see that abiding in Christ is the difference between just existing and *abundant* living.
3. Are you *abiding*!

FIVE SECRETS OF LIVING

(Lesson 3)

John 15:1-17

The Secret Of Abiding Is Obeying

John 15:10, 14

Introduction

1. John 10:10 — Jesus came to provide abundant life.
2. In our subsequent study of "*The Vine and the Branches*," we have seen that:
 - a. The secret of abundant life is fruitbearing.
 - b. The secret of fruitbearing is abiding.
3. Today, let us notice the secret of abiding ... It is found in John 15:10, 14 ... *obeying*.

Discussion

- I. Why is obeying the secret of abiding?
 - A. Obeying is the fundamental law of the universe for abiding. E.g.:
 1. If a person obeys the laws of health, he will abide in health.
 2. If a pilot obeys the laws of aeronautics, he will abide in the air, in flight.
 3. The reason for our ecological problems is that man has not obeyed God's laws. If he had we would still be abiding in a world of plenty of pure air, water and abundant natural resources.
 4. God has written certain laws and principles into this world and we cannot disobey them without suffering.
 - B. Obeying is a fundamental law of the scriptures for abiding. E.g.:
 1. Adam and Eve did not abide in life and in the garden because they did not obey.
 2. Israel did not abide in the land of promise because they did not obey. (Deut. 11:26-28.)
 3. Saul did not abide as king ... his throne did not abide ... because of his obedience. (1 Sam. 13:13,14.)

4. Abraham did abide in God's promises to him because he did obey. (Gen. 22:15-18; 26:5.)
 5. Obedience of parents promises abiding in lengths of days. (Eph. 6:1-3.)
 6. Obeying the will of God ultimately promises eternal abiding. (1 Jn. 2:17.)
- C. Obedience releases power!
1. Scientists obey the laws of science and release power. E.g.: nuclear power, atom bombs, etc.
 2. Farmers obey the laws of agriculture and release power — crops produced.
 3. Obedience of God releases His power at work in us. (Phil. 2:12—14: enabling us to abide and bear fruit.)

II. What is involved in obeying?

- A. Recognizable difficulty, for one thing.
1. Obedience involves the will ... involves our becoming the slaves of it. (Rom. 6:16.)
 2. There is something selfish in us that says "Do it your own way" (the flesh.) Rom. 7:18, 19.
- B. Obedience involves a certain attitude of mind.
1. Must have the mind of Christ. (Phil. 2:5-8.)
 - a. A mind of self-emptying service. (Phil. 2:6, 7.)
 - b. A mind of humility. (Phil. 2:8.)
 - i. Remember Jesus said, "I am the vine and ye are the branches."
 - ii. "Without me ye can do nothing."
 2. Must have a mind under control. (2 Cor. 10:5.)
 3. Must have a mind of respect — "fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12.)
- C. Obedience involves a close, fixed attention to the commands of Christ.
1. "Keep" means "*to give heed to* (pay close attention), to observe."
 2. If our attention not firmly fixed on the commandments of Christ, they slip from us, we slip from them. (Heb. 2:1.)
- D. Obedience is something that is learned.
1. Even Jesus *learned* obedience. (Heb. 5:8, 9.)
 2. The word "learned" basically means "to acquire the habit of, to learn by use and practice."

1. Obedience is learned through suffering. (Heb. 5:8, 9; Jn. 15:2; Heb. 12:11.)
 4. It is also learned by practice. (Heb. 5:13.)
 5. We must acquire the habit of obeying Christ!
- E. These are merely the *practical aspects* of obedience - the flesh, bones, sinews, and organs thereof ... In our next lesson we will learn what the "*life's breath*" or secret of obedience is.

III. There are no substitutes for. obedience. (You can't abide any other way!)

- A. Men have tried in vain to make substitutes for obedience.
 1. Jews tried to substitute knowledge and study for obedience. (Jn. 5:39, 40.)
 2. Many have tried to substitute subjective emotional feelings for obedience.
 3. Worship for obedience. (Saul.) 1 Sam. 15:22.
 4. Words of obedience. (Two sons.) Matt. 21:28—32; cf. Matt. 15:8.
 5. Excuses for obedience. (One talent man.) Matt. 25:14— 30.
 6. Faith only. (Jas. 2:14-26.)
- B. Men have tried in vain to make substitutes for the thing which is to be obeyed.
 1. Traditions. (Matt. 15:1-6.)
 2. Precepts of men. (Matt. 15:9.)
- C. To abide in Christ, must *obey* and must obey *the commandments of Christ*. (Jn. 15:14.)

Conclusion

1. We cannot be saved without obeying Christ ... Neither from past sins nor eternally! (Heb. 5:8, 9.)
2. "If ye *do* ... do *whatsoever I command you* ..." emphasizes that *everything* commanded is *essential* ... F, R, C, and B ...*All*.
3. We should want to obey Him so that we might be in Him and *abide* in Him ... *There is no other way than to obey!* (Jn. 3:24.)
4. Are you obeying Christ?

FIVE SECRETS OF LIVING

(Lesson 4)

John 15:1-17

The Secret Of Obeying Is Loving

John 15:9, 10 The secret of obeying is loving because ...

- I. Love has a strong connection to obedience in the scriptures.
 - A. There are three levels of obedience.
 1. We can obey out of *fear* — because we *have* to.
 - a. There is a proper fear — respect, reverence. (Eccl. 12:13, 14; Heb. 12:28,29.)
 - b. But fear is not the best motive for obedience.
 2. We can obey out of *selfishness* — because we *need* to.
 - a. There are many examples of this. 1) E.g. Matt. 19:27 -- Peter.
2) E.g. Teenagers ... they have learned that obedience - can purchase favors.
 - a) Young man mows lawn, cleans room and knows he he has better chance of getting car keys.
 - b) Young girl helps mother in kitchen and knows she has better chance of going shopping for new clothes.
 - 3) Many Christians live like this -- obedience proportionate to what God gives them ... unlike the three Hebrews. (Dan. 3:17, 18.)
 - b. There are rewards to being faithful and obedient. (Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:29,30.)
 - c. Yet, obedience because we need to is not the best motive for obedience.
 3. The highest motive for obedience is love — we can obey because we want to. (Jn. 14:15-17 Cor. 13:13.)
- B. Why is love the highest motive for obedience?
 1. God delights in obedience from the heart.
 - a. Deut. 10:12, 13; 26:16; Rom. 6:17; Eph. 6:6.
 - b. Obedience from the heart is obedience motivated by love.

2. Love obeys whatever the cost — does" not measure sacrifice. (Jn. 15:13.)
 - a. Cf. Father who rushes into the burning house to save his child.
 - b. Cf. Mother who plunges into raging waters to save her child.
 - c. Love does not count the cost; Love that calculates is not true love.
3. Love is the essence of the nature of God. (1 Jn. 4:8.)

III. Love enables us to render complete obedience.

- A. Love can lead to things which nothing else can.
 1. Led God to give Jesus.
 - a. John 3:16; Rom. 5:7,8.
 - b. God did not give Jesus because He *had* to, or because He *needed* to, but God gave Jesus because He *wanted* to — because He loved the world.
 2. Led Jesus to lay down His life.
 - a. John 5:13.
 - b. Jesus laid down His life, not because He *had* to, nor because He *needed* to, but because He *wanted* to — because He loved us.
 - c. (This is not to say that respect for God and the joy set before Him were not motives for Jesus dying for us, but *love* was the greatest factor.)
 3. Love can lead us to do things that our fear and selfishness, cannot lead us to do.
- B. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. (Rom. 13:10; Mk. 12:30, 31.)
 1. Everything which God has commanded is comprehended in the concept of love for God and our fellowmen.
 2. When we truly love, we automatically do what God commands us.

IV. Love is the essence of obeying Christ. (John 15:12.)

1. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14.)
2. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15.)
3. "These things I command you, that ye love one another." (John 15:17.)

Conclusion

1. We cannot love God without obeying him.
2. We cannot obey God without loving him.

FIVE SECRETS OF LIVING

(Lesson 5)

John 15:15

The Secret Of Loving Is Knowing

John 15:15

Introduction

1. Someone has said, "Familiarity breeds contempt."
2. But Phillips Brooks has clarified it correctly: "... familiarity breeds contempt only with contemptible things or contemptible people."
3. The central theme of our lesson today, the final one in this series on John 15, is *that familiarity with Jesus breeds love ... The secret of loving is knowing ... to know Him is to love Him!*

Discussion

- I. The better you know Jesus, the more you will love Him.
 - A. Illus. Loving husband and wife who have shared a home for fifty or more years: "We know each other better today than ever before, and we love each other more!"
 - B. Notice the progression of knowledge described in the word of God:
 1. Salvation is knowing Christ - our first knowledge. (Jn. 17:3; Matt. 11:28-30.)
 2. Growth in knowledge of Jesus. (2 Pet. 3:18.)
 3. The ultimate ... in the life to come. (Phil. 3:10.) Note: Paul had been a Christian at least 25 years when he wrote Philippians ... he had been to the 3rd heaven ... and still says, "That I may know Him."
 - C. The life of the Christian that now is ... and the life that is to come: a process of knowing Christ better and loving Him more.

II. Why is it important to get to know Christ better?

- A. He is the best and dearest friend we can have. (Jn. 15:13 — 15.)
- B. The more we know Christ, the more we become like Him.
 - 1. Illus. Two friends, husband and wife: gradually become alike, grow together, and even think alike.
 - 2. Rom. 8:29 — God's plan that we be conformed to the image of His son.
 - 3. 1 John 3:1, 2 — but we can start becoming like Him today — through increase in the knowledge in Him.
- C. The better you know Jesus, the more you love Him ... look at some of the lovable things about Jesus:
 - 1. His compassion. E.g. Matt. 9:36; Heb. 4:15.
 - 2. His patience. E.g. with his disciples in their ignorance, their selfishness, and when they were almost unteachable. (Jn. 16:12.)
 - 3. His meekness and lowliness. E.g. Matt. 11:28-30.
 - 4. His power — over disease, demons, death, the elements of nature, the grave, etc.
 - 5. His sacrificial love for us, exhibited in His passion. (Cf. 1 Jn. 4:10,19.)

III. To what do we go to know Christ better?

- A. The word of God, the principal source.
 - 1. Go to the OT ... There He is seen in type and prophecy. (Lk. 24:44.)
 - 2. To the gospels ... see Him teaching and doing God's will and dying to redeem mankind.
 - 3. To the book of Acts and see Him at work through and in His church, His body.
 - 4. To the Epistles ... they interpret for us the spiritual truths contained in the Person and work of Christ.
 - 5. To the book of Revelation ... see Him there as Lamb, Judge, and King of kings.
- B. Nature is another source.
 - 1. Psa. 19:1; Col. 1:15-17; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3.
 - 2. When on earth, Jesus saw the hand of God in such things as lilies and birds.
 - 3. When we have the word of God dwelling in our hearts,

- we can look at creation and see God's hand at work, and Jesus'.
- C. Thus, the more we read and study God's word, the more we observe God's wonderful creation, the more we know Christ.

Conclusion

1. The Secret of Living — it all starts with *knowing Christ...* (in this series we have studied them in reverse order.)
 - a. The more you know Christ, the more you love Him.
 - b. The more you love Christ, the more you will obey Him.
 - c. The more you obey Him, the more you will abide in Him.
 - d. The more you abide in Him, the more you will bear fruit.
 - e. The more you bear fruit, the *more you will live!*
2. Have you begun to *know* Christ? If not, why not obey the gospel? Why not take hold of the abundant life which Christ came to give you?

"People Whom the Church Can Do Without Until They Repent!"

Part I

Demas, In Love With This Present World

2 Timothy 4:10

- I. An explanation of that which Demas loved.
 - A. The word "world" often translates *cosmos* which means respectively:
 1. The planet earth.
 2. Mankind, e.g., John 3:16.
 3. The sum of temporal possessions, e.g., Matt. 16:26.
 4. Humanity in rebellion to God e.g., John 7:7.
 - B. There is another word translation: "world" — *aion*... "age, period of time, etc." This word used in 2 Tim. 4:10, and is that which Demas loved.
 - C. God's word describes some characteristics of that with which Demas was in love:
 1. The cares of the world. (Matt. 13:22.) — these things present in the this world or age which cause anxiety.
 2. The wisdom of this world. (1 Cor. 1:20.) — the wisdom that men of the world have devised. Cf. 2:6.
 3. The fashion of this world. (Rom. 12:2.) Its mold — what the world would make of you if you allowed yourself to become like it!
 4. The god of this world. (2 Cor. 4:4.) — This present age is characterized by service of sin and Satan.
 - D. It was *this* that Demas was in love with. Illus. Like a person who is in love with "the good old days — ". He is in love with the things and circumstances of that period of time.
 - E. In essence, ALL the meanings of *cosmos* are inherent in *aion* ... they are all things of this age! i.e. would be more happy here than in heaven in this age than the next.

- II. That with which Demas was in love has a powerful and strong influence to seduce people into love with it!
 - A. Even the best church workers are not immune to the danger of the love of this present world.
 - 1. Demas was once a helper of Paul: stood by him while Paul was in prison. (Col. 4:14.)
 - 2. Demas, however, forsook Paul when he needed him ... this present age had the power to lure him from the side of a friend and brother!
 - B. How does the world maintain such seductive power? How was it able to seduce Demas? Several explanations are possible:
 - 1. *This world is the Here, the Now, the Tangible, and the Seen ... whereas the world to come it not...* this present world has more appeal to a person without faith (which is the evidence of tilings not seen!)
 - 2. *The way of this present world is the way of least resistance.*
 - a. Demas once was with Paul — in such a position, he faced possible imprisonment, suffering, and perhaps even death himself. (Nero was emperor — very ruthless.)
 - b. But, by the world, he was presented with escape from physical danger and condemnation.
 - 3. *The way of the world is the way of pleasure (Heb. 11:25) as well as power and popularity.*
 - 4. *The world is an entangling web or net of defilement. (2 Pet. 2:19, 20.)*
- III. The church can do without people like Demas who are hi love with the world ... until they repent.
 - A. Why the church has no place for Demas and those like him:
 - 1. The church is the kingdom of heaven, and not of this world!
 - 2. The church is an army of soldiers in a battle *against* the world! (2 Tim. 2:3,4; Eph. 6:12.)
 - 3. The church is a fraternity of the sons of God, rather than of the sons of this world ... the children of God

rather than the children of disobedience. (Jn. 1:12; Eph. 5:1; cf. Lk. 20:34,35; Eph. 2:2.)

4. The church is composed of friends of God rather than those in a state of enmity with Him. (Jas. 4:4.)
 5. The church ideally is a people who hates the polluting influence of the world and of the flesh. (Jas. 1:27; Jude 23.)
 6. The church is a band of pilgrims whose home is not this present world and who are not *at home* in this present age!
- B. How can we avoid being Demas in the church?
1. Recognize that we must choose one or the other of two worlds. (Matt. 16:24-28; Mk. 10:28-30.)
 - a. Either have all this world has to offer and none in the next ...
 - b. Or have sacrifice of some things in this world and *everything* in the next!
 2. Recognize and deal with the *root* of the problem: the bringing of the desires of this present world under the control of God and allow your members to be the instruments of righteousness. (Rom. 6:15—23.)
 3. Refuse to love the things of this world — realize what they offer. (Matt. 6:19, 20; 1 Jn. 2:15, 16, 17.)
 4. Love the world that is to come! (Col. 3:1 —4.)

**People Whom the Church Can Do Without
Until They Repent
Part II
Diotrephes, Who Loved The Pre-Eminence
3 John 9, 10**

Introduction

1. Julius Caesar said that he would rather be first in an Iberian village than second in Rome ... He loved to be first. Plutarch tells how Alcibiades craved first place in Athens. He got it and brought ruin upon Athens by an expedition against Syracuse. He changed sides.
2. The Bible tells of a man who was like these two ... a man who craved first place and had an overwhelming ambition for it. We read of him in 3 John 9, 10.
3. Diotrephes and any who are like him are *people whom the church can do without...* until they repent. Let's take a look at him.

Discussion

- I. John provides the identifying marks of Diotrephes.
 - A. Loved to put himself first.
 1. Of all men's motives, ambition is one of the most powerful.
 2. The church must have ambition ... strong desire to grow and increase ... but one of the most destructive things to the church is *self ambition*.
 3. In Rom. 12:3, Paul wrote, "For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him."
 - B. Didn't acknowledge anyone but himself.
 1. Primarily didn't acknowledge John's apostolic authority.

2. Likely that he was not concerned with the opinions or desires of others.
3. A "Do it to suit me or I'll ruin it" policy.
- C. Prates against others with evil words.
 1. He was a talker, a slanderer, a back-biter.
 2. The original language seems to suggest a bad temper on the part of Diotrephes ... "boiling over."
 3. "Prating" denotes insinuations and insinuating words.
 4. He was guilty of hatefulness, sarcasm, and perhaps even lying it would seem.
- D. A hindrance to the life and fellowship of the congregation.
 1. He was casting out faithful people out of the church (assembly).
 2. Note: being responsible for keeping people away from the assembly is no different from what Diotrephes had done.
- E. Two things that are implied ... He was a leader in the church and quite actively involved, yet still was guilty of these things.
 1. I learned early that you can't determine a man's character by the fact that he is really involved in church.
 2. I knew of a man who was doing canvas work for his religious group. Yet he was so nervous about it that he would have to take a drink, he said, before he could go up to people's houses to talk with them. His involvement was no indication of his true character.
 3. I worked with a congregation once which was served by an active deacon who was largely involved in promoting local dances and a referendum to legalize liquor in the city.
- F. The sad and penetrating thought is that the spirit of Diotrephes is still with us today and you can know it by his fruits. (Matt. 7:15-20.)

- II. Some reasons why the church can do without Diotrephes and his kind.
 - A. The church is made up of people who should seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), and who deny self (Lk. 9:23.) A Diotrephes is seeking first the kingdom of self!
 - B. The church is made up of people who acknowledge others.

1. A people who are to outdo one another in *showing* honor, (Rom. 12:10), rather than seeking it.
2. A people who are neither to be haughty, nor conceited, nor to have a "better than thou" attitude. (Rom. 12:16)
- C. The church is made up of people who are not to act or speak evil toward others. (1 Pet. 2:1; 3:8—10; Jas. 5:9.)
- D. The church is to be made up of people who work properly to build up the church rather than hinder it. (Eph. 4:16.)

III. How are we to deal with Diotrephes and his kind?

- A. What would Jesus have done? (Matt. 18:15-17.) ... What did John do? (v. 10.) — personal confrontation.
- B. Elders should exercise their authority in such matters. (Tit. 1:9,10.)
- C. We must love him and pray for him to repent of his conceit and self-ambition.
- D. By all means we must avoid imitating him (3 Jn. 11) rather, we should strive to be humble. (1 Pet. 5:8.)
- E. Realize that the Lord will deal with him.
 1. John said, "I will bring up what he is doing." (v. 10.)
 2. God will bring up at the judgment all those who have followed the way of Diotrephes.

Conclusion

1. Diotrephes is such that the church could do better without ... until he repents.
2. The tragedy of it all is that usually, the persons who possess this problem could be some of the most helpful people in the church, if not for their love of the pre-eminence ... the fondness of being first.
3. Let us strive to humble ourselves and not fall victim to the powerful and dangerous motive of Diotrephes.

**People Whom the Church Can Do Without
Until They Repent
Part III
Alexander, The Metal Worker**

- I. Alexander rejected Faith. 1 Tim. 1:18-20. (He was a Christian who fell!)
 - A. The last thing the church needs is *unbelief*.
 - 1. Unbelieving hearts have always been a serious threat to the welfare of the church. (Heb. 3:12; 12:1-4.)
 - 2. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6)
 - B. One of the greatest hindrances to the cause of Christ is the detrimental influence of *unfaithful* members of the church.
 - C. In view of the upsurging onslaughts against the church and its members in particular in the battle for truth and right, we must have soldiers bearing the shield of faith. (Eph. 6:16.)
 - D. There is no place in any army, much less Christ's, for retreat or deserters!

- II. Alexander rejected a good conscience. (1 Tim. 1:18 -20.)
 - A. Alexander rejected having a good conscience ... he did that which was against his conscience.
 - 1. While the conscience is not a sole and safe guide in matters religious, it serves a good purpose to help us do what we know to be right.
 - 2. The conscience can be seared ... become insensitive to wrong. (1 Tim. 4:2.)
 - 3. If we are not careful, we may find ourselves doing that which we know is not right and it will no longer hurt.
 - B. What the church needs fewer of is people without conscience and more with good conscience.
 - 1. Love issues from a good conscience. 1 Tim. 1:5 and it

is obvious that we need more love in the church. (Heb. 13:1.)

2. Yet, we do not need compromise in the church ... Rather people who'll say, "It is wrong, thus I cannot do it ... It is right and I cannot *but* do it."
3. Note: Deacons, 1 Tim. 3:9.

III. Alexander blasphemed. (1 Tim. 1:18-20.)

- A. To blaspheme means to slander, to speak against.
- B. When ever the word blaspheme is mentioned, the blaspheming against the Holy Spirit automatically registers ... But there are several other possibilities:
 1. The name of Christian. (Jas. 2:7.)
 2. Other brethren, (Jas. 5:9.)
 3. The doctrine. (1 Tim. 6:1.)
 4. The word of God. (Titus 2:5.)
- C. The church can do without people who slander and speak against the Lord's church by word or deed.

IV. Alexander did harm. (2 Tim. 4:14.)

- A. Christians are to be harmless. (Matt. 10:16; Phil. 2:15.)
- B. The church has enough enemies from outside without having harm from within. Ways people do harm in the church:
 1. Cause divisions, sow discord, cause fusses.
 2. Fail to accommodate the weak.
 3. Be a poor ambassador for God and His church.
 4. Be a fault-finder about everything that is done.
 5. Be negative and pessimistic.
- C. Note: Paul, however, gives a lesson about how to deal with harm done to one personally. Could have quit the church like some do, but didn't.
 1. The Lord will repay.
 2. Cf. Rom. 12:17-21.

**People Whom the Church Can Do Without
Until They Repent
Part IV
People The Church Cannot Do Without Dorcas
Acts 9:36-43**

Introduction

1. It seems that we are fascinated with the stories of people who were raised from the dead.
 - a. There was Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, as well as others, raised by Jesus.
 - b. The resurrection of Jesus is the center of the gospel.
 - c. Truly, Jesus brought life and immortality to light *personally* as well as through the gospel.
2. Not only did Jesus raise people from the dead, but He also gave His disciples power to do the same.
 - a. During the limited commission they utilized this power.
 - b. After the establishment of the church they utilized this power.
 - c. Dorcas was one of the people raised from the dead by an apostle of Jesus.
3. But the most wonderful thing about Dorcas was not the fact that she was raised from the dead, but that she was a person *whom the church could not do without!*
4. Let us notice some facts and insights which God's word provides about this godly woman.

Discussion

- I. Dorcas was a disciple, (v. 36.)
 - A. There are many things involved in being a disciple. It means more than just a follower.
 1. The Greek word denotes a pupil, a learner.
 - a. I can't conceive of a person pleasing to the Father who

does not enroll in the study of Jesus and his word.

- b. There is only one way to be approved of God — handling the word properly, studying it. (2 Tim. 2:15.)
 - e. Only students of the sacred writings of God can have access to salvation. (2 Tim. 3:15.)
2. The word is synonymous with the name Christian. (Acts 11:26.)
 3. How strange that Luke does not call her a Baptist, a Methodist, a Catholic, a Lutheran, a Presbyterian. Why? Why, none of these were in existence then! Then they were Christians and disciples, no more, no less.
- B. What the church needs today more than anything is disciples, learners, pupils, students of Christ and His word. We can never help others to be that which we are not!

II. Dorcas was full of good works and acts of charity.

- A. The Bible speaks of people being "full of " various things, some good and others bad. E.g.:
1. In Deut. 34:9, Joshua was said to be full of the spirit of wisdom.
 2. David was old and full of days. (1 Chron. 23:1.)
 3. Haman was full of wrath. (Esther 3:5.)
 4. Jesus declared that the body can be full of light. (Matt. 6:22.)
 5. Jesus was said to have been full of grace. (Jn. 1:14.)
 6. The apostles on Pentecost were thought to have been full of new wine. (Acts 2:13.)
 7. Stephen was full of faith, the Holy Ghost. (Acts 6:5.)
 8. Peter spoke of some whose eyes were full of adultery. (2 Pet. 2:14.)
- B. But Dorcas is the only person on record who is said to have been *full of good works and acts of charity*. What meaneth this?
1. Goodness and love was her character — her nature.
 2. Denotes that she was saturated with these qualities — she possessed them to a tremendous degree.
 3. The good deeds and acts of charity were natural manifestations of that which was within her.
 4. She was characterized by that which is said of Jesus: (Acts 10:38.)

- C. We need more and more people like this — so full of good that there is little room for evil ... so full of love that there is no room for hatred and discord.
- III. Dorcas was a user of the gifts which God gave her.
- A. She was not an apostle, a preacher, a teacher, or possessor of other of the more visible gifts, the more spectacular gifts.
 - B. She was one who worked with her hands ... literally yielded her members as instruments for righteousness. (Rom. 6:19.)
 - C. We need to realize that there are many ways that good can be done which are quiet and unnoticed by men but greatly prized by God and brethren. We need more like her. (Rom. 12:6.)
- IV. She was a righteous woman who suffered patiently, "she fell sick ..." (v. 37.)
- A. The most difficult question of all seems to be, why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.
 - 1. Job asked this question in the long ago.
 - 2. Frequently events cause us to ask the same questions.
 - a. Those who seem to be so useful and needed in the Lord's church are swept away from us in their prime.
 - b. The most lovely children, the most well-behaved and dedicated teenage Christians, tragically are snuffed out when we least expect it.
 - c. While those who shame and reproach the church thrive and prosper, and sinners live ungodly lives seem to be blessed the most.
 - d. Do doubt, the brethren asked this question about godly Dorcas... why her ... why one who had done so much good and was so full of love?
 - B. Trials are intended to teach us patience. (Jas. 1:3, 4.) No doubt at all in my mind that in her sickness, Dorcas grew more loyal and more dependent upon and closer to the Lord!
 - C. What John was told to write about the dead who died in the Lord truly applies to Dorcas. (Rev. 14:13.)

- V. Dorcas was missed when she was not there, (v. 39.)
- A. "While she was with them" ... these words suggest what they felt once she was no longer with them.
 - B. Considering the way that the body is fitted and framed together, when a vital part or organ is lost, the body suffers.
 - C. What about each of us ... Are we such workers and contributors to the work of the Lord that it would be hindered were we to die.
 - 1. Many are so involved that the church misses their efforts when they die.
 - 2. Others are just dead weight and hindrances and the church thrives when they are gone. They are not missed.
 - D. If they had your funeral tomorrow, what could be said about the statement "while he/she was with us?"

Conclusion

- 1. May God give us more like Dorcas ... full of good works and acts of charity.
- 2. May the Lord help us to be all that is denoted by the term "disciple."
- 3. May the Lord help us to use the gifts we have, as well as suffer patiently the trials we must face.
- 4. May we so live that we will be greatly missed when we are gone.

**People Whom the Church Can Do Without
Until They Repent
Part V
Philemon**

- I. Love and faith towards Christ and Saints, (v. 5.)
 1. Faith comes from the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.)
 2. Love is the fruit of faith in Christ.

- II. One who shared His faith, (v. 6.)
 1. Had fellowship with those of like previous faith. (2 Pet 1:1.)
 2. Through his life and words he communicated his faith — it was a dynamic faith.
 3. Paul prayed that his faith might be effectual — that he might enjoy all the blessings of fellowship.

- III. One who refreshed the hearts of the Saints, (v. 7.)
 1. Literally means to bring to rest, to relieve of trouble and pressing cares of sorrow. Cf. Matt, 11:28—30; 1 Cor. 15:58.
 2. Could be financial assistance, hospitality, kindness, encouragement, etc.

- IV. One who could be counted on to obey and go beyond his duty. (v. 21.)
 1. He was dependable, trustworthy. (Cf. Phil. 1:12.)
 2. He was willing to go the second mile. (Matt. 5:41.) Could be that Paul figured he was going to make Onesimus a free man, although his duty was simply to receive him back.

- V. One who prayed. (v. 22.)
 1. It could be that the people around us may be like Paul — all their hope is placed in God's answering our prayers.
 2. As Paul asked Philemon to pray for him, so ought we to seek the prayers of others on our behalf. (Jas. 5:16.)

**People Whom the Church Can Do Without
Until They Repent
Part VI
Epaphras
Col. 4:12,13**

- I. Epaphras was "one of yourselves." (v. 12.)
 - A. This suggests the common bond which exists between Christians (or should exist.) Eph. 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:1.
 - 1. The church is the family of God — we are brothers and sisters one of another.
 - 2. The church is God's building — each of us are lively stones of which it is made.
 - B. This also suggests the attitude which ought to characterize the body — we are members one of another, (Eph. 4:25.)
 - 1. This means that we all belong one to another (rules out selfishness.)
 - 2. Each of us is to serve the other.
 - 3. Illus. What if the heart decided it was going to leave the body and beat on its own? The body would *be affected* and the heart would *be affected* — they both would die.
 - C. These words suggest the equal status we all have as Christians before God (preachers no exception.) Eph. 3:28 and perhaps James 1:9. Of every Christian it ought to be appropriate to say, "He is one of us!"

- II. Epaphras was "a servant of Jesus Christ." (v. 12.)
 - A. Servant is the translation of the Greek word for slave.
 - 1. The apostle Paul only uses this phrase with regard to himself except for here and once referring to Timothy. (Phil. 1:1)
 - 2. Probably it points to exceptional services on the part of Epaphras.
 - B. While it is especially applied to New Testament preachers, it can be applied to all Christians. (Rom. 6:15—18.)

1. Jesus was in the form of a slave. (Phil. 2:7.)
 2. Jesus' life was a life of service. (Matt. 20:28.)
 3. We ought to be servants. (Matt. 23:11.)
- C. Yet, Epaphras was a servant *of Jesus Christ*.
1. We must remember that we are first and foremost to serve Christ and do His will and whenever the will of others conflicts, we must be loyal to Christ.
 2. E.g., A Christian wife is not bound to the will of her unbelieving husband if he demands of her that which is contrary to the will of Christ. (1 Cor. 7:15.)
- D. So, let us remember the type of people we ought to be — servants; and who our Lord is: Christ.

III. Epaphras prayed hard and worked hard! (v. 12, 13.)

- A. The word "earnestly" carries the idea of wrestling and grappling, reminiscent of Jacob's wrestling with the angel.
1. Cf. Paul's prayer - "toil and striving" (1:29; Rom. 15:30.)
 2. Cf. Jesus' agony in the garden. (Heb. 5:7.)
 3. We ought to be people who pray hard ... take our trials and problems to the Lord. We must take these things with which we struggle and let the Father deal with them.
- B. Epaphras also worked hard.
1. Prayer is essential and valuable and powerful... but it is no *substitute for hard work!*
 2. Prayer and work must go hand in hand, as the song suggests.

"I will work, I will pray;
 In the vineyard, in the vineyard of the Lord.
 I will work, I will pray, I will labor every day,
 In the vineyard of the Lord."

3. No doubt, the labor and hard work of Epaphras was devoted to the same purpose for which Paul strove on their account. (Col. 2:1—3.)
4. The Lord's church desperately needs people who will strive and work, as well as pray, for these things!

"You Don't Have Long To Live"

Psa. 39:4-7

Introduction

1. It may be that you or I will someday be lying in a hospital bed or sitting on the doctor's examining table. The doctor will look us straight in the eye and say, "You do not have long to live."
2. You say, "I hope that never happens to *me*." *But did you realize that God speaks to every one of us and says in His word: "You do not have long to live."*?
3. In Psalm 39:4-7, David wrote ...
4. How upset would you be if the doctor told you your time was short? Would you think of preparation for death? *What about when God says, "You don't have much time to live ..."*? Do you think of preparation for death?
5. Let us consider what David says.

Discussion

- I. David provides a most accurate description of the life of man.
 - A. He answers the question of James in Jas. 4:14 — "What is your life?"
 - B. Your life is *vanity*.
 1. *Vanity* means "that which soon vanishes away ... that which quickly fades." The brevity of life is emphasized in this word.
 2. David said, " ... that I may know how frail I am ..."
 - a. RSV — "how fleeting my life is."
 - b. Hence, life is a fleeting thing - a thing which passes quickly.
 3. David said, "Thou has made my days a handbreadth," a. A *handbreadth* is one of the *smallest* natural measures such as the foot or the cubit. It is a measure of four fingers.

- b. Again, this shows how short life really is — how quickly it passes by.
 - c. As the poet expressed it, "Life is but a span ..."
 - 4. David said, "Mine age is as nothing before thee ..."
 - a. God is eternal ... existing not in terms of time but in terms of eternity.
 - b. As Matthew Henry said, "All time is nothing to God's eternity, *much less our share of time.*" (Cf. Psa. 90:4; 2 Pet.3:8.)
 - c. The point is "You and I have not long to live."
 - 5. David said, "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew."
 - a. RSV — "Surely every man goes about as a shadow."
 - b. The significance of the "shadow" in the Old Testament was the sundial.
 - c. Man is like the shadow on a sundial: As the sun rises it rises ... and then declines as the sun sets. (Psa. 102:11.)
 - C. Your life is *uncertainty*, (v. 6b.)
 - 1. Men are anxious about this world's goods ... *All in vain!*
 - 2. They heap it up and *do not know* who will enjoy it.
 - 3. Classic illustration of life's uncertainty and the underlying uncertainty of its possessions — *the rich fool.* (Lk. 12:18-20.)
 - D. Your life is *opportunity*, (v. 13.)
 - 1. All that is desired to be done *must* be done before we depart this life.
 - 2. Death is the point of no return. When we have departed we have no more opportunity to do them. (Job 10:20-21.)
 - 3. There comes a time when it is too late! (John 9:4.)
- II. David provides a sobering application of this description of life.
- A. The brevity, uncertainty, and opportunity of life *know no exceptions.*
 - 1. Three times David says, "*Every man ...*" (vv. 5, 6, 11.) Puts the emphasis on this fact.
 - 2. Every man's death is at an appointed time.
 - a. Appointed in the sense that *all men die.* (Heb. 9:27.)

- b. Appointed in the sense that the end of man's days are known to God. (Job 14:5.)
 - 3. Illus. A young boy was telling about his dad ... how he wanted his son to have it better than he had it. His father had said that his son was not going to work for hours standing up like he had, but was going to get a good education. The boy said, "So my dad opened a savings account with \$10.00 and put some in every week out of his pay. He had it all planned out how I was going to go to college and everything. The only thing he didn't plan on was *dying!*"
 - 4. You can plan on dying ... *and begin planning right now* ... for God's word says, "You do not have long to live!"
 - B. The brevity, uncertainty and opportunity of life are *unconditional*. They apply to man's life *even at its best!* (v. 5b.)
 - 1. What if a man be healthy? Even a healthy man's life is brief, uncertain, and one of opportunity.
 - 2. What if a man be wealthy? Life is described for the wealthy in terms of brevity, uncertainty, and opportunity as well.
 - 3. "I'm planning to live a long time ... maybe to be a.hundred!" Life is still brief, uncertain, and opportune.
 - 4. The original language of this verse puts the emphasis where it belongs: "Truly, every man *standing firm, fast, and settled* is altogether vanity."
 - C. The brevity, uncertainty, and opportunity of life is applicable to *life altogether*, (v. 5.)
 - 1. Nothing in this world or this life is eternal. (1 Jn. 2:17.) It is all transient.
 - 2. Not our bodies, possessions, houses, money, clothes or anything else will last very long. Nations and empires, etc. ... they too are as a breath. (1 Pet. 1:24.) Note: "flesh" and "glory".
- III. David asks a thought provoking question and gives the answer to it.
 - A. When David considered the answer to the question "what is your life?" he realized that there was nothing in this world to give him hope.

1. He saw that life itself and all this world had to offer were transient and due soon to vanish away.
 2. Verse 7.
 3. When he eliminated what this life had to offer, all that remained to give him hope was the Eternal God. "My hope is in thee."
- B. We must come to grips with the truth of David's question and answer.

1. Jennie Wilson put it this way:
 "Time is filled with swift transition,
 Naught of earth unmoved can stand.
 Build your hopes on things eternal,
 Hold to God's unchanging hand ...

Covet not this world's vain riches,
 That so rapidly decay,
 Seek to gain the heavenly treasures,
 They will never pass away."

2. If we honestly consider the truth about life and the things of earth, we'll see that they provide us no hope. *Yet, how many ... yes, even many Christians ... trust in this life and its things!?*
 - a. If all you have to hope for (honestly) is a few more years of physical life, a few more possessions, a few more earthly pleasures to enjoy, you *have no hope! You are hopeless!*
 - b. If you are not a Christian ... and a *faithful one!* ... this world, this life, and its things *are all the hope you have ... you are hopeless!*
 - c. Solomon found this out the hard way after he had hoped in this life and its things and found that they offered no hope. He learned the greatest of all lessons. (Eccl. 12:13.)
 - d. If you are a Christian ... and a *faithful one* ... you have treasures in heaven, a mansion now empty just waiting for you, and hope of eternity in the presence of God!

Conclusion

1. I have emphasized these points to make you realize *one point*, viz., that there is *disaster in delay!*

- a. In delaying your obedience.
 - b. In delaying your being restored.
 - c. In delaying becoming dedicated to the Lord in committed service.
2. Psa. 39:4; Deut. 32:29; Psa, 90:12.
 3. Notice Psa. 39:5 — *Selah*. This is a musical *pause*. It is significant. It directs us to pause, to reflect, and to consider what has been written. You and I don't have long to live!
 4. Why not realize that life is *brevity*, *uncertainty*, and *opportunity*. Why not consider that the world and its things offer no hope, but God does!
 5. Why not consider your latter end, number your days, and perceive how fleeting your life is? Why not obey Christ while you have the time left to do so?

The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12

Introduction

1. Matt. 7:12 - "the golden rule".
2. Well known in its original and "boiled down form" ... but little heeded, seldom practiced. Why?
 - a. Lack of *empathy*. Empathy is "the ability to identify oneself mentally with a person and understand his feelings."
 - 1) Bible definition of empathy: 2nd Commandment: "Love thy neighbor as thyself..."
 - 2) Empathy and the 2nd Commandment are the *heart, soul, and breath of the Golden Rule!*
 - b. Lack of acquaintance with the qualities and results it has.
3. Let us look at three of these qualities and results.

Discussion

- I. The Golden Rule is a priceless principle.
 - A. When we think of gold these days we think of its price. This rule is called the "golden" rule because of its great value.
 - B. It is of great value because it is a rule to end all rules "This is the law and the prophets ..."
 1. The golden rule is a compact version of the commands of God on human relations.
 - a. Cf. Rom. 13:10.
 - b. Illus. Two boys, one older, the other younger, talking about what the younger should do when he goes "a-courtin'". The older gives him a whole list of things to do and say. The young man looks over the list and says, "In other words, be a gentleman." The golden rule is like that.
 2. "Therefore" — This word informs us that Jesus means, "If you want to do what I have taught you in the Sermon on the Mount, *remember this* and you will have no trouble."

- C. The golden rule is of great value because it will solve our problems.
 1. In the home. (Some families would give all the gold in the world if they had just practiced this little bit of gold.)
 2. In the church.
 3. In everyday life.
- D. Amazingly, though *golden*, this rule *is free*; all it costs is the price of practice.

II. The Golden Rule is a preventive principle.

- A. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." (Bible says it's worth more than that.) Psa. 119:11; 1 Jn. 3:9.
- B. The golden rule is all the prevention one needs to keep him from sinning against his brother or neighbor.
 1. It causes us to have empathy, to obey the 2nd Commandment.
 2. It makes us stop and *think* before we act: "How would I want to be treated were I in his place?"
 3. The old Indian adage: "Walk a mile in his moccasins ..."
- C. Here is how the rule works:
 1. Provides us a light by which to evaluate every thought. (1 Cor. 13:5.)
 2. Provides us a balance in which to weigh every word. (Jas. 5:9; Three weights to weigh it against: "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful?")
 3. Provides- us a barrier against evil deeds. (Cheating, stealing, murder, fornication, lying, etc.)
- D. Many folks in the world, and especially those in the church need a strong dose of this preventive medicine!

III. The Golden Rule is a productive principle.

- A. Question often asked: "Why doesn't the church do more work for the Lord? Why do we not care about people more? Why are we so indifferent?"
 1. The answer: Not enough practice of the Golden Rule!
 2. Golden Rule not only prevents sin but produces good works! (Jesus practiced what He preached ... That's why the Bible says of Jesus: "He went about doing good ...")
 3. The Golden Rule is intended to *motivate* us to do good.

- a. We need motivation (Jas. 4:17); we need zeal. (Titus 2:14.)
 - b. No greater motivation than the Golden Rule. It's all we need — a compact version of all the motivation in the Bible.
- B. The Golden Rule motivates us and produces good works from us in the same way it prevents us from sinning.
- 1. It causes us to have empathy — causes us to obey the 2nd Commandment.
 - 2. It makes us think, "How would i want to be treated were I in his place?"
 - 3. The Good Samaritan — Jesus' illustration of empathy and the 2nd Commandment. (Lk. 10.)
- C. Here is what the Golden Rule produces:
- 1. Visitation; "If I were sick ..." (Matt. 25:36.)
 - 2. Benevolence: "If I were an orphan, a widow, unfortunate ..." (Jas. 1:27.)
 - 3. Evangelism: "If I were a lost sinner ..." (Lk. 19:10.)
 - 4. Restoration of the erring: "If I were an unfaithful Christian ..." (Gal. 6:1.)
 - 5. Triumph over evil: "If I were in his place ..." (Rom. 12:20.)

Conclusion

- 1. No one could fail to see the beauty, power, and immense value of the Golden Rule.
- 2. Empathy is the key to the gold!
- 3. The Golden Rule is priceless, productive, and preventive, *only if practiced**.
- 4. Matthew 7:12.

Worship In Song

1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16

Introduction

1. Just how often do we hear, "They have great singing there"? What is great singing?
 - a. Is it loud, that all notes are properly sung, right tempo, right pitch, dynamic, sounds good?
 - b. We should strive for excellence in all these areas, for they are important, but is this all that makes for great singing?
 - c. You can have all these and still not have singing that is acceptable to God.
2. What is the design and purpose of singing?
 - a. Not a call to worship, not to entertain, nor fill in the time till every one arrives at the meeting house; not to display voices, nor a contest to see who has the best voice.
 - b. According to Ephesians 5:19, singing has a two-fold purpose:
 - i. To edify and build up the singers — "teach and admonishing one another."
 - ii. To praise, glorify, and worship God — "singing with grace in your hearts *to the Lord*."
 - c. You can have all the things we mentioned before and still fail to accomplish these purposes.
3. The purpose of our lesson is to get us to recognize that worship in song that is acceptable to God and upbuilding to the church is a "whole of man" activity,
 - a. This is easily seen in Eph. 5:19 — There is to be *singing* and making melody *in the heart*.
 - i. The heart in the New Testament stands for man's entire mental and moral activity, both rational and emotional. (Vine.)
 - ii. Therefore, in singing and making melody in the heart, the whole man is involved.
 - b. Let us look at the three distinct parts of man which the

Bible teaches must be involved for our singing to be acceptable to God and edifying to us.

Discussion

- I. Acceptable singing is a vocal activity.
 - A. We are commanded *to sing*. One cannot sing without using the voice. (Eph. 5:19.)
 - B. We are commanded to *speak* in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Eph. 5:19.) One can hardly speak without using the voice.
 - C. We are commanded to *make a joyful noise*. Psa. 100:1. We can not do this without using our voices.
 - D. Therefore, one cannot worship acceptably during the song service if he sits silent! (Nor can he please God if he is *speaking* and *making noise* not in psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs!)
 - E. Let us resolve to open our mouths and lift up our voices in praise and devotion unto God.

- II. Acceptable singing is an emotional activity. (1 Cor. 14:15a.)
 - A. The *spirit* of man in this passage is that part of man with which he perceives, reflects, feels, and desires.
 - B. Therefore, to worship acceptably, a Christian must perceive, reflect, feel and desire during the song service. Practically applied, this means:
 1. He must be keenly aware of what is being sung, taking note of the words.
 2. He must think deeply about the words, consider them and let them remind him of spiritual truths.
 3. He must feel what he sings, let an impression be made upon him by the songs, must let himself be touched by them. (Some are past feeling. Eph. 4:19. Cannot sing acceptably.)
 4. He should desire to live better, and be motivated to greater spirituality and service.
 - C. The Bible says "by their fruits ye shall know them." It speaks of those who "say and do not." It is obvious that some are not worshipping "with the spirit" because they "sing and do not!"
 1. Folks who were well known for their harsh, hurtful,

- hateful, and vengeful words of anger were heard singing "Angry words, O let them never, from the tongue unbridled slip ..."
2. Many sing, "Anywhere with Jesus ..." and their lives add "as long as it is convenient and I don't have anything else planned."
 3. Others sing, "Give me the Bible ..." and their attitude adds, "except what it says about the one church, sin, giving, baptism, church attendance, and church discipline ..."
 4. Some sing, "There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth ..." but their attendance adds, "but only for an hour on Sunday morning and that if I didn't have anything better to do."
 5. Many other things show that some are not singing with their spirit! They are not perceiving, feeling, and desiring what they are singing.
- D. The Bible also speaks of things which must characterize our spirits or our emotional part in order for our worship to be pleasing.
1. *Cleanse* our spirits so there will be complete holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1.)
 2. *Stirring* of our spirits within us. (Acts 17:16.)
 3. *"Binding"* of our spirits to the purpose of doing God's will. (Acts 20:22.)
 4. Waxing strong in spirits as the child John the baptizer did. (Lk. 1:80.)
- E. Paul was absent in body but present in spirit. (1 Cor. 5:3,4.)
1. This meant that he could not be with them in person, as they came together to discipline their sinful brother, but his thoughts, desires, and feelings would be with them.
 2. How sad, that the opposite is sometimes true of us: "*present in body, but absent in spirit!*" We fail to perceive, reflect, feel, and desire as we worship.
- F. Let us resolve to worship in song with our spirit!
- III. Acceptable singing is a mental activity. (1 Cor. 14:15b.)
- A. The "understanding" is a translation of the Greek word

- for "mind." It refers to that with which we judge, determine, and decide.
- B. Acceptable singing involves singing with the mind.
1. The Corinthians sang with their spirits but failed to sing with their minds — they failed to interpret their singing in tongues — people present who didn't know the language in which they sang could not understand. (1 Cor. 14:6-19.)
 2. We must sing with the mind.
 - a. We must use our mental faculty to judge and determine what the words mean — else we will not be edified nor will our singing be from the heart.
 - b. To some of us the words of our songs are "unknown tongues" to us for we sing them without the slightest notion of what they mean, e.g.:
 - i. Figurative words and phrases.
 - a) "*Beulah*" land. (#395) Hebrew means "married" Isa.. 62:4. These referred to God reconciling Jerusalem to Himself. Would be a state of new joy. This state of new joy is the meaning it has in the song.
 - b) "Bread of Life" (#51) Does not refer to the Lord's Supper, but to the teaching of Jesus; the truth
 - c) *Eden's "bowers" bloom.* (#50 stanza 2) A bower is a leafy shelter or arbor which might be found in a garden. Refers to times when life is sheltered from unpleasantness, pleasant times. Contrasted with "deepest gloom." Means God's hand leads us through the gloomy times as well as the pleasant,
 - ii. Unfamiliar words.
 - a) *Cherubim and Seraphim* (#59 stanza 2). These are angels. (Gen. 3:24; Isa. 6:2; Rev. 4:6.) The meaning is that all the inhabitants of heaven worship God, lauding His holiness.
 - b) "Plaintive" cry (#81 stanza 2) means a cry that sounds sad.
 - c) There are many others.
- C. Plus, we must sing with our minds to know what the songs mean to each of our lives: changes we need to make, work we need to do, duties, etc.
- D. Let us strive to sing with our minds!

Conclusion

1. There are many "graces" which we are to grow in: "Christian Graces", the grace of giving, etc. (2 Pet. 3:18.)
2. Let us make sure that we grow in the grace of singing also.
 - a. There is always room for improvement, and let us make all we can!
 - b. Let us not have the attitude that some have, who readily express that they have no desire to improve, nor see any need to.
3. Remember, one of the primary activities of eternity in heaven is singing!

God's Directions For Happy Living

1 Peter 3:10-12

If you would "love life and see good days" ...

- I. Refrain your tongue from evil and your lips that they speak no guile.
 - A. "Tonics" and "elixirs" used to be popular and were claimed to be able to make life better. This reminds of the following story:

A certain Assyrian wandering through a city cried and said, "Who will receive the elixir of life?" The daughter of an old rabbi heard him and went and told her father. "Call him in," he said. When he came in, the rabbi asked him, "What is that elixir of life which thou art selling?" He said unto him, "Is it not written, 'What man is he that desireth life, and loveth days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile,' Lo, this is the elixir of life which is in the mouth of man."
 - B. Why is the control of the tongue so important to him who desires to "love life and see good days?"
 1. If a man cannot control his tongue, he cannot expect to control his life. (Jas. 3:2.)
 2. Jas. 3:3, 4 — The tongue in our mouths can turn about our whole life, turn it into the sunshine of happiness or into the gloom of wretchedness.
 3. The injury that the evil tongue does to others is not so great as that which it brings on its possessor. (Gal. 6:7.)
 4. It may be that Peter, as he penned these words, remembered his denial of the master. He had learned how the tongue that speaketh falsely can take all the joy out of life.
 - C. You may recall the old fashioned doctor, whose stock interrogation of each patient was, "May I see your tongue?" Regardless of the other symptoms, the tongue was usually considered the index to the physical condition. Times have

changed, and as a result of scientific research, doctors have discovered more accurate methods of diagnosing physical disturbances. But without a question, the tongue is still the *index to one's spiritual condition* (Matt. 12:34; Jas. 1:26) *and furthermore, it is an indication of the prospects one has to love life and see good days!*

II. See that you eschew evil and do good.

A. What does it mean to "eschew evil?"

1. When you are riding a horse and he sees a rattlesnake in the path just ahead, what does he do? He "shies" away from it! That is the meaning of "eschew."
2. In India, the roads are so narrow, there is only room for one vehicle on them at a time. When two vehicles approached one another, both would move over out of the other's way to let it pass. When we see evil ahead, we must "eschew" it, that *is, we must divert our path from it.*
3. Paul puts it plain and clear (1 Thess. 5:22); the Psalmist describes the happy man that steers clear of evil. (Psa. 1:1—3.) The prodigal son illustrates the futility of trying to "love life and see good days" while seeking evil.

B. But, it is not enough just to "eschew evil" one must also "do good!" (Gal. 6:10; Acts 10:38.)

1. The Lord taught that the house is in peril if the evil spirit is only driven out and the house is left empty, swept, and garnished.
 - a. We must be doing good, seeking good, filling up our lives with good, filling them so full that *evil cannot even squeeze in edgeways!*
 - b. Not enough to be a *checklist* Christian; must replace the evil driven out of our lives with good, virtuous, and righteous activity!
2. When one's life is filled with good, and doing good, *eschewing evil will be easier!*
 - a. A passenger asked the Mississippi river-boat captain, "I suppose you know all the sandbanks on this river." "No," said the skilled navigator, "But I know where the deep water is, and I keep in the mid channel."

C. *Why will eschewing evil and doing good give promise of*

"loving life and seeing good days?" Because God is in control. (v. 12.)

III. You must seek peace, and pursue it.

- A. We live in a world to which Paul's words apply: "And the way of peace have they not known." (Rom. 3:17.)
 - 1. The problem of strife is as old as man.
 - 2. Out of the past 4000 years, there have only been 400 years of peace on the international scene.
 - 3. In the world, today, the only remedy for the turmoil that exists is if all men "seek peace and pursue it."
- B. But let's look at Peter's words from the standpoint of their application to the individual. *It is a fact that a peaceful disposition or spirit will contribute to length of days.*
 - 1. A proven medical fact that a peaceful calm disposition is favorable to health.
 - 2. Such a spirit can preserve us from death sentences, brawls, and suicides.
- C. How may we go about seeking peace and pursuing it then, that we might "love life and see good days."
 - 1. *Put your trust in the Lord.* (v. 12.)
 - a. One time Oliver Cromwell's secretary was dispatched on an important mission. He spent a restless night in a seaport town, unable to sleep. Tossing in his bed, he disturbed his servant who was sound asleep in the same room. Rousing, the servant asked his master why he could not sleep. "I'm afraid that something will go wrong with the mission," replied the secretary. "May I ask you a question?" said the valet. "Did God rule the world before we were born?" "Most assuredly!" answered the secretary. "And will He rule it again after we are dead?" "Certainly!" "Then master, why not let Him rule the present, too?" The secretary accepted this logic of faith and soon joined his servant in peaceful sleep.
 - b. Phil. 4:7.
 - 2. Follow things that make for peace. (Rom. 14:19; Matt. 5:9.)

Where Do I Fit In?

Mark 2:1-12

Introduction

1. Our lesson is a study of some things which I feel will help us to have a great meeting April 29 — May 1.
2. Our text is Mark 2:1-12. In this text, a meeting was being conducted in a manner of speaking. It had as evangelist the Master Teacher, so we know that it is worthy of our notice.
3. It is hoped that by this study, each of us will ask of ourselves, "Where do I fit in a great gospel meeting?"

Discussion

- I. There were some common things found at gospel meetings present at Capernaum.
 - A. Every gospel meeting has a "noising abroad." We use radio, newspapers, and flyers to get the word out. The word had gotten out at Capernaum.
 - B. Every meeting has its "gatherers together". In this meeting there were "many" v. 2. The meeting house was full to overflowing.
 - C. Every gospel meeting has a preacher. In this case, the best preacher was preaching — Jesus. He prepared the word to them. (v. 2.)
 - D. Every meeting has some critics — skeptics. They do not come out with their criticism and skepticism but it is secret and in their own hearts, (v. 6.)
 - E. Every meeting has its reporters, (v. 12b.) They tell about what they thought of the meeting.
 - F. All these are present at the average gospel meeting. They were present in Capernaum. But they did not make the meeting a great success, but some of them were hindrances to the success of the meeting.

- II. There was one uncommon thing to which the success of the meeting can be attributed; something not found at most gospel meetings.
- A. That was the *four men who came bearing the paralyzed man*. They are not found at most meetings.
 - B. Parallel to these men would-be those who bring the lost with them to the meeting ... Those who are doing as the song suggests: "Bring Them In."
 - C. This is where a vacancy is that need filling. This is the difference between the mediocre meeting and the great meeting, the successful meeting can only happen when they are present.
 - D. Here is what it takes to be one of these:
 - 1. Faith, (v. 5.)
 - 2. Saving no expense. (It mattered not to these four that they would probably have to pay for damages done to the roof.) Should be willing to expend gas, car, time, etc. to see that the lost are here. Note v. 3 - carried.
 - 3. Requires disregarding element of danger. (These four were in danger of the displeasure of the owner of the house.) We may be in danger of the displeasure of people when we see to it that they come to the meeting.
 - 4. Requires some thought as to the best method of approach. (These four were faced with a closed door. They had to think of alternative methods of approach.) We sometimes are faced with closed doors. We need to find ways to open them.
 - 5. Requires diligent attitude. They did not give up the first time they were unable to get in. They kept on till they got in.

Conclusion

- 1. Where will you fit in in our upcoming meeting. Will you be a common fixture of the meeting (without which little difference would be made) or an *uncommon* one?
- 2. As the Capernaum meeting was made a success because of the faith and diligence of these who brought the man who needed help, our meeting can be made a success by us bringing the lost to hear the gospel.

The Hitchhiker

Phil. 2:12

Introduction

1. To every motorist who drives the nation's highways, the figure by the side of the road with his thumb out is a familiar sight. His name is two-fold: He is a hitchhiker and his name is legion, for they are many!
2. He is looking for a free ride.
 - a. He assumes no responsibility for the funds needed to purchase the car, the gas to run it, or the cost of maintaining it.
 - b. He assumes the driver has the insurance covering him in the event of an accident.
 - c. He even expects a comfortable ride and adequate safety.
 - d. He has been known to even spurn a ride because the car had no radio.
3. There is a situation even worse — the spiritual hitchhiker: One who expects a free ride to heaven. Let us consider him.

Discussion

- A. There are those who want a free ride to salvation from their sins.
 1. Some want a free ride: *one that doesn't cost them anything!* (Their name is legion for they are many!)
 - a. They don't want to have to give up their love and allegiance to popularity, worldly pleasures, family religion, riches, etc. to follow Jesus.
 - b. Jesus said that such men are not to be His disciples as long as they are that way. (Lk. 14:26.) "Hate" means "to disregard" in this verse.
 - c. All need to have the wonderful attitude of David. (2 Sam. 24:18-24, esp.v. 24.)
 2. Others want a free ride in the sense of *one that doesn't demand anything of them!* (Their name is legion for they are many!)

- a. They desire to be saved by faith only; by grace only. They want to "get religion" rather than give themselves in obedience. They want the Spirit to act upon them rather than act upon what the Spirit teaches them to do.
- b. The gospel makes *demands* upon men and of men.
 - 1. Man must turn away from sin, and turn to God. (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:31.)
 - 2. A man must be baptized into Christ for remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:48.)
- B. On the contrary, there is no such thing as a free ride to salvation.
 - 1. Must work together with God. (1 Cor. 3:9.) God provided the plan; men must obey its commands.
 - 2. Must work out one's own salvation. (Phil. 2:12.) Salvation demands the cooperation of man in its accomplishment.
 - 3. Salvation is by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8, 9.) God's favor is bestowed upon man through man's active, living, obedient faith.
 - 4. Salvation is the gift of God. (Rom. 6:23.) One that must be accepted on God's terms. He only gives it to the obedient. (Heb. 5:8, 9.)
- C. God is the one who offers salvation to man. But if man is to have it, God says it is going to cost him something; there are demands which must, be met. There are no free rides to salvation.

II. There are spiritual hitchhikers in the church.

- A. Their name is legion for they are many! B. Many are like the Jews of Jesus' day. (Matt. 3:9):
 - 1. They think that simply being on the church roll insures them of entrance into the everlasting kingdom. Not so. (2 Pet. 1:5-11.)
 - 2. As John said to the Jews, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." If a dead, inactive, lukewarm, Sunday-only church member can go to heaven, *these stones out in the parking lot can go!*
 - 3. There is no free ride to heaven even for a person with his name on the church roll.

- C. Many have the idea that going to heaven is like a ride on a 747.
1. On a 747, you go in, find your seat (which reclines) and sit down. You rare back in your seat, fold your hands, and go to sleep. There are many stewards and stewardesses who regularly serve meals and refreshments to you. Movies are shown; earphones are provided for continuous stereo music. It is a very smooth ride. The only time you have to do anything is when you take off and land (fasten seat belts!)
 2. Legions of church members act like that's what church membership is all about.
 - a. They act like the only time you have to do anything is when you first enter (obey the gospel) and when the end comes (die with your name on the church roll.)
 - b. They act as though the church is there to serve them, entertain them and their children, and make them comfortable.
 - c. They demand all the benefits and privileges of the church without feeling the slightest responsibility for its support with money, time, or talent. And if they do not get all they feel they rightly deserve, they become critical.
 3. Rather than a free ride on a 747, the church is more like one of the new man-powered airplanes. The pilot is sweating, laboring, toiling from start to finish. He sits on a bicycle seat and pedals like mad! No stewardess to serve him; no sleep — constant endeavor until the flight is over.
- D. There are no free rides to heaven for church members. (1 Cor. 3:9; Titus 2:14; 2 Pet. 3:14; 1 Cor. 15:58; Mk. 13:34.)
1. A minister was once asked, "How many members are there in the congregation where you preach?" "One thousand," the preacher responded. "Really?" the man asked. "And how many of them are active?" "All of them are active." was the reply. "About three hundred of them are active for the Lord; the balance are active for the devil!" All you have to do to be active for the

devil is do nothing for the Lord.

2. Nikolai Lenin, the leader of the Russian revolution of 1917 and founder of the Soviet Socialist Republic, is quoted to have said, "We will not accept into membership anyone with any reservations whatsoever. We will not accept anyone unless he is an active, disciplined, working member of our organization." The communists have been faithful to that ideal. That is why the threat of communism is ever advancing throughout the world.
3. Mk. 12:30. To be inactive is to be not "with Jesus." Therefore, to be a spiritual hitchhiker in the church is to be against Jesus.

Conclusion

1. Thanks be to God that there are still many who are obeying the gospel. Thanks be to God that there are still many active, obedient, loving, zealous, working children of God. But they are in the minority. The hitchhikers are legion, both in the church and out of it.
2. There is grave danger in hitchhiking.
 - a. Frederic Storaska, executive director of the National Organization for the Prevention of Rape and Assault, in his book, *How to say no to a Rapist — and survive*, said,
 - 1) "If I were a woman and I wanted to get raped right now, if I didn't have any time to fool around, I'd hitchhike.
 - 2) "If nothing else will convince you, consider this: every year, some 900 people will die while hitchhiking, not because they're murdered by an assaulter but because they are *hit* by cars."
 - b. There is more serious danger in spiritual hitchhiking.
 - 1) Of destruction for those who expect a free ride to salvation. (Matt. 7:21.) Just asking the Lord for a free ride results in condemnation.
 - 2) Of destruction for those church members expecting a free ride to eternal life. (Jn. 15:2.)
 3. Remember, Christianity is not without cost; it is not without demands. There will be *no hitchhikers in heaven*. Are you a hitchhiker?

How To Avoid Backsliding

Jer. 5:6

Introduction

1. Hear Jeremiah describe apostate Israel. (Jer. 5:6.) Sounds like an accurate description of the 20th century church.
2. But there is good news! This does not have to happen. The Bible teaches us how we can avoid backsliding.
3. If we will hear what the Bible has to say, and then *do it*, we can avoid falling away. We can avoid backsliding.

Discussion

- I. There is the possibility of avoiding backsliding.
 - A. We hear much about the "possibility of apostasy". It is certain that a child of God *can* fall. Yet, we need to think more about the *possibility of not falling away*.
 1. This is taught in *principle*.
 - a. God will never expect anything of man that man cannot perform.
 - b. 1 Jn. 5:3 — Commandments of God are not grievous.
 - c. This means that God's laws are not unreasonable; the duties He requires of us are not beyond our ability.
 2. This is taught by a *picture*.
 - a. God's Son lived a flawless life, accomplishing all that God commanded Him to do. He did so under the most difficult of circumstances.
 - b. Heb. 4:15.
 - c. We hear excuses: "I am the victim of my environment" ... "I have tremendous hardships" ... "I am under great pressure from my peers" ...
 - d. But God knows what we are under, He knows what we are capable of, and He gave us His Son's life as an example that we can live a faithful life, an obedient life. (1 Pet. 2:12, 22.)
 3. This is taught *m promise*. (1 Cor. 10:13.)

- a. "But such as is common to man" ASV says, "but such as man can bear." *God promises that no temptation has ever been greater than we could overcome.*
 - b. "Will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able". *God promises that you will face no temptation that is greater than you can bear.*
 - c. It is a sure promise, for *God is faithful*. You can depend on God!
- B. Let us learn to tell the difference between the *possibility of apostasy* and the *probability of apostasy*. Though it is possible for a child of God to fall, *it is also possible for him to avoid falling**.

II. There is protection against backsliding. (Jude 24)

- A. The Lord is our protector. He is a vigilant guard. (Psa. 121:1-4,)
- B. We hear much about "getting the right kind of protection" and having "enough protection"; insurance, alarm systems, etc. But a greater protection is provided for us!
- C. It is *conditional* protection. We must keep our policy "in force." Jude 21 — Keep ourselves "in the love of God." How can we expect Him to keep us from falling unless we hold His hand and be led by Him in the safe way?
- D. This protection extends even to "stumbling."
 - 1. KJV - "falling"; ASV - "stumbling."
 - 2. Not that we cannot stumble, or that we do not stumble, but that *God has the power, is able* to keep us from stumbling!
 - 3. The problem: *we don't always avail ourselves to it.*
 - 4. The closer we stay to God, the less likely we are to stumble,
- E. Even though we do not "always avail ourselves of this power, even though we stumble, *He has the power to present us faultless in the end, if we walk in the light.* (1 Jn. 1:7.)

III. There are provisions made for avoiding backsliding.

- A. There is the word of God. (Acts 20:32.)
 - 1. First, there must be the study of the word.
 - 2. Then we must commend ourselves to it. "Commend"

means to *entrust*. We must entrust our lives to the guidance of the word of God.

3. It has the power to build us up and thus keep us from falling.
- B. There are the Christian graces. (2 Peter. 1:5 —10.)
 1. These constitute a *divine insurance policy*.
 2. The extent to which we are covered under this policy is *equal to the extent to which they are in us* and to which *they abound*.
- C. There is the whole armor of God. (Eph. 6:10—18.)
 1. Enables us to *stand* (opposite of falling) and to *withstand*. (Eph. 6:11, 13a.)
 2. Again, the extent to which they enable us to stand is equal to the extent to which we put them on.
- D. There is the assembly of the saints. (Heb. 10:25.)
 1. At worship, we get exhortation; by the preaching, the reading of God's word, Bible study, singing, praying, and fellowship with God's people.
 2. Again, the extent to which worship helps keep us from falling is equal to the extent to which we attend and participate from the heart.
- E. There is the Lord's supper. (1 Cor. 10:16.)
 1. "Communion" means *joint participation, fellowship*. Thus, the Supper keeps us close to God.
 - a. Keeps us mindful of our sinfulness.
 - b. Keeps us mindful of the cross of Christ.
 - c. We drink with Christ. (Matt. 26:29.)
 2. Again, the extent to which the Lord's Supper brings us close to God, is equal to the extent to which we observe it.
 - a. This depends on its frequency. (Acts 20:7.)
 - b. Depends upon our participation with the heart.
- F. The *provisions* have been made; the *means* is available. If you don't grasp them and utilize them, *it's no one's fault but your own if you backslide]*

IV. There is profit in avoiding backsliding.

- A. No greater incentive to faithfulness than the prize of the high calling of God, the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10.)

- B. Yet, some look upon Christianity as they look upon their business. They are willing to work at it as long as they can *see* the profit.
 - 1. Christ had some like this: Followed Him for loaves and fishes. But when He said, Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life ..." many went back and followed Him no more. (Jn. 6:27, 66.)
 - 2. The Christian who has lost sight of the heavenly prize will soon backslide because he sees no *visible* profit in being faithful.
- C. Hear Jesus: Mark 10:29-30.
- D. Thus, we have an incentive, *a great incentive*, to avoid backsliding!

Conclusion

- 1. This is what it takes to avoid backsliding and it is available!
 - a. It is *possible* to avoid backsliding.
 - b. There is *protection* against backsliding.
 - c. There are *provisions* for avoiding backsliding.
 - d. There is *profit* in avoiding backsliding.
- 2. Yet, how many there are who have learned this lesson too late, for you have already backslidden! Are you among them?
- 3. There is remedy for backsliding. (Jer. 3:12—14.) You can be restored ... if *you will turn ... if you will return*.
- 4. *Acknowledge* your sins, that you have transgressed against the Lord. Come home!

Overcoming Worldliness

John 17:15, 16

Introduction

1. Most of the problems of the church caused by worldliness.
2. Worldliness will condemn the soul. (Gal. 6:7, 8.)
3. Not enough to condemn worldliness and charge not to be worldly; Need to tell *how* to overcome it.

Discussion

- I. To overcome worldliness, we must know what it is.
 - A. Our definition is often extreme.
 1. Sometimes too narrow, too limited. More than drinking, dancing, immodest dress, cursing, though these worldly.
 2. Sometimes too broad. Not all things the world does are worldly. This extreme gave rise to monastic orders.
 - B. The dictionary defines worldliness as follows: to be worldly is to be "of or belonging to life on earth, not spiritual."
 1. Often said, "He doesn't belong" ... "He doesn't fit in."
 2. This suggestive of the meaning of worldliness — to "belong" or "fit in" with the world.
 - C. Bible definition:
 1. Jas. 4:4 — to be a *friend* of the world is to be worldly. (Cf. Jn. 17:14.)
 2. 1 Jn. 2:15, 16 — to *love* the world and its things is to be worldly.
 3. Everett F. Harrison says, worldliness is "an affection for that which is unlike God and contrary to His will."
 - D. Summarizing: a worldly person is one who "belongs" in the world; is a friend of the world; loves the world; whose life has more emphasis on the temporal than on the spiritual.
- II. To overcome worldliness, we must realize what we are.
 - A. How many Christian young people have wisely been advised before going out, "Remember who you are."?

- B. The same with the Christian — He must realize what he is.
 - 1. He is a citizen of the world to come. (Phil. 3:20 ASV.)
 - a. Spiritually speaking, he has been transferred to the heavenly places — the spiritual realm. (Eph. 1:3; 2:6.)
 - b. Spiritually speaking, his life is in heaven — "hid with Christ in God."(Col. 3:3.)
 - c. Spiritually speaking, he is not in the flesh, but in the spirit. (Rom. 8:9.) His real existence is a spiritual one.
 - 2. He has a new nature.
 - a. The old nature that served sin and self — crucified. (Gal. 2:20a; Col. 3:3; Rom. 6:11.)
 - b. His new nature is Christ — He is conformed to the image of Christ. (Col. 3:10.)
 - 1) Gal. 2:20b - "Christ liveth in me."
 - 2) Gal. 3:27 - "put on Christ."
 - 3) Phil. 2:5 - "mind of Christ."
 - 3. He has eternal life. (1 Jn. 5:13.) Eternal life refers to the quality of life, not to the length of it — *life in the realm of the eternal*.
- C. Realizing what we are helps us get our bearings straight, gives direction to our lives, shows us the objective of life, and *gives us the desire to overcome worldliness*.
 - 1. Phil. 3:13, 14.
 - 2. Heb. 12:1-4.

III. To overcome worldliness, we must be what we are.

- A. How many times have we heard, "Act your age."?
 - 1. Paul said "Act like men." (1 Cor. 16:13.)
 - 2. Phil, readied for battle: "Be strong, act like men." (1 Sam. 4:9.)
 - 3. Christian must act like and be *what he is!*
- B. The dilemma: Though we are citizens of the world to come, though we have a new spiritual nature, though we live in the realm of the eternal, *we are still citizens of planet earth!*
 - 1. Still have physical bodies. Still susceptible to temptation. (Jas. 1:13-15.)
 - 2. Thus, a battle is raging — the fleshly nature against the new nature.
 - a. Rom. 7:22-25.
 - b. 1 Pet. 2:11.

- c. Matt. 26:41.
 - 3. To give in to the flesh results in worldliness!
- C. To overcome worldliness, therefore, means that we must *win the battle over the flesh -- we must be what we are.*
 - 1. We must crucify the flesh. (Ga. 5:24.)
 - 2. We must mortify our members. (Col. 3:5.) Destroy their strength and power.
 - 3. Must discipline the body. (1 Cor. 9:27.)
- D. The means is provided by which the flesh is overcome and thus *worldliness is overcome:*
 - 1. The mind.
 - a. Renewing the mind. (Rom. 12:2.)
 - b. Filling it with knowledge. (Col. 3:10,16.)
 - c. Proverbs 23:7. Someone says, "A man is what he thinks all day."⁵
 - 2. The Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 3:16; Rom. 8:5.) Obviously by his *teaching* indwelling us and guiding us.

Conclusion

- 1. We must overcome worldliness. (Rom. 8:6, 13.)
- 2. We have examined what it takes to do so.
 - a. Knowing what it is.
 - b. Realizing what we are.
 - c. Being what we are.
- 3. As long as we live in this physical body, the flesh will be battling against us. By faith, we can overcome worldliness. (1 Jn. 5:4.)

How We Can Build A Great Church

Introduction

1. The vast and orderly universe did not just happen, It was *built*. Great nations don't happen accidentally, they are built. Great architectural masterpieces do not just happen. They are built. *Great churches or great local congregations do not just happen, they are built.*
2. The principle of building the local church may be seen in several passages of scripture.
 - a. *Ephesians 4:16* —the local church pictured in terms of a building which is constructed joint by part.
 - b. *1 Peter 2:5* —the local church is described as a spiritual house made of lively stones.
3. These passages suggest the subject, "How we can build a great local church."
 - a. Someone has said that if you combine a skunk and a computer you have nothing but a "stinkin' know-it-all."
 - b. This lesson does not come from a "know-it-all" attitude.
 - c. The principles contained herein are basic, have been tried and tested, they are Biblical, and they work.
4. Let's look at three essential steps in the procedure of "building a great local congregation."

Discussion

- I. The first ingredient is great desire.
 - A. Desire is basic to any successful endeavor.
 1. Did you ever know of a wonderful marriage that was produced by a couple who had no desire to have a wonderful relationship?
 2. Did you ever hear of a winning team that had no desire to win?

3. So it is with the church; no desire to build, to grow, no growth!
- B. Many reasons can be given for why we ought to have strong desire to build a great local congregation.
1. God has given us the task of masterbuilders. (1 Cor.3:10.)
 2. Because the work of the church is the greatest cause on earth.
 - a. Booker T. Washington, black educator, obtained an audience with the great philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. After Washington presented his appeal on behalf of black education, Carnegie wrote him a check and handed it to him. Washington thought it was far too small. He then asked for another appointment with these words, "Sir, I have not impressed you with the greatness of the cause," will we ever have the desire we ought to have.
 - c. The greatness of the cause can be seen when we face up to the facts that Christ has given us a task — *the gospel to every creature of every nation in all the world.* (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:15, 16; Lk. 24:46, 47.) The local church is the only organized body of people that the Lord left to accomplish that.
 3. Because the church is in danger of extinction! The following figures express the direction in which we are headed:

Year:	1906-16	1916-26	1926-46	1946-53	1953-59
Growth rate:	99.14%	36.14%	57.29%	171.42%	33.84%
Year:	1959-67	1967-76			
Growth rate:	17.06%	6.38%			

(Figures from a series of Articles recently appearing in the Firm Foundation.)
 4. Because the church *can* grow, it can be great, it can accomplish the tasks Christ left us to accomplish. (Eph. 1:23.) It was through the *local congregations* that the gospel was preached to the whole world in the 1st century.
- C. There are also many forces which work to put the damper on our desire to grow.
1. *Self-satisfaction.* The devil has convinced us to live in the past - "Look at how far we have come ... Look

what we have done ... etc." Paul said forget all that! (Phil. 3:13, 14.) We are content with the status quo and have merely set up house-keeping. Amos said, "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion ..." (Amos 6:1.) 2. *Pessimistic defeatism*. The devil has convinced us that we cannot grow any more, that we have come as far as we can, that we haven't what it takes to build a great church.

II. The second ingredient is a great foundation. (The materials for use in this foundation are provided in 1 Thess. 1 '3.)

A. *Great faith* is essential to the foundation.

1. Faith has its source in the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.)
2. In order for us to lay the foundation for growth, the first step is to become strong on *Sound Doctrine*; to be students of the word of God.
 - a. It is the cross which draws men (John 12:32) and the word which saves souls (Jas. 1:21.)
 - b. Abiding in the doctrine of Christ is the assurance that God is with us. (2 Jn. 9.)

B. *Great love* is essential to the foundation.

1. There must be love for one another.
 - a. Love one for another is the "badge" of discipline. (Jn. 13:35.)
 - b. This love which binds Christians together will exert a tremendous influence upon the world. (Jn. 17:21.)
2. There must be love for the- church and the work of the church. (Eph. 5:25.) Christ loved the church enough to give his life for it; we must love it as well.
3. Fielding Yost, in his first year as coach of Michigan's football team, went 10 and 0 for the season, then on to the Rose Bowl where he beat Stanford 49 to 0. His team that year was not scored against! In a five-year span his club won 55 and lost one. He was asked the secret of his success, and he said it was his two-hour lecture to the boys at the beginning of the year. This lecture, he said, was on 4 letters: L-O-V-E. He tried to teach the boys to (1) love the game. (2) love to win, and (3) love their fellow players.

C. *Great patience of hope* is essential to the foundation.

1. No congregation can be great nor grow unless it has the

"never-give-up" attitude. We must keep on planting, and watering, and trust God to give an increase. 2. This attitude is expressed in Gal. 6:9.

- D. Great *faith*, great *love*, and great *patience of hope* are the fundamental foundation for building a great church. Knute Rockne was one of the greatest football coaches who ever lived. In his thirteen years as head coach of Notre Dame, his team won 105 games, lost 12 and tied 5. Other coaches knew that he never had a secret practice. In fact, he sometimes would put up a sign for visitors that said, "Secret practice today, come and bring your notebooks." One time when an Army scout missed a train connection and did not get to Notre Dame in time to cover the game he was to cover, Rockne obligingly sent him the plays he planned to use against the West Pointers. He explained his action by saying, "It isn't the play that wins, it's the execution."

What was Rockne's secret? Emphasis on the basics, the fundamentals: *faith, love, patience of hope*. These comprise the foundation of every great church.

III. Third ingredient is great living.

- A. As we mentioned before, the church is not experiencing growth like it has experienced in the past. The statistics show that we not only are not growing, but we are *on the decline*. It is not that we have not been trying to produce growth, but we have been barking up the wrong tree.
1. We have thought putting Christians in more active community involvement, such as PTA, social organizations, etc, would do the job.
 2. We have spent great sums of money on mass communication outreach, great cooperative campaigns for Christ involving all city congregations, put heavy emphasis on home Bible studies, door to door solicitations, personal soul-winning efforts thinking this would do the job.
 3. Add to this the elaborate church buildings, vacation Bible schools, Dial-a-Devotion, State fair evangelism, changing preachers every two years, etc., and we still do not have the kind of growth that the early church had. Instead, we are on the decline.

4. This tells us that it is time to come in from our fads, gimmicks, delusions, and "get-it-wholesale" tactics. Methodology isn't the answer.
- B. There is an old saying which holds true in every case: "When all else fails read the instructions." The Bible gives us the instructions: Matt. 5:13—16.
1. How do we view these statements of the Savior? Do we think they are beautiful and interesting, but don't hold much water-when put to the test?
 - a. These vivid words point to the fact that *the most convincing argument for the truth is a life that shines forth in good works and righteous living.*
 - b. Jesus, Paul and Peter placed tremendous emphasis on the power of one dedicated life.
 - 1) Paul speaks of the potential of children of God when they shine their lights. (Phil. 2:15.)
 - 2) Peter speaks of the power of the dedicated life to overcome false teaching. (1 Pet. 2:15.)
 - c. The statistics support this emphasis, showing where the *power* for growth really is: A certain church directory service conducted a poll to see why people attend church services where they did. Here are the results:
 - 1) 3% of the people came to church because the preacher visited them.
 - 2) 9% came because of, the beauty of the church building.
 - 3) 14% came because of their previous ties.
 - 4) 18% came because the building was the closest.
 - 5) 22% came because they liked certain members.
 - 6) 34% came because they were invited by friends.

This means that 56% of the people chose to worship where they did because of their contact with the *members.*
 2. The most irresistible force in the world is a godly life.
 - a. Daniel Webster was once asked what he thought was the most convincing argument for Christianity he had ever seen. His reply was, "A little old aunt of mine that lives up in the New Hampshire hills."
 - b. A preacher told of a new Christian he talked with

about how she came to know the Lord. She put it very plainly. "My neighbor is a member of the church." "Well," the preacher asked, "What did your neighbor say to you to bring you to Christ?" Her reply was, "Oh, it wasn't what she said so much as what I saw in her life. I never heard her say a thing against anyone, living or dead ..."

3. People are attracted to the church when they see a change for good it has made in lives, when they see joy and happiness and love as a result of association with the church.
 - a. One of the most *powerful* forces in the first century church was that Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, the imprisoner, the injurer who became Paul the apostle, the preacher, the teacher. The influence of the effect the gospel had on Saul is ageless and timeless in its effect.
 - b. When ever the book of Acts speaks of joy and gladness, these words are immediately followed by growth and increase. (Acts.2:46, 47; Acts 13:52-14:1.)
 - c. As we read through the book of Acts and see record growth, we notice that it is directly following great acts of love and compassion, (Acts 4:4; Acts 5:14, 15; Act 6:7.)
 4. When the Christians clean up their language, elevate their morals, exhibit the change the gospel has made their lives, exhibit the joy and gladness resulting from salvation, and allow their love and compassion to issue forth in good works and holiness, *then the church will grow and abound like it did in the first century.*
- C. Why is this congregation not growing with leaps and bounds like the Jerusalem church grew? Because folks look at us and see no change, no joy and gladness, no compassion, *and they see that they have no use or need for what we have if this is all it does I*

Conclusion

1. We can have all the buildings, programs, methods, gimmicks, etc., that we want, but until we become "the salt of the

earth" and "the light of the world", we will not get the job done, we will not reach our potential of growth.

2. We must project to the world that the church is the *most important* thing in our lives or else, they will be able to say, "-Why should they want me to be a member of the church, it doesn't mean that much to them?"
3. *Every one of us needs to repent* of our half-heartedness and indifference. We need to quit just *singing* "Be a light for Jesus" and start *being* lights for Him.

A Dangerous Imbalance

2 Thess. 3:1-15

Introduction

1. I have always tried to emphasize that one extreme is as bad as another. I am convinced that the Bible bears this out. E.g.:
 - a. Faith only vs. Meritorious works.
 - b. Direct operation of the Holy Spirit vs. Denial of Holy Spirit's work.
 - c. Phariseeism vs. fellowship with the world and its evil works.
 - d. Binding where God has not bound vs. loosing where God has not loosed.
2. Our lesson today is a study of a classic case of extremism on the part of first century Christians and of 20th century Christians.
 - a. Sometimes, even today, preachers preach God's truth and for various reasons folks take it to mean something different than it does. Most often, reading things between the lines that are not there.
 - b. In the case we are going to study, a young congregation is considered, some of whom had misunderstood Paul's teaching.
 - c. Paul wrote to correct the problem.
3. Our lesson is entitled, "A Dangerous Imbalance." Let us read as a text, 2 Thess. 3:1 — 15.

Discussion

- I. The Thessalonians were characterized by an imbalance.
 - A. The nature of their imbalance: they had convinced themselves (by reading between the lines of Paul's preaching) that the second coming of Christ *was to occur immediately*. (2 Thess. 2:2.) They were so wrapped up in it that they *neglected their temporal affairs*.
 1. Since they thought Christ's coming was to occur immediately, they reasoned, "What point is there in continuing some steady job?"

2. They thought, "It is much more realistic to be about the business of proclaiming the near end of the world."
3. Here is what they had done:
 - 1) They were living in idleness. (2 Thess 3:11.) "Disorderly in Hellenistic Greek means "idle."
 - 2) They were not doing any work. (2 Thess. 3:11.)
 - 3) They *refused* to work. (2 Thess. 3:10.) "would not work" means "refuse to work."
 - 4) They sponged off of the other brethren. (2 Thess. 3:8.)
 - 5) They became busybodies. (2 Thess. 3:11.) "They were not busy with their own business, but were *over-busy* in that of others.
 - 6) They had given themselves to the spiritual to the neglect of the temporal.

- B. There are modern day examples of the imbalance of the Thessalonians.
E.g.:

According to the Nashville Tennessean, June 28, 1981, a religious group in Tucson, Ariz, were convinced that by noon, June 29th, the "rapture" would take place. Of course, none of these things came to pass. But their leader *quit his business* the year before to get the message out and prepare for the "rapture". His followers were so confident of the "rapture" that many *sold their homes and belongings*. One man, a house painter, said he didn't plan to start a new job scheduled for Saturday, June 29th, so he would leave no breach of contract. On the day it was supposed to happen, dozens moved around in a confused mass, eating snacks, sipping soft drinks, giving interviews, discussing the "rapture", answering telephone calls, reading Bibles, singing spirituals.

This is similar to what the Thessalonians had done.

- C. I Thess. 3:10 — There was indeed something lacking in their faith: *on the temporal side* there was an imbalance.
1. Christianity is a religion that teaches men to fulfill their temporal responsibilities. (2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8.) This does not apply to an able bodied man who is willing to work but there is no work available.
 2. They had emphasized the *spiritual* to the neglect of the

temporal They were leaning too far to one side; were in error.

3. This error needed to be corrected even at the cost of disciplinary action. (2 Thess. 4:12; cf. 1 Thess, 4:12); if allowed to persist, cast a reflection on the church.

II. Many Christians today are characterized by this imbalance in reverse ... and worse.

A. The nature of our imbalance:

1. Many have *unknowingly* convinced themselves that the second coming of Christ is *yet a long way off*. (Cf. Matt. 24:48.)
 - a. As a result, we are so wrapped up in *temporal* matters that we neglect the *spiritual*: neglect preparing for, and watching and waiting for Christ.
 - b. Thinking that the Lord's coming is yet a long way off, we have reasoned, "There is no point in getting excited about preparing and watching and waiting."
 - c. We think, "It is much more realistic to get all we can out of life; there is plenty of time later to prepare for Christ's coming."
 - d. What we have done:
 - i. Whereas the Thessalonians refused to work and weren't doing any work, modern man works himself in temporal affairs to the point where there is no room for religion.
 - a) "I'm too tired; I've worked all day or all week; I cannot attend the services."
 - b) "I'm too busy."
 - c) "I don't have time."
 - ii. Whereas the Thessalonians became busybodies, modern man is totally unconcerned with anyone but himself.
2. Were the Lord to come now it would be with many as in the days of Noah. (Matt. 24:37-39); *given totally to temporal affairs!*

B. There were first century examples of the way we are. (2 Pet. 3:3, 4.)

C. There is *indeed* something lacking in our faith. (1 Thess. 3:10.) There is an *imbalance* on the spiritual side.

1. Christianity is a religion which demands that we seek God first and his kingdom first. (Matt. 6:33.) This does not exclude secular work or temporal affairs, but puts things in *balance*.
2. We have emphasized the *temporal* to the neglect of the *spiritual*. We are leaning too far to one side; we are in error.
3. This error needs to be corrected even at the cost of disciplinary action. (2 Thess. 4:12.) If allowed to persist, cast a reflection on the church, (1 Thess. 4:12.)

III. The need then and now - Balance.

A. Paul's prescription for the imbalance of the Thessalonians:

1. Patient waiting. (2 Thess. 3:5.)
 - a. They had the watching and waiting for the coming of Christ.
 - b. They needed the patience to continue working while they watched and waited.
2. Realization that the second coming of Christ was not going to happen immediately. (2 Thess. 2:1 — 11), though it was going to occur and could happen soon.
3. A look at Paul, Silas, and Timothy's balance. (2 Thess. 3:7-9.)
 - a. They had worked at preaching the gospel, getting men ready to meet the Lord.
 - b. They had also worked with their hands to provide for themselves.

B. Paul's prescription for the imbalance of men today is the same — *just reversed*.

1. Patient waiting. (2 Thess. 3:5.)
 - a. We have the working to provide for ourselves.
 - b. We need to start watching and waiting while we are working to provide for ourselves.
2. Realization that the second coming of Christ will happen and could happen any moment. (1 Thess. 5:1—11.)
 - a. It has been 1900 years since Paul said, "not immediately."
 - b. It has been hundreds of years since the falling away that was to precede the second coming of Christ, cf. 2 Pet. 3:9-11.

- c. Many like the Israelites. (Ex. 32:1.)
- 3. We, also need to observe the balance of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. (2 Thess. 3:7-8.)
 - a. They worked with their hands to provide for themselves.
 - b. Yet, they did not neglect *the spiritual* — getting themselves and others ready to meet the Lord.
- C. This balance is the cure for humanities ills.
 - 1. Unhappiness exists when men are *overly* anxious about temporal matters to the neglect of the spiritual.
 - 2. Man has more than a temporal body. Man cannot be happy until there is balance. (1 Thess. 5:23; cf. Eccl. 12:13.)

Conclusion

1. It matters not which side of the balance is tipped, *it is still tipped* — *there is an imbalance*,
2. All of us to visualize ourselves at the judgment bar of God alongside the Thessalonians and imagine what we might hear.
 - a. "Mr Thessalonian Christian, you thought that Jesus was going to come in the next few days. You wanted to devote all your time to watching and waiting, so you quit work and sponged off your brethren. There was an imbalance in your life. I wanted you to watch and wait and also to provide for yourself. Depart from Me, I know you not!"
 - b. "Mr 20th century Christian, you thought that Jesus' coming was a long way off. You figured, 'Why get excited about it; enjoy the temporal things; There's plenty of time to prepare and watch and wait.' So you devoted all your time to secular work and temporal affairs and neglected to serve and watch for Jesus. Depart from Me, I know you not!"
3. Many will hear God say on the day of judgment, "These you ought to have done and not left the other undone." (Matt. 23:23.)
 - a. To the Thessalonians; — "You ought to have worked and enjoyed the temporal things and not left the spiritual things undone."
4. What about you? Should Jesus return soon, would He find balance .. or imbalance in your life?

The Letter To The Church At Smyrna

Rev. 2:8-11

Introduction

1. As with all these letters: Christ says "I know ..."
2. Some facts about Smyrna.
 - a. In Roman times, Smyrna was considered the most brilliant city in Asia Minor, rivaling Ephesus.
 - b. Excellent roads, schools, architecture, etc.
 - c. The church there had undergone
 - (1) pressure (tribulation);
 - (2) poverty;
 - (3) blasphemy from the Jews (Note: the martyrdom of Polycarp.) Cf. Jas. 2:7.
3. Several great lessons regarding the church may be gleaned from this study: *a study of the only church of Asia of which Jesus had only commendatory things to say.*

Discussion

- I. A church may be spiritually rich though physically poor and oppressed, (v. 9.)
 - A. Christ made spiritual wealth possible. (2 Cor. 8:9.)
 - B. Physical wealth not necessary for spiritual wealth. (Jas. 2:5, Lk. 12:15.)
 - C. Far better to have treasures in heaven than treasures on the earth. (Matt. 6:19, 20; Matt. 16:26.)
- II. A church must be faithful unto death, (v. 10.)
 - A. Many misinterpret - think it means "until you die from natural causes." But in addition to this it means "if it costs you your life."
 - B. *Faithful* ye definition means "trustworthy, firm, sure, certain."
 - C. Faithful, but faithful to what?
 1. God and Christ.
 2. The word of God - The Faith. (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:7.)

3. The church of the Lord.
 4. The commitment that you made when you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. (Lk. 9:23.)
 5. The elders of the church. (Heb. 13:17.)
- D. Our time - a time of possible persecution — Would we be faithful unto death?

III. The tremendous blessings of complete faithfulness.

- A. No need of fear. (v. 10; 1 Jn. 4:18.)
- B. Crown of life — "crown which *is* life eternal." (v. 10.)
- C. Immunity to the second death. (Rev. 21:8.)

Conclusion

1. As we noticed, Jesus knows about every congregation.
2. Knowing this congregation, would he be able to say: "They are spiritually rich"; "They are faithful unto death."?

Foes Of Contentment

Introduction

1. Contentment - "the state of being satisfied with what one has." How many of us are in this state? We need a lesson on Contentment.
2. Contentment is to be desired.
 - a. The Bible says we should be content. (1 Tim. 6:8.)
 - b. It is obvious that godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Tim. 6:6.)
 - c. Yet, few are content. So many are depressed, down on the world, resentful, dissatisfied. What is the answer?
3. Contentment has foes. They are at least four in number. The answer to the problem of discontent is to overcome these foes, *foes of contentment*.

Discussion

- I. For number one: covetousness.
 - A. In order to be content, you must be free from covetous-ness. (Heb. 13:5.)
 1. In this verse, covetousness is seen to be the opposite of contentment.
 2. Covetousness is lust for money and possessions.
 3. This lust is never satisfied and cannot be. (The covetous man must have more, more, more; Luke 12:18.) That is why it is a foe to contentment.
 - B. Someone has written:

"The secret of contentment is knowing how to enjoy what you have and being able to lose all desire for things beyond your reach."
- II. For number two: unbelief.
 - A. When the Lord instructed us to be content, He gave us a reason to obey him. He made wonderful promises.

4. Matt. 6:24—34: He would provide all the necessities of life. (Cf. Psa. 37:25.)
 2. He has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. (Heb. 13:5.)
- B. Do you believe these wonderful promises? If so, is there any way you could fail to be content?
1. Jesus used the animals as illustrations of contentment. They are satisfied with the necessities of life.
 - a. The birds: They build their nests, rear their young, make their annual flights to warmer climates, but so far as is known no bird ever tried to build more nests than his neighbor.
 - b. No squirrel ever died from anxiety lest he should not lay up enough nuts for two winters instead of one.
 2. Could it be that we put the emphasis on the wrong thing? On what we *want* rather than what we *need*?
- C. Never forget, God takes care of His own.

III. For number three: envy.

- A. Envy may be defined as "*discontent* at the excellence or good fortune of another."
- B. Biblical examples abound which show that contentment cannot survive when envy enters the picture.
 1. Saul was content with what praise he received until he saw that David was getting more. (1 Sam. 18:8,9.)
 2. The elder brother was content with things at home until he knew that a feast was being given for his returned brother. (Lk. 15:25-32.)
 3. Haman was content until he saw Mordecai sit at the king's gate. (Est. 5:9-14.)
- C. Envy is an insidious evil which much needs to be eradicated from our hearts. (1 Pet. 2:1.)

IV. For number four: complaining.

- A. The discontented person is seldom willing to keep his discontent to himself.
 1. So he broadcasts it.
 2. And every time he tells about it, he feels it more deeply and it gets worse.

- B. The complainer must open his eyes to those around him.
 - 1. He will always be able to find someone who is worse off than he. He can learn to be content by counting his blessings instead of his problems.
 - 2. One man observed, "I complained about having no shoes until I found a man who had no feet. I complained about no one visiting my family until I found a person who had no family. I complained about the members until I moved where there were none. I complained about the Bible teacher until I tried teaching. I complained about not having fine clothes until I saw someone in rags.
 - 3. The poet expressed it this way: "The grumbler's life is ever so sad, It is filled with sorrows and woes, He hasn't thought how content he could be, By counting the blessings God bestows."
- C. Complaining and grumbling is fuel for the fire of discontent. Counting your blessings, however, can extinguish that fire.

Conclusion

- 1. If you are not content, it may be that you are covetous, or unbelieving, envious, or a grumbler. If you can overcome these foes of contentment, you can be content.
- 2. If you are not content, it may be that you are not a Christian, or you are an unfaithful one. (Matt. 6:33.)
- 3. Why not become a Christian or be restored and so enjoy the contentment that faithful service brings!

The Church Which Left Its First Love

Rev. 2:1-7

- I. A look at the church at Ephesus.
 - A. A hardworking church, (v. 2, 3.)
 - 1. Likely in response to Paul's writing in Eph, 2:10.
 - 2. For a church to be pleasing to God today, must have toiling members.
 - a. Like Jesus. (Jn. 9:4; Matt. 11:28.)
 - b. Abundant work. (1 Cor. 15:58.)
 - c. Zealous of good works. (Titus 2:14.)
 - d. Not weary in well doing. (Gal. 6:9.)
 - 3. Would Christ, who knows the activities of all congregations (v. 2) be able to say of us: "a hardworking congregation."?
 - B. A doctrinally sound church, (v. 2.)
 - 1. Likely due to Paul's and Timothy's exhortation. (Acts 20:28-30;! Tim. 1:3.)
 - 2. For a church to be pleasing to God today, must not endure false teaching.
 - a. Gal. 1:8,9 — let false teachers be accursed.
 - b. Rom. 16:17 — mark them and avoid them.
 - c. 1 Jn. 4:1 — try the spirits.
 - 3. Would Christ, who knows the activities of every congregation (v. 2) be able to say of us: "a doctrinally sound church."?

Despite all these good qualities of the church at Ephesus, Jesus said that...

- II. They had left their first love. (v. 4.)
 - A. Shows that a congregation may be doctrinally sound, and may be hardworking, *and still fall short of divine approval**.
 - 1. They had the same problem the rich young ruler had.
 - 2. They were beset by the same deficiency as Martha.

- B. What had happened - what is meant by "*Left their first lover*'
1. First, to understand the figure of Christ's relationship with His people: *marriage*, (Jer. 2:2, 32; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 19:7.)
 2. *They were failing to give Christ all the love, devotion, and fervor of service* that a bride should give her husband!
 - a. "All the romance had gone out of the marriage".
 - b. "The night has a thousand eyes,
 And the day but one;
 Yet the light of the bright world dies
 With the dying sun.

 The mind has a thousand eyes,
 And the heart but one;
 Yet the light of a whole life dies
 When love is done."
 —Francis William Bourdillon
 3. You may say "I believe that a church is all right so long as it is doctrinally pure and hardworking." Yet, note:
 - a. The result of love and enthusiasm being left behind: "I'll remove your candlestick out of his place,"
 - b. Go to where Ephesus *was* — no church — *no city I*

III. The remedy for such a condition (v. 5.)

- A. *Remember* — the need to recapture the love, devotion, enthusiasm of one's conversion.
 1. Day of my conversion — only thought of God, pleasing Him, devotion and love for Christ.
 2. Need to go on a "second moneymoon."
- B. *Repent* — the need to change one's mind — determine to get out of the rut, and get on fire for God.
- C. *Do the first works*.
 1. Worship regularly again.
 2. Pick up where you left off in study and growth.

Conclusion

1. The thing which could have resulted in the church at Ephe-

sus being around today - to have maintained their initial devotion and love and fervor for God.

5. The thing which will keep the lamp of the Lobelville church burning, keep it from going out - maintain our initial love, devotion and fervor!

Seeing Salvation Through To The Finish

Philippians 2:5 — 13

Introduction

1. Emphasize things which are useless until you carry them through to their finish, E.g. payments on retirement, social security, or loans ... tennis, baseball, or golf swing (follow through.)
2. Christian life is like that - Revelation 2:10. It is worthless if you do not see it through to the finish. (Lk. 9:62.)
3. Let's look at what Paul said to the Philippians about seeing the Christian life through to the finish. (Phil. 2:5-13.)

Discussion

- I. First, Paul wanted the Philippians to recognize Christ as the supreme example of seeing His mission through to the finish. "Obedient unto death." (v. 8.)
 - A. Jesus' obedience was the result of an attitude of humility. (vv. 7,8; Heb. 5:8.)
 1. Some feel that they are too good or high to obey someone. (Illus. politicians and others who get off after committing crimes.)
 2. Even though Jesus was the *Son of God* he was obedient.
 - B. Jesus' obedience was the result of an attitude of unselfishness, (v. 6.)
 1. Jesus was by nature God; was possessor of all things appertaining to deity.
 2. Yet, Jesus gave all that up in order to save you and me... to do God's will. (2 Cor. 8:9.)
 - C. As a result, God highly exalted him. (vv. 9—11.) God always rewards complete obedience! (Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:14.)

- II. Second, in view of the exemplar obedience of Christ and their past obedience, Paul encouraged the Philippians to see their salvation through to the finish, (v. 12.)
- A. Some have the idea that obeying the gospel is a one-time affair. It is really a life-time affair: two phases of salvation present and eternal.
 - 1. Cf. The rich young ruler. Though he could get all his obeying over with, etc.
 - 2. People are often baptized never to be seen or heard from again.
 - B. Salvation is something one must "work out" — see to the finish! (Cf. Titus 3:8; 1 Cor. 15:58.)
 - 1. Paul points to an end to which we are headed ... to which we must arrive as faithful and obedient. (1:6; 1:10; 2:16; 3:12-17,20.)
 - 2. Peter says that the faithful will "receive the end of their faith ... the salvation of their souls." (1 Pet. 1:9.)
 - 3. Illus. If a man gives notice or decides to quit and he has signed a contract, he must "work out" the promised time ... he must see his promise to the end.
 - C. As in Jesus' case, obedience to the finish on the part of Christians is the result of an attitude - fear and trembling.
 - 1. Why do people fail to see salvation through to the finish? Perhaps there are many answers.
 - 2. Yet, one reason may be that they have lost the respect for God that they once had ... that they lose sight of the horrors of hell, etc.
 - 3. Heb. 12:28.
- III. Third, Paul wanted them to realize why it was necessary for them to see their salvation through to the finish: God wanted them to and gives help to all who will try. (Phil. 2:13.)
- A. His power is there to enable. (Phil. 4:13; 3:21; 1:6.)
 - B. His *peace* is there to encourage. (Phil. 4:7.)
 - C. His *presence* will be there to strengthen. (Phil. 4:9.)
 - D. His *providence* will see to the needs of his people. (Phil. 4:19; Psa. 23:1.)

Conclusion

1. Eternal salvation is the result of life-long endeavor.
2. When the day of Christ comes, when the race is finished, when the battle is won, will you have been faithful and obedient? Will you have seen salvation through to the end?
3. Will you be able to say with Paul what he said in 2 Tim. 4:7?
4. Why don't we all plan on it ... why don't we all make it our goal and aim to do as Paul said in Phil. 2:12!

"Let Us Draw Near"

Hebrews 10:22

- I. There is a tremendous need to draw near unto God.
 - A. The world is drawing farther and farther away from God, and is becoming a reproduction of Romans 1:18—32.
 - 1. Man was created to be near God — part spiritual.
 - 2. When man is drawn away from God, the spiritual part of him dies.
 - 3. To draw back and away from God is to draw back into perdition — distinction, damnation. (Heb. 10:38, 39.)
 - B. The need of the hour is expressed by the text — "Let us draw near".
 - 1. As a nation. (Prov. 14:34.)
 - 2. As a congregation. (Rev. 2:4.)
 - 3. As individuals.

- II. It is indeed possible to draw near unto God.
 - A. Under the law of Moses, men *could not draw near*.
 - 1. Man was kept at a distance because of his sins. The sacrifices of the law could not bring *complete* remission. (Heb. 10:1-4.)
 - 2. The veil of the temple between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was a barrier which kept man at a distance.
 - B. As a result of Christ, these barriers have been overcome.
 - 1. The veil of the temple was rent. (Matt. 27:51.)
 - 2. The sacrifice of Christ made *complete* remission possible. (Heb. 10:12-18.)
 - 3. Hence, now it is possible to draw near.
 - a. Christ entered God's presence with His blood to atone for man's sins. (Heb. 6:20.)
 - b. As He did that, He consecrated a *way* through which brethren may boldly enter God's presence. (Heb. 10:19,20.)

- C. Both God and man are essentially involved in the process of drawing near.
 - 1. God draws men (Jn. 6:44) through the Scriptures. (Jn. 6:45; Jn. 12:32; 1 Cor. 1:18,21.)
 - 2. Men must themselves draw near unto God, by hearing, learning, and obeying the teaching of God. (Jn. 6:45; Heb. 5:8,9.)

III. Drawing near unto God *is a* three-staged process.

- A. A matter of *remission from past sins*. (Heb. 10:22.) How is such remission obtained?
 - 1. "*True heart*" void of guile and hypocrisy (Matt. 15:8,9.)" laying aside the doctrines and commandments of men.
 - 2. "*Full assurance of faith*." (Heb. 11:6; Jn. 8:24.) "Nothing doubting!"
 - 3. "*Hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*" denotes repentance — a change of the will.
 - 4. "*Bodies washed with pure water*." Baptism. (Acts 22:16; '1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21.)
 - 5. It is a new, living, and consecrated *way* for new, living, and consecrated people, made such by these steps. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:3,4; Jas. 1:18.)
- B. A matter of growth in Christ: Drawing nearer, *nearer, Nearer!*
 - 1. Drawing near in *daily prayer*. (Heb. 4:15, 16.)
 - 2. Drawing near in *faithful worship*. (Heb. 10:23-25.)
 - a. To draw near to the brethren is to draw near unto God.
 - b. No time when nearer to God than in worship. (Matt. 18:20.)
 - 3. Draw near *in study*. (Jn. 6:44,45.)
 - 4. Draw near by conforming to the stature of His Son. (Eph. 4:13.)
 - 5. Illus. Drawing near unto God is a matter of *constant* endeavor. It is like being in a row-boat in the middle of a swift stream. The current of the world and temptation is ever drawing you away from God, thus must be *constantly* rowing in order to make progress in drawing near unto God.

- D. Eternity: A matter of being *with* God for those who have drawn near unto Him in life. (Rev. 21:3; Jn. 14:1—3.)
1. In this life, the faithful Christian walks, communes, and fellowships with God *by faith*. (2 Cor. 5:7.)
 2. But in that land beyond, faith shall have become *reality* — *sight!*
 3. Mark it! The only individuals who shall be *with* God in eternity are those who are drawing *near* unto Him now!

Conclusion

1. As a general rule, men don't want to draw near unto God. Why?
 - a. God is light. (1 Jn. 1:5.)
 - b. Men love darkness better than they do the light (Jn. 3:19) because their deeds are evil.
2. Think of hell just for a minute. What are two things which make hell so horrible?
 - a. Outer *darkness*. (Matt. 25:30.)
 - b. "*From the presence of the Lord.*" (2 Thess. 1:9.)
3. The answer — the way to avoid hell — *draw near unto God, the Light!*

Are You A Working Christian?

Introduction

1. The Thessalonian church was noted for their spiritual labor, even though in temporal matters some of them are negligent.
2. In keeping with our lesson this morning, there must be a balance: both temporal and spiritual work.
3. The Thessalonian letters give us much insight into the area of the working Christian.
4. Let us notice the question, "Are you a working Christian?," and its answers from various passages from the Thessalonian letters.

Discussion

- I. The answer is determined by your disposition.
 - A. The disposition is your character and what makes it up.
 - B. Thus, your being a working Christian depends upon your *faith*. (1 Thess. 1:3.)
 - C. Your being a working Christian depends on your *love*. (1 Thess. 1:3.)
 - D. Your being a working Christian depends on your being *constrained by concern*. (1 Thess. 4:14, 15.)
 1. This passage suggests several general tasks of working Christians to perform.
 - a. Admonish the unruly.
 - b. Encourage the fainthearted.
 - c. Help the weak.
 - d. Be patient with all.
 - e. Seek to do good to one another.
 2. These tasks *grow out of* concern. It is most difficult to perform them effectively without concern!
- II. The extent to which you are a working Christian is limited by leadership.
 - A. 1 Thess. 5:12 — "Respect those who *labor* among you."

1. This must refer to the elders of the church: they are "over you."
 2. Also, they "admonish" you.
- B. While it is true that some *refuse* to follow the leaders, it is *rare that Christians exceed or surpass* their leaders.
- C. The eldership is not just an *office*; it is also a *work*. (1 Tim. 3:1.)
1. A man who aspires to the office of an elder does so that he may do the *work* of an elder.
 2. In general terms, that work consists of:
 - a. Superintending and feeding the flock. (Acts 20:28.)
 - b. Giving instruction in sound doctrine. (Titus 1:9.)
 - c. Watching for souls and giving account for them. (Heb. 13:17.)
 - d. Not domineering over the flock but being *examples*. (1 Pet. 5:3.)
- D. Since elders are workers and examples, according to the Bible, we cannot rightfully expect any more of the flock than what is exemplified by the leaders. *A working, laboring, leadership will greatly facilitate and make fora working, laboring congregation.*
- III. The dependability of a working Christian is assured if he is set for steadfastness. (1 Thess. 3:8; 5:21.)
- A. Regardless of how great leadership exists, *there must be personal steadfastness* on the part of a Christian if he is to be a working Christian. 1 Thess. 1:3 -*patience* of hope.
- B. 1 Thess 1:3 — *patience* of hope.
1. The working Christian is one who *endures* in the work, whatever obstacles might exist.
 2. Too many work awhile and then quit - grow weary. We must work till Jesus comes; We must work until the job is done. (Heb. 3:14.)
 3. The working Christian does not become weary in well doing because of the hope he presses for. (2 Thess. 3:13.)
 4. He knows he will reap if he faints not. (Gal. 6:9.)
- C. If we are willing to be faithful to what God says, He will *stablish* us in every good word and work. (2 Thess. 2:15— 17.)
- D. Note some things which accompany steadfastness:

1. Rejoice always. (1 Thess. 5:16.)
 2. Pray constantly. (1 Thess. 5:17.)
 3. Give thanks in all circumstance: (1 Thess. 5:18.)
- E. Patience *of hope*. Hope is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. (Heb. 6:19.)
1. The more diligence we show, the more assurance of hope we have. (Heb. 6:11.)
 2. Laziness has no hope nor promise. (Heb. 6:12.)

Conclusion

1. Note: "We'll work till Jesus comes."
2. Note: "There is room in the Kingdom."
3. To be a church filled with working Christians, we must
 - a. Develop dispositions which drive us to work.
 - b. Have leadership willing to set the pace and lead the way.
 - c. Have steadfastness... never give up attitude.
4. Rev. 14:13.

Stop Praying!

Introduction

1. Our lesson is on prayer. Its basic thrust is that we ought to stop praying!
2. Oh, of course this statement is conditional. We ought to stop praying IF ... certain things characterize us. Under certain conditions *prayer is short circuited*
 - a. Of course, the Bible many, many times encourages us to pray regularly and not to cease a life that has prayer as a regular feature.
 - b. This encouragement is given to faithful Christians. There are some individuals, who because of their lives, may as well stop praying because their prayers *are short circuited*
 - c. Our lesson is to encourage us to live in such a way as to pray and expect an answer!
3. Let us look at some instances in which the Bible in essence says "Stop praying."

Discussion

- I. The case of men characterized by Proverbs 28:9.
 - A. The wise man says that if a man refuses to hear the teaching of God, his whole life is an abomination to God, *but even his prayer is an abomination!*
 1. No more lucid example of this truth than the story of Saul, first king of Israel. (1 Sam. 15.)
 - a. He rejected the word of the Lord. He obeyed the voice of the people. For the purpose *of sacrifice*.
 - b. He had *good* in mind and in view, but he had nonetheless rejected the word of the Lord.
 - c. Samuel told him "to obey is better than sacrifice."
 2. As a result of Saul's rejection of the word of the Lord, God rejected him from being king.
 - B. Jesus emphasized the importance of hearing. (Mk. 4:24; Lk. 8:18; Matt. 13:14; the parable of the sower, etc.)

1. A man who *refuses* to hear the word of the Lord cannot expect God to respect his worship or hear his prayer.
 2. The prayer of the upright is heard because the Lord delights in it. (Prov. 15:8.) Note: The English dictionary says *upright* means "having a strict regard for what is morally right." For a man to be upright, he must have *strict regard* for the Word of God.
 3. Many have no or little regard for the word of God and yet pray for God to save them!
- C. The point: If a man does not have a strict regard for the word of God, and for what is right, *God rejects his prayer*, and he may as well stop praying.

II. The case of Moses. (Deut. 3:23;26.)

- A. Moses was forbidden to enter the land of Caanan because of his lack of faith at Meribah as per, Num. 20:10—13.
- B. In Deut. 3:23-26, Moses besought the Lord to let him go in, but God said, "speak no more to Me of this matter." God told Moses to stop praying!
- C. Many like this today. God has spoken and the matter is settled, but people keep praying for it to be otherwise. Might as well stop praying.
 1. Bible says, "Except born of water and spirit cannot enter kingdom." (Jn. 3:5.)
 - a. They refuse to submit to baptism, but pray to God for Him to save them.
 - b. To them, God says, "Stop praying." The matter is settled.
 2. Bible says, "Except ye abide in Christ" can do nothing. (Jn. 15:4.)
 - a. To abide in Christ means to be a faithful member of the church of the NT, where salvation is, (Col. 1:18, 19; Eph. 5:23 (RSV) of which there is only one. Eph. 4:4.)
 - b. They refuse to become members of that body, but they pray for God to save them anyway.
 - c. To them God says, "Stop praying." The matter is settled.
 3. Bible says, "Except your righteousness exceed that of

- the Scribes and Pharisees, can't go to heaven." (Matt. 5:20.)
- a. Many of the members of the church live like the Scribes and Pharisees, and they pray for God to save them as they are at last.
 - b. God says, "Stop praying." The matter is settled.
4. Bible says, "There is a gulf fixed ..." (Lk. 16:26.)
- a. Yet, certain religious people pray for their sinful departed ones that they might be saved in purgatory.
 - b. God says, once you pass from this life, your destiny has been determined and cannot be altered.
 - c. He says to them, "Stop praying." The matter is settled.
- D. The point is this: Stop praying as long as you reject the way of the Lord; cannot pray *contrary to His will* and expect Him to hear and answer. (1 Jn. 5:14.)

III. The case of Joshua at Ai. (Josh. 7:1-15.)

- A. Joshua and the Israelites had been successful by the hand of the Lord in taking Jericho. God had said that the spoil was to be dedicated to Him. But Achan had taken some of the spoil, had broken faith regarding the devoted things.
- B. When the children of Israel, 3000 of them, went against Ai, they were defeated and fled. Thirty six slain and men of Ai chased them as far as Shebarim.
- C. Joshua prayed until evening, he and the elders of Israel. God said, "Stop praying; Israel has sinned!"
- D. Same principle applies today.
 1. Our efforts to save the lost and build the church unsuccessful because there is sin in the camp.
 2. We can pray all we want to, but God, who giveth the increase, will not bless our labors until the sin is removed. (Jos. 7:13.)
 3. This problem at Corinth. (1 Cor. 5:1.) Paul told them the remedy. (1 Cor. 5:6,7.)
- E. The point: God will not answer the prayers of a congregation which tolerates sin in its ranks, nor the prayers of sinful Christians. (1 Pet. 3:12; cf. Isa. 1:15-17.)

- IV. The case of the Psalmist come to worship. Psa. 66:13-20.
- A. The Psalmist states his intention to go into the house of the Lord, and make good his vows and offer sacrifice and to pray reverently to the Lord.
 - 1. Yet, he says, if he had cherished iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not have listened.
 - 2. The meaning of this: If one comes to God praying, yet refuses to repent of sins, refusing to acknowledge them, or having evil plans and purposes in his heart, he may as well stop praying for God will not hear.
 - B. This applies in the case of Christians today. The Bible emphasizes the condition of the heart in reference to answered prayer. E.g.:
 - 1. If we come to God asking Him to forgive our sins, our heart must acknowledge our sins before Him. (1 Jn. 1:9.) If not, we might as well stop praying.
 - 2. If we come praying to God for forgiveness, yet are unwilling to forgive others, we may as well stop praying. (Matt. 6:14.)
 - 3. If we come to worship and have ought against our brother and have not made it right, we might as well stop worshipping until we have taken care of the matter. (Matt. 5:23.)
 - 4. If husband and wife are not discharging their duties one to another, if strife, discord, bitterness, etc. between them, may as well stop praying until matters corrected. (1 Pet. 3:7.) *Prayers short-circuited.*
 - C. The point: The heart must be contrite and pure from sinful plans, must be willing to confess wrong if God will hear. Must be acceptable to God *ourselves* before *our prayers* are acceptable. If not, may as well stop praying!

Conclusion

- 1. By all means, faithful Christians must never give up the practice of regular prayer to the Father. Can't live the Christian life without it. (Lk. 18:1.)
- 2. But, these are some conditions under which one may as well not pray until they are changed.
 - a. If a man refuses to hear the word of the Lord.

- b. If a man has refused to obey God.
- c. If there is sin in the camp.
- d. If there is iniquity cherished in the heart.

Let us do our best to make sure that we remain on "speaking terms" with God.

The School Of Life

Psa. 143:10

Introduction

1. In almost every area of life, education is essential.
 - a. The extent of one's education often determines the potential one has in the working world.
 - b. Thus, we want our children to enter the best schools and do their best.
2. The same principle applies to going to heaven.
 - a. Education which is in godliness is required and is essential.
 - b. "Life is the schoolroom of eternity" it is often said and correctly so.
 - c. The extent of our education in spiritual things determines our potential for living with God in the after awhile. We must enter the best "school" and do our best.
3. These things being the case, it is our purpose to discuss "The School of Life" and as a basis, Psa. 143:10: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

Discussion

- I. Consider the teachers, text, and students in the school of life.
 - A. The teachers - God and Christ. (Isa. 54:13; Jn. 6:44, 45.)
 1. They are eminently qualified. (Job 21:22.) They understand the pupils; are sympathetic in attitude. (Psa. 143:10.)
 2. Their method of teaching is the best. (Jer. 31:33.)
 - a. Provide for babes in Christ. (1 Pet. 2:2.)
 - b. Provide for strong and fullgrown. (Heb. 5:14.)
 3. Provide individual attention. (Psa. 32:8.)
 - B. The text - The word of God, the Bible.
 1. The All-Sufficient text. (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim 3:16, 17.)
 2. A text which contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. (Jn. 17:17.)

3. A text which provides for the whole of man — a complete guide to heaven. (Eccl. 12:13.)
- C. The students or pupils.
1. Requisites:
 - a. Meek (humble, teachable.) Psa. 25:9; Jas. 1:21.
 - b. Fear the Lord. Prov. 9:10; Psa. 25:12.
 - c. Wise and righteous. Prov. 9:9.
 - d. Love the truth. 2 Thess. 2:10, 11.
 2. No discrimination on account of race, ethnic or social background, or sex. An equal opportunity school. Rom. 1:16; Gal. 3:28.
- II. Consider the courses of study offered. (2 Pet. 1:3.)
- A. Psychology — "The science of mind and behavior."
1. Recognizes that the heart (mind) the basis of behavior. (Pro. 4:23; Matt. 12:34; Mk. 7:21.)
 2. God teaches us to cleanse our hearts. (Jas. 4:8; Matt. 5:8.) This will result in clean behavior.
- B. Arithmetic — "the science of number."
1. We are to add the virtues. (2 Pet. 1:5-9.)
 2. We are to subtract the vices. (Eph. 4:25; 4:28-31.)
 3. We are to rightly divide the word of truth (handle it aright.) 2 Tim. 2:15.
 4. We are to multiply by bearing fruit. (Jn. 15:8.)
- C. Language — "the science of speech."
1. Bible emphasizes the beauty of good speech. (Prov. 25:11.)
 2. Jesus, our teacher, eminently qualified to teach this course. (Lk. 4:22.)
 3. We are to learn the art of gracious speech. (Col. 4:6.)
- D. History — "the science of the past."
1. Lessons are provided from the past for our learning, for our warning and instruction. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.)
 2. By them we are led to the better things of Christianity. (Gal. 3:24-RSV.)
- E. Sociology — "The science of human relations."
1. The Bible teaches us how we ought to treat each other.
 2. E. g.: Matt. 6:14; Matt. 7:1, 12; Matt. 22:39; Lk. 10:30-37. Gal. 6:1, 2.

III. There will be a final exam and graduation.

- A. After a period of diligent study and discipline is over, the student will be called before the teachers for a final test. (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10.)
- B. Those who stand the final test will take part in the grand commencement. (Matt. 25:31—40.) Those who do not pass the final test shall go away into everlasting torment. (Matt. 25:41-46.)
- C. Only those who have studied for the final exam will pass it. (2 Tim. 2:15.)
- D. Let us all apply the same discipline and diligence that the Apostle Paul displayed, lest we "fail the test" (meaning of the word "castaway") 1 Cor. 9:27.

Conclusion

- 1. Too many of us have dropped out of God's school. Others are not making the grades. Some have need of applying for admission into God's school. The requisites are within the reach of all.
- 2. As students of God, we must study diligently at His feet, gleaning from His wonderful textbook, the Bible.
- 3. From the courses we study in the grand text, we have practical instruction that will make this life the best possible and assure life with God eternal.

Walking With God

Introduction

1. There are few subjects that people seek to know more about than "the Nature of God."
2. The fact that there is a creator with power and divinity can be known from the things we see in our world. (Rom. 1:20.) Yet that is all that can be learned from nature as to God, and many have not learned that.
3. Only by the Bible, God's revelation of Himself to man, can one know the identity, the mind, the nature, and the love of God.
4. In every page of the Bible is presented God's desire for men to be close to Him, to know Him, to allow Him to bless them.
 - a. That is the purpose of all that God has done since He made man.
 - b. All God's work culminates in the declaration contained in Rev. 21:3 - "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them... '!"
5. With this in view, it is fitting to think on the subject of "Walking with God."

Discussion

- I. Jehovah is a personal, social God, and men can walk with Him.
 - A. The Bible speaks of God as a personal, social being. So much so, the writers of the Bible refer to God in human terms, e. g., heart, hands, eyes, ears, etc., as though He were a man.
 - B. One of the most significant ways the Bible promotes the idea that God is a personal, social being is by stating that certain men "walked with God."
 1. These are figurative words. (Ex. 33:20.)

2. They are used in only three connections.
 - a. Gen. 5:22—24: The case of Enoch, seventh" from Adam.
 - b. Gen. 6:9: the case of Noah.
 - c. Mal. 2:4-9: the case of the Levites.
 - C. What does the Bible mean when it says certain men "walked with God"?
 1. The original language denotes "intimacy, fellowship, a close relationship and communion with the Personal God."
 2. One way this is expressed is in the case of Abraham, (Jas. 2:23), "the friend of God. "
 3. Also, in the case of Levi, (Mal. 2:4, 5) the words of the Lord refer to a covenant (partnership) which the Lord had with the house of Levi. (Cf. Num. 16:8, 9.)
 - D. In view of its meaning, it is something all of us should desire — to walk with God, to enjoy an intimate, close, personal relationship with Him.
 1. J. R. Baxter expressed in these words what should be the desire of us all:

"I hold to the hand of my Savior and Friend,
 He shields me from evil till dangers all end,
 He'll take me to heaven where voices now blend;
 I hold to the hand of my Lord. "
 2. This is the close, intimate relationship that all of us should have with God.
- II. God only walks with one manner of men. If we are to walk with Him, we must be that kind of men.
- A. The manner or type of men that can walk with God is exemplified by the case of Noah. (Gen. 6:9.) Let us examine his characteristics which made him fit for walking with God.
 - B. "Noah was a righteous man. "
 1. From Heb. 11:4-12 we learn what the Bible means when it says "Noah was a righteous man. " This passage tells of three great men of old who were said to be righteous.
 2. Here are their characteristics:

- a. Faith - v. 6: "... believe in God and that He is a re-warder of them that diligently seek Him.."
- b. Obedience.
 - 1) Abel - worshipped after God's command.
 - 2) Enoch — pleased God.
 - 3) Noah — performed the task God commanded him to perform.
- 3. Righteousness means "conforming to the Divine standard. " These things (faith/obedience) are what was involved in "conforming to the Divine standard. " These are what God sought in men, if they were to be fit to walk with Him.
- 4. These things God still seeks in men who would walk with Him.
- C. "Perfect. "
 - 1. Hebrew meaning — complete; an all-sided life, well rounded in all its parts, no essential quality lacking. (Does not denote sinlessness.)
 - 2. God does not demand sinlessness of us but that we have all the qualities he desires. E. g.:
 - a. Love. Matt. 5:43-48.
 - b. Christian Graces. 2 Pet. 1:5-8.
 - c. Fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22, 23.
 - d. Whole armor of God. Eph. 6:10-17.
 - e. Beatitudes. Matt. 5:1-11.
 - f. et. al.
 - 3. God desires that we be perfect (complete) wanting or lacking nothing. (Jas. 1:4.)
- D. "In his generations. " Cf. Titus 2:12,
 - 1. Enoch stood out among his contemporaries.
 - a. All the Bible says of them: "They lived... begat children... and died. "
 - b. Of Enoch: "He walked with God... begat children... walked the rest of his stay on earth with God... was translated.
 - c. What could be said of us? Would our epitaph be more like Enoch's... or more like his contemporaries?
 - 2. Even more significant in view of Gen. 6:5, Noah stood out among his contemporaries; he walked with God when everybody else walked with wickedness on his mind.

E. So the manner of man who is fit to walk with God is one who is righteous, peerfect (complete) and is such even when those around him are not!

III. God only walks with those who are in agreement with Him. If we are to walk with God, we must be in agreement with Him. (Amos 3:3.)

A. I used to think that this passage meant that two cannot walk together unless they get along, think the same way, etc. This may be true, but this is not the meaning of this passage.

B. In the original language, "agree" means "to make an appointment to meet together at an appointed time and at an appointed place. "

1. Suppose two people decided to take a walk together. One of them said, "Let's meet on the corner and we'll take a walk together. " They could not walk together because they had not agreed on the time; only the place.

2. Suppose one of them said, "Let's meet at 7: 00 and we'll walk together. " They could not walk together because they had not agreed on the place; only the time.

3. Yet, if they said, "Let's meet at 7: 00 on the corner and we'll walk together, " they could walk together because they had agreed on the time and place.

4. So it is with us. If we are to walk with God, we must do so at the appointed time and place.

C. God has revealed in His word the time and place in which men can walk with Him.

1. The time: At such a time as we are his faithful children. (2 Cor. 6:16-18. Cf. Jer. 31:31-34.)

2. The place: In Christ, (Col. 2:6); his body, his church of which there is only one. (Col. 1:18, 19; Eph. 4:4.)

a. Many have said, "I can walk with God because I am a good person. I can do so without becoming a member of the church. "

b. Others have said, "I can walk with God as a member of any religious group. I do not have to become a member of the church of the New Testament to walk with God. "

- c. Some say, "I am a member of the New Testament church and no matter how I live, I can walk with God, since I am on the church roll. "
 - 1) Even though one may be a member of the church, there are appointed places in which church members must walk with God.
 - 2) They include:
 - i. In his paths. (Isa. 2:3.)
 - ii. In his light. (Isa. 2:5; 1 Jn. 1:7.)
 - iii. In his Son's manner of life. (1 Jn. 2:6.)
 - iv. In his law and commandments. (2 Jn. 6; Psa. 119:1.)
 - v. et. al.
 - 3. How can we know that we are at the appointed time and place?. How can we know that we are walking with God? (Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 2:4 - RSV.)

Conclusion

- 1. To walk with God then, we must be the manner of men that God walks with, and we must be in the appointed time and place.
- 2. If one conforms to these guidelines, he can sing,
 - "My God and I will go for aye together,
 - We'll walk and talk as good friends should and do:
 - This earth will pass, and with it common trifles —
 - But God and I will go unendingly. "
- 3. Are you walking with God? Are you at the appointed time and place? Are you the manner of person that God walks with? If not, you can be today, if you will change your life to what God would have it to be.

How Far Is Heaven?

Introduction

1. Just how far is it to heaven? Children often ask this, and I suppose adults do, too. There are many answers given whether we realize it or not.
 - a. Popular song expressing view of modern day immorality: "Heaven's just a sin away... just a sin away. "
 - b. Materialistic, worldly view is also expressed by the common dictionary definition: "... something delightful... "
 - c. Modern day religious leaders, such as Christian Scientists: "Heaven is not a future dwelling place; it is a state of mind here and now... "
 - d. The Bible gives the true and right answer.
2. What Paul said of God in Acts 17:27b is true of heaven: "... not far from each of us..."
3. Our lesson concerns the church and its relation, its proximity to heaven. By seeing the relation that the church has with heaven, we can answer the question, "How far is heaven?"

Discussion

- I. The church is the entrance hall of heaven.
 - A. The tabernacle and the temple had three basic parts:
 1. The outer court.
 2. The Holy Place.
 3. The Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies.
 - B. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place typified or foreshadowed realities brought to light in the Christian dispensation. (Heb. 9:1-14.)
 1. The Most Holy Place was a type of heaven. (Heb, 6:19, 20.)
 2. The Holy Place was a type of the church. (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:19-22.)
 - C. This shows that the church sustains the same relation to heaven that the Holy Place of the tabernacle did to the

Most Holy Place, i. e., in order to go into the MHP, must go through HP..
in order to go to heaven, must go through the church.

- D. Can a person, in view of this, go to heaven without being in the church?
NO. How far is heaven? As far away as the entrance hall — the church!

II. The church is the gate of heaven.

A. Jacob's dream at Bethel. (Gen. 28:10-17.)

1. "How awe-inspiring is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven. " (v. 17.)
2. Thus, we see that the House of God is synonymous with the Gate of Heaven!

B. When we turn to the NT, we find that the House of God is the church of the Living God. (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19; 1 Pet 2:5; Heb. 10:21; Heb. 3:6.) Therefore, the church is the Gate of Heaven, because it is the House of God.

C. Again, it is obvious that one cannot go to heaven without entering the church, the house of God, the gate of heaven.

D. In the story of Jacob, as he awoke from his dream, he said, "The Lord is in this place and I knew it not. " There will likewise be many on the day of judgment who will say of the church, "The Lord was in this place and I didn't realize it!" How far is heaven? As far as the gate of heaven — the church!

III. The church is the Kingdom of Heaven.

A. The central theme of John's preaching as well as that of Jesus was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. " They preached the essentiality of entering and being in the kingdom of heaven when it was established.

B. What is meant: "the kingdom of heaven"?

1. Sovereignty, royal power, dominion. (Abstract)
2. The territory, or the people over which dominion is exercised. (Concrete)

C. There is only one place in which the full meaning of "the kingdom of heaven" is fulfilled: The church of the New Testament.

2. Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23. Christ is king of the church, exercises sovereignty, royal power, and dominion. (This cannot be said of any other religious group, for all others act upon the authority of men.)
 2. The church is made up of the people over whom the Lord is sovereign, and ruler.
 - a. Church made up of the saved. (Acts 2:47.)
 - b. Paul said that men are "called" into the kingdom. (1 Thess. 2:12.)
 - c. Yet, Paul says, "called" into the kingdom. (1 Thess. 2:12.)
 3. Jesus said church and kingdom of heaven, one and same thing. (Matt. 16:18, 19.)
- D. The destiny of the kingdom of heaven: Delivered to God. (1 Cor. 15:24.) Thus, must be in the church to go to heaven. How far is heaven? As far as the Kingdom of Heaven — the church!

Conclusion

1. We have seen that the church is the entrance hall, the gate, and the kingdom of heaven.
2. Instead of the question, "How far is it to heaven?", we should ask, "How far is it to membership in the church?"
 - a. Mark 12:34 — Some not far from the kingdom. Why not come on in. How?
 - b. Hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized. Having done this = saved. Saved added to the church. (Acts 2:47.) You can do it today.
 - c. If already a member of the church but unfaithful: How far is it to heaven? All the way to the finish line of the race set before us. (Heb. 12:1-4; Rev. 2:10.) Why not re-enter the race? Why not do it today?

Courage — A Quality That Counts

Josh. 1:1-9

Introduction

1. Think for just a minute...
 - a. It was forbidden by law to pray to any god or man for 30 days and Daniel knew it. Yet, three times a day he prayed as usual with the windows open.
 - b. The Philistine champion, Goliath of Gath, who was 9 feet, 9 inches tall (1 Sam. 17:4), defied the armies of God. The young shepherd, David, with 5 stones, a sling and a staff went against Goliath and slew him.
 - c. Anyone who came before Ahazuerus the king without being called would be put to death. Esther knew it. Yet, to make supplication for her people who were doomed to extermination, she went,
2. Think... What is the common link between all three of these people? What is the outstanding quality behind their actions? The answer: undaunted courage, a quality that counts; a quality that has changed the world and will go on changing it!
3. Our lesson today deals with courage — a quality that counts. Listen carefully as I read Josh. 1:1 — 9.

Discussion

- I. Just what is this thing called courage?
 - A. The dictionary defines it, "The ability to control fear when facing danger or pain, bravery. "
 1. So courage is not the absence of fears, but the ability to conquer, control, and overcome them.
 2. Note that in having the kind of courage God demanded, Joshua would be enabled to not tremble or be fainthearted, (v. 9.)
 - B. But in addition to this, more is involved in the courage God demanded of Joshua.
 1. The Hebrew word translated "be... of good courage"

- means to be strong, determined and vigorous; to act with great spirit.
- 2. It carried the idea of a determination of mind, a stoutness of heart, (cf. Amos 2:16 RSV.)
- 3. It was that which would enable him to "do according to all the law... turn not from it the right hand or to the left..." (v. 7.)
- C. So, altogether, courage is the ability to conquer fear and to stand and do what is right come what may - at all times and in all places.

II. Courage is the need of the hour — both then and now.

- A. The need for courage was so intense that God exhorted Joshua three times so he would not forget, (vv. 6, 7, 9.)
 - 1. Joshua was already a courageous man. (Num. 14:4—10.)
 - 2. Courageous though he was, he needed strength, more courage.
 - 3. Every person, no matter who they are, no matter what their station in life, needs the quality of courage, (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12.)
- B. The task before Joshua was an awesome one.
 - 1. The need for courage was great for he was to fill the shoes of Moses the servant of the Lord. (Num. 27:18 — 23; Josh. 1:1, 2.)
 - a. Moses was a "hard act to follow." (Deut. 34:10-12.)
 - b. There was much expected of him. (v. 6.)
 - c. Perhaps our mother, father, or some spiritual leader has passed on; we must have the courage to step in and fill the vacancy.
 - 2. The need for courage was great for Joshua was to "cross over this Jordan." (v. 2.)
 - a. To Joshua and the children of Israel, the Jordan river represented a barrier between them and the land of promise. Joshua needed courage to lead the people over Jordan.
 - 1) There are rivers of difficulties and barriers that children of God face — seen and unseen.
 - 2) We need courage to "cross" them.
 - b. The Jordan also represents obedience to God in baptism: The dividing line between the wilderness of sin

- and the land of promise. Need courage to cross and become a member of the church.
- c. The Jordan also represents death. We face it at the flood stage. The question of Job (Job 14:14) is one common to man. We need courage to face death.
- 3. The need for courage was great for Joshua because there were foes to conquer, as the promised land was possessed.
 - a. The Canaanites, the Amorites, and others had to be met in combat and overcome.
 - b. The Christian has foes to conquer:
 - 1) The tempting world without. (Eph. 6:11, 12.)
 - 2) Evil thoughts within. (Matt. 15:18, 19.)
- C. Certainly Joshua's need for courage was great, but the need is great today as well.

III. There was and is an abundant source of the courage that is needed.

- A. The Lord's presence is always a source of courage, (v. 5, 9.)
 - 1. This is how the shepherd Psalmist overcame his fear. (Psa. 23:4.)
 - 2. The Savior likewise is present with us. (Matt. 28:20.)
- B. The Lord's promise is always a source of courage, (vv. 3-5.)
 - 1. We have promises of the Lord that are far greater and more precious (1 Pet. 1:3, 4.)
 - 2. If God expected great courage of Joshua, shall He not expect even greater courage of us to whom He has promised much more! (Cf. Heb. 4:9; Matt. 5:5.)
- C. The Lord's power is always a source of courage.
 - 1. Joshua knew that he could not defeat the giants of the land by his own power, but with God's power, he knew he could. (David also found courage in God's power; I Sam 17:37.)
 - 2. Without Jesus, we can do nothing. (Jn. 15: 5.) Yet, with God all things are possible. (Matt. 19:26.) We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us! (Phil. 4:13.)

Conclusion

- 1. Indeed courage is the need of the hour — a quality that counts. Courage to stand up and be counted; to do and be

with God would have us do and be, no matter what dangers we face!

2. Some present today know that they need to "cross over this Jordan" - to leave the wilderness of sin and become a child of God, a NT Christian.
 - a. I admit that it takes courage to forsake the world and give your life to Jesus. I admit that it takes courage to resist the temptation to delay and put off becoming a Christian.
 - b. But you can find the courage you need in the power, presence, and promises of God. He will be with you every step of the way. Why not be of good courage and obey the gospel this hour?

3. Likewise, there are some here who have been unfaithful. You are ashamed of your life of sin. You want to be cleansed. You want to be restored.
 - a. I admit that it takes courage to walk down this aisle and say, "I have sinned and I want to live right from now on. "
 - b. But you, too, can find the courage you need if you will yield to the will of God. Why not be strong and very courageous and come home and do it NOW?

Are We "Cakes Not Turned?"

Hosea 7:8

Introduction

1. Our lesson takes us back to the kitchen of a woman in Israel.
2. Hosea uses this "cake not turned" to illustrate the spiritual condition of the Northern Kingdom.
 - a. They mingled themselves with the nations, yet at the same time considered themselves the consecrated people of God.
 - b. They worshipped idols and God.
3. This condition prevails today and must be studied in light of its seriousness.

Discussion

- I. A Christian can be a "cake not turned". Note some of the following ways:
 - A. "Well done" in the outward show of religion but "raw and doughy" in inward religion. (Matt. 15:8; Matt. 23:23, 25 — 28.)
 - B. "Well done" in hearing but "raw and doughy" in doing. (Jas. 1:22-25.)
 - C. "Well done" in Sunday Morning attendance but "raw and doughy" in Sunday night and Wednesday night attendance.
 - D. "Half-baked" in the sense of being the friend of the world while trying to be the friend of God. (Jas. 4:4.)
 - E. "Well done" in laying up treasures on earth but "raw and doughy" in hying up treasures in heaven. (Lk. 12:13—21.)
- II. Doom and destruction are the fate of half-baked "cakes not turned. "
 - A. As Ephraim in their half-baked condition, so cakes not turned today. (Hosea 7:12, 13.)
 - B. Such are fit for destruction because of their worthlessness. (Cf. Matt. 5:13-15.)
 - C. Being synonymous with lukewarm, cakes not turned are

destined to be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. (Cf. Rev. 3:16.)

- D. A tragic doom — for such a condition makes one insensitive to his situation. (Hosea 7:9.)

III. How can we keep from being "cakes not turned?"

- A. Realize that with the Lord it is all or nothing. (Matt. 6:24; Lk. 9:62.)
- B. Being today to grow and develop as a Christian. (2 Pet. 1:5-11.)
- C. Begin today to replace half-hearted, half attendance with whole-hearted attendance of all the services. (Heb. 10:25.)
- D. Begin today to hear and do. (Rom. 2:13.)
- E. Be not conformed to the world but transformed. (Rom. 12:1, 2.)
- F. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:19, 20.)

Conclusion

1. If you realize that you are a "cake not turned, " then turn, repent of your half-baked service.
2. If you have never fully obeyed the gospel and yet you believe, you are but a "cake not turned". You must turn to God through complete obedience unto Him. (Acts 3:19.)

Unconscious Glory

Exodus 34:29-35

Introduction

1. Israel had disobeyed God's instructions - they had made the golden calf and worshipped it while Moses was on the mount.
2. God said they were a "stiff-necked people. " They were so sinful that God said, "If for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. " (Ex. 33:5.)
3. God therefore, instead of Himself, would send His angel to go with them into the land He swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
4. But Moses pleaded that God Himself would to up with them. (Ex. 33:12-16.)
5. This brings us to our study. Our lesson text is Ex. 34:29-35.

Discussion

- I. Moses experienced "a foretaste of glory divine. "
 - A. To be reassured that he had found favor in the eyes of Jehovah and that Jehovah would be with the children of Israel, Moses requested to see God's glory, (i. e. His goodness.) Ex. 33:12-18.
 - B. God granted his request. (Ex. 33:19-23; 34:5-9.)
 - C. In this story, we are reminded that no man in the flesh can see Jehovah and live. This fact urges us to long for the coming of Christ, when we shall see God.
 1. We shall then no longer be flesh and blood, but have a spiritual body, in which we may see God. (1 Cor. 15:42-50.)
 2. We shall be like Him and we shall see Him as He is. (1 Jn. 3:2.)
 3. We shall be partakers of the "divine nature. " (2 Pet. 1:4.)
 - D. We shall see Him face to face... we shall behold what Moses saw a reflection of.

- II. The glory of God had an effect upon Moses.
 - A. The skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. (Ex. 34:29 RSV.) Moses' face reflected God's glory.
 - 1. There is incredible power in such communion with God.
 - 2. This power is still available through Prayer and Bible study! We talk to Him in prayer; He speaks to us through His word.
 - 3. Though our face will not shine in the same way Moses' did, they will shine with joy, enthusiasm, hope, and peace. And more important, our lives will radiate the light of God to those around us. (Matt. 5:13, 14.)
 - 4. We are changed by this kind of communion with deity. (2 Cor 3:18.)
 - B. But Moses did not realize that his face shone!
 - 1. Closeness with Jehovah always produces "self-forgetful-ness".
 - 2. The closer we get to Christ, the more we hear His words, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself..." (Lk. 9:23.)
 - 3. A person who is not characterized by humility has not been close to God!
 - 4. Someone has said, "We can do almost anything in the church if we quit worrying about who gets the credit!"
- III. The glory of God that shone in Moses' face is a figure for the present dispensation.
 - A. Why did Moses put the veil on his face? OT doesn't say, but Paul does: So the Israelites would not "see the end of the fading splendor. " (2 Cor. 3:13 RSV.)
 - B. When Christ came the veil was lifted. (2 Cor. 3:14.) Then people could see that the splendor of the old law had faded.
 - C. Yet, when the Jews who had hardened their hearts against Christ read the Old Testament, the veil remains over their minds. (2 Cor. 3:15.) They, because of their hardness of heart cannot see that the old law is done away, that its splendor has been totally over-shadowed by that of the new covenant.

- D. Whenever such a person turns to Christ, the veil is lifted. (2 Cor. 3:16.)
- E. All of this points to the Greater Splendor of the Christian system over the inferior and fading splendor of the old law. (2 Cor. 3:7-12.)

Conclusion

1. In this study we are reminded of the glory that awaits us in eternity; of the glory of the Christian life and influence in its humility; and of the glory of the Christian system.
2. As the glory of God assured them then, it can reassure us now. (2 Cor. 4:1.)
3. Let us all so live as to "see Him face to face!"

True Repentance

Psalm 51

Introduction

1. The heading (relate the story.) Called the "Penitential Psalm. "
2. Meaning of repentance (Heb. word) "to return, to turn again."
 - a. Psalm 51 is the outpouring of the heart of a man returning to God.
 - b. David has been called "the prodigal son" of the Old Testament.
 - c. Psalm 51 is his prayer to God. It is similar to the plea prepared by the lost son in Luke 15.
3. Read Psalm 51.
4. The words of this beautiful prayer teach us what is involved in true repentance.
 - a. All of us sin — no question about that. (Rom. 3:23.)
 - b. Therefore all of us must repent when we sin.
 - c. David here provides a model of true repentance.

Discussion

- I. True repentance requires a heart willing to say, "I have sinned. "
 - A. This is among the hardest things God calls upon men to do. It is hard because men will do almost anything before admitting guilt.
 1. They will shift blame. (Cf. Adam and Eve.)
 2. They will hunt motes. (Matt. 7:3-5.)
 3. They will seek to cover up their trail of sin with good deeds. (Lk. 18:12.)
 4. They will stand behind the church, (cf. Matt. 3:9.)
 - B. David was far from resorting to these when confronted with his guilt.
 1. He could have implicated Bathsheba, for she had been dressed immodestly.

2. He could have called attention to other men in the kingdom as guilty as himself.
 3. He could have weighed his sin against his accomplishments.
 4. He would have hidden behind the throne.
 5. But he did not! He simply acknowledged his guilt. He said, "I have sinned..." (2 Sam. 12:13; vv. 3-5.)
- C. David realized as should we that the only heart that is able to be forgiven is one willing to say, "I have sinned. "
1. Luke 18:13, 14 — Only one who sent down justified was one who said he was a sinner.
 2. 1 Jn. 1:9.
 3. James 5:16.
 4. Why? Only an acknowledgment of guilt enables one to see his need for forgiveness. (Lk. 5:31, 32.)
- D. Are you willing to say, "I have sinned?"
- II. True repentance requires a heart willing to say, "I am sorry. "
- A. Is there anywhere to be found a more intense sorrow for sin expressed than here?
1. Empty of joy and gladness, (v. 8.)
 2. Bones broken, (v. 8.)
 3. A broken and contrite heart, (v. 17.)
- B. What produced sorrow for sin in the heart of David?
1. Realizing the crushing weight of the guilt and consequences of sin. (vv. 3, 8.)
 2. Realizing that all sin is sin against God. (v. 4a.)
 3. Realizing that he had committed sin worthy of death in his own words. (2 Sam. 12:5.)
- C. David's sorrow was of a godly sort - it was genuine sorrow for sin. (v. 6.)
1. Wasn't like the sorrow of the rich young ruler. (Matt. 19:22.)
 2. Wasn't like the sorrow of many criminals — sorry because they got caught.
 3. David's was sorrow for what he had done.
- D. Only those hearts which experience genuine sorrow for sin are capable of repentance. 1. 2 Cor. 7:10.

2. Acts 2:37 — Had Peter told them to repent before they had their hearts pricked, they would not have done so.
3. Are you willing to say, "I am sorry?"

III. True repentance requires a heart willing to say, "I'll try to live right from now on. "

A. This is what Paul and John called "the fruits of repentance. "

1. Matt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8.
2. Acts 26:20.
3. By this is meant a manner of life which is proof that one has turned to God and forsaken sin. (Cf. Rom. 6:20-22.)
4. Good trees bring forth good fruit, etc. (Matt. 7:17, 18.) Hence, a man who bears evil fruit has not repented.

B. David had the fruit of repentance.

1. Evident from his prayer.
 - a. Prayed for steadfastness in obeying God. (v. 10.)
 - b. Prayed for a willing mind, ready to do God's commands, (v. 12.)
2. Evident from his resolutions.
 - a. To teach others, (v. 13.)
 - b. To worship and praise, (v. 14, 15.)

C. True repentance is not simply a matter of turning to God "until the heat's off" and then going back to the old way of life.

1. That is what Pharaoh tried to do.
2. That provides a predicament worse than the first. (2 Pet. 2:20-22.)

D. Are you willing to say, "I'll try to live right from now on?"

IV. True repentance requires a heart willing to say, "Please forgive. "

A. Some 20 times in this psalm, David says in so many words, "Please forgive. "

1. He uses various terms which express how he viewed sin: "blot out, wash, cleanse, purge. He saw his sin as a filthy defilement, a stain.
2. He realized that he was unable to remove his sin himself, a. "Deliver me" (v. 14.)

- b. "God of my salvation. " (v. 14.)
 - c. God was his only hope.
 - 3. He realized that God and God alone was abundantly able to forgive, (v. 1.)
- B. Tragedy of tragedies! When a man makes up his mind to forsake the love and practice of sin yet will not seek forgiveness.
 - 1. How many think that since they have straightened up they will be saved!
 - 2. Though David had made up his mind to forsake sin and serve it no more, he still pled for purging, cleansing, washing!
 - 3. Though one may decide today he is not going to serve sin any longer, it is not until he is baptized that he is dead to sin. Not until he is dead to sin is he free from it. (Rom. 6:1-7.)
 - 4. Saul of Tarsus had made up his mind that he would no longer persecute Christ, but not until after he had been baptized, not until he had called for forgiveness upon the name of the Lord was he saved. (Acts 22:16.)
- C. Are you willing to say, "Please forgive?"

Conclusion

- 1. That's what is involved in true repentance: saying
 - a. "I have sinned. "
 - b. "I am sorry. "
 - c. "I'll try to live better from now on. "
 - d. "Please forgive. "
- 2. If you as a Christian have wandered from God and sinned in His sight, this is what you must say to Him. If you have sinned against the church, this is what you must say to the church.
- 3. 2 Pet. 3:9; David repented and received forgiveness; Paul obtained mercy; Peter, though he denied the Lord, was pardoned; you can be forgiven, if you are willing.

The Watchman Principle

Ezekiel 33:1-9

Introduction

1. An ever important fact is presented in Rom. 6:23 - "The wages of sin is death."
2. The Bible declares that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but desires that all turn to Him. (Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9.)
3. Since man is created in the image of God and is thus a free moral agent, God cannot force anyone to turn to Him. But He can warn men of the consequences of unrighteousness and that they should turn to Him. Hence, He has given us, His children, the responsibility of being watchmen, to warn mankind.

Discussion

- I. The Watchman principle.
 - A. God took this principle from the practice of the Israelites (33:1 -6) and applied it to the commission of Ezekiel.
 1. The basic idea underlying the watchman principle is the obligation to warn,
 2. Hence, God told Ezekiel to inform the captives that the city of Jerusalem and "the desire of their eyes" (the temple) would be destroyed on account of their wickedness and that they should turn to Him. They didn't believe Him. When the news of the sack of Jerusalem reached Babylon, Ezekiel's obligation as a watchman continued as God renewed His commission to warn the people to turn from their evil ways.
 - B. The watchman principle applies because of impending danger, not mere physical death, but spiritual death in eternal hell — danger which must be warned of.
 1. Hence, God has set each one of us Christians as watchmen to warn of the danger of eternal perdition.
 2. This obligation has serious responsibility (Ezek. 33:8).

- II. Prevalent misunderstandings of and attitudes toward the watchman principle.
 - A. Some say, "He wouldn't change even if I did warn him!" This is not the issue. We are not held responsible whether or not a person heeds God's warning; we are only held responsible for whether or not he has been warned!
 - B. Others claim, "I'm afraid that I might lose a friend. "
 - 1. Yet, how much of a friend are you if you do not warn him to turn from his wicked way?
 - 2. Jesus says that if he hears you, "thou hast gained a brother" (Matt. 18:15). Isn't saving him from eternal perdition worth the risk of losing his friendship? If not, it's not much of a friendship!
 - C. Some are under the impression that the duty of a watchman is to deride, criticize, condemn, judge, or scathe.
 - 1. God says it simply involves warning.
 - 2. God did not set Ezekiel over the hour of Israel as a man-eating "guard dog" trained to pounce upon his listeners and devour them!
 - 3. Ezekiel was simply instructed to "hear the word at God's mouth and give them warning from God. " (Ezek. 33:7.)
 - D. Many say, "It's not my place to meddle in his matters. "
 - 1. True, we are not to be busy bodies in other men's matters, but warning someone of the dangers of his sinful life doesn't fall into this category.
 - 2. I imagine that there will be two types of people in hell.
 - a. Those who can say nothing because they were warned, yet did not heed the warning.
 - b. Those who can cry out to men who "didn't feel it was their place" and say, "You met me day by day, and you knew I was astray, yet you never mentioned Him to me!"

III. Some applications of the watchman principle.

- A. Preachers must be watchmen.
 - 1. This is a day when it is unpopular for the preacher to speak out and warn of the sins of the people; if he does so, he is a meddling preacher.
 - 2. Such has ever been the case. (Gal. 4:16.)

3. Must realize that the preacher will lose his soul for failing to speak out and warn.
- B. Elders of the church must be watchmen. (Heb. 13:17.)
1. Many members of the church are living in public sin, and elders sit by and say, "It's best for us not to get involved. "
 2. Ezekiel's prophecies against the shepherds of Israel will well apply to some elders of the church. (Ezek. 34:1 — 10.)
 3. All elders should realize that if they do not warn, God will "require the sheep at their hands. "
- C. Parents must be watchmen.
1. The common practice among so many parents today is to let children find out for themselves. How dangerous!
 - a. There is no warning given in many cases concerning evil companionships, the scars and consequences of immoral living, etc.
 - b. Yet, how many parents would be willing to let their children find out about the fatal effect of poison on their own? But sin is far more fatal than poison!
 2. Parents are shouldered with the responsibility to "bring their children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. " (Eph. 6:4.)
 3. Will God overlook failure in the responsibility of warning their children?
- D. Every member must be a watchman.
1. To warn other members of sin and its penalty (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19, - 20.)
 2. To warn the lost of the consequences of failing to turn to God. (Cf. Acts 20:26 - Can we all say this?)
 3. We would warn them if physical ill were about to befall them.
- Illus. A preacher wrote some time ago that the awful-ness of being lost never gripped him until a little child was lost in the community in which he lived. A little brother and sister went out in some dense woods late one afternoon in search of the cows. When they failed to find them, and darkness overtook them, they disagreed on the way home. Each one went the way he believed was the way home. When the brother finally

arrived back, the father frantically asked, "Where is your sister?"

When the family learned that she had gone the wrong way and was lost in the woods known to be inhabited by wild animals, they sent other children running to tell the sad news to the neighbors. A searching party of dozens gathered in minutes. The men combed the woods, while the women agonized in prayer for then-success.

They all agreed that if the child were found dead or alive by any one he would fire a gun, and they would gather back at the house. Finally, the gun sounded, and they came running from all directions. When they all learned that the child had been found alive, strong men hugged each other and wept for joy. No one went to his work. They all gathered at the church building and praised God that the child had been found alive.

The preacher said that as he sat in that service, this thought came to him. We put aside everything and spent hours searching for this child, who was only lost physically. Yet, thousands in our community are lost in sin and on the way to hell, and yet we do practically nothing to find them and bring them into the fold.

Every Person Ought To Be A Creature With Four Faces

Ezekiel 1:1-14

Introduction

1. You've heard of "two-faced individuals; but our lesson today is about some creatures with four faces.
2. The vision which Ezekiel saw was intended to impress him with the glory and splendor of God.
 - a. It was much like Isa. 6.
 - b. The marvelous nature of the angelic servants produces awe in the heart of those who behold them.
3. The vision centers around the four living creatures, the cherubim of God.
 - a. These living creatures formed the ideal for man and angel in the mind of the OT people.
 - b. Their nature is depicted in the faces that they had. (v. 10.)
4. The significance of the faces gives us a great lesson on the qualities which we, who are also servants of God, must possess in order to serve effectively.

Discussion

- I. "They four had the face of a man" — symbolizes intelligence.
 - A. Intelligence is defined as "ability to learn, understand. " (Webster). Like all angels, these creatures had the ability to learn and understand the will of God.
 - B. Christians have this ability and must utilize it.
 1. Jesus desires that men to study and learn what the scriptures mean. (Matt. 9:11 — 13; implies that the will of God can be understood.)
 2. Jesus desires that we learn of Him. (Matt. 11:29.)
 - a. That we might follow His example. (1 Pet. 2:21.)
 - b. The manner in which some live makes it obvious that they have not learned Christ. (Eph. 4, especially v 20.)

3. Jesus learned obedience and so must we. (Heb. 5:8, 9.)
 4. We must understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:17.)
- C. How do we go about utilizing our intelligence for God's service?
1. Read the word of God. (Eph. 3:4; Psa. 119:104.)
 2. Pray for enlightenment. (Eph. 1:18) i. e. wisdom (Jas. 1:5.)
- II. "The four had the face of a lion" symbolizes Courage or Bravery.
- A. Without courage, there is no entrance into the everlasting kingdom; only the lake of fire!
1. 2 Pet. 1:5 - virtue - "moral courage. "
 2. Rev. 21:8-fearful.
- B. Today, Christians need courage more, it seems, than ever before.
1. These last days are perilous (dangerous) times. (2 Tim. 3:1.)
 2. To even the odds, we must be lion against lion, if we hope to overcome the devil. (1 Pet. 5:8.)
- C. The Bible says that "The righteous are as bold as lions. " (Prov. 28:1.)
1. Abraham left homeland, offered his only son — courage!
 2. Gideon went against the mighty Midianites with only 300 men — courage!
 3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo refused to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar in the face of fiery furnace — courage!
 4. Daniel persisted in praying regardless of the edict against prayer — courage!
 5. Peter and John obeyed God rather than men — courage!
- D. Whence comes this courage? From being on the side of God! (Rom. 8:31.)
To be fearful and uncourageous when God Almighty is on your side is to say that you don't believe Him!
- III. "They four had the face of an ox" — symbolized strength, patience, and endurance in burden bearing.

- A. Christianity is a burden bearing business from start to finish.
 - 1. It is a cross. (Matt. 16:24; Lk. 9:23; Gal. 2:20.)
 - a. Following Christ means losing one's life!
 - b. For certain, losing one's will and replacing it with the Savior's will; possibility of physical death!
 - 2. It is a yoke. (Matt. 11:29.)
 - a. Everyone must pull his share of the load.
 - b. Must pull to the end of the row.
 - c. Jesus is in the yoke with us — makes it easy and light — will guide us.
 - 3. Bearing other's burdens. (Ga. 6:2.)
 - B. Must bear the burden unto the finish - patience and endurance.
 - 1. Jesus bore His cross all the way to Golgotha.
 - 2. When we get weak, fainthearted and weary; look unto Jesus. (Heb. 12:1-4.)
- IV. "They four had the face of an eagle" — symbolized swiftness, speed, penetrating vision and aspiration.
- A. As the eagle soars at lofty altitudes, so must the Christian set his affections and aspirations on things above.
 - 1. Col. 3:1—3 — set affections on things above.
 - 2. Titus 2:13 — looking for that blessed hope.
 - B. As the eagle nests in inaccessible mountain heights, so must the child of God live above the world.
 - 1. Eph. 2:1—6 — raised us up.
 - 2. Eph. 4:17 — walk not as other Gentiles walk.
 - 3. "Higher ground. "
 - 4. Rom. 12:1, 2 — not conformed to this world.
 - C. As the eagle has the most penetrating vision, so must Christians' eyes be single and full of light (singleness of purpose and intent). Matt. 6:22, 23.
 - 1. Able to see temptation and sin while it is yet afar off in order to flee!
 - 2. Able to see opportunities for worship, work, growth and service.
 - D. Are we most like eagles or like buzzards who stay near the ground?

Conclusion

1. These living creatures indeed had characteristics and qualities which better suited them to serve the Almighty.
2. Would it not be wise for us to so characterize ourselves with these qualities in order that we might better serve?

Striving For The Prize

Philippians 3:13, 14

Introduction

1. Paul often used racing language to depict salvation.
2. In this passage, Paul reveals the elements necessary in his and every quest for the "prize of the high calling of God. "

Discussion

- I. There must be some "counting".
 - A. Paul says he does some "counting" or evaluating. He looks at himself, examines the facts, and realizes he has not reached perfection, completeness, maturity.
 1. As a Jew, he was as near perfection as one could be. (vv. 5-7.)
 2. Yet, he realizes these accomplishments are worthless in comparison with the excellency of Christ, (vv. 7, 8.)
 - B. How about us? Do we think we are perfect, complete, mature? From our actions, it seems that...
 1. We think we have reached perfection in Bible knowledge — we have stopped studying God's word. (Heb. 5:12.)
 2. We think we have reached perfection in Christian growth, for we have ceased growing. (2 Pet. 1:5—8.)
 3. We think we are far ahead of the Apostle Paul.
 - C. The first step in real growth is realizing the need. Paul recognized he needed to do some more growing... so must we.
 - D. Illus. When we are lost on a trip, the first step is to find out where we are. Then we can map our course to where we need to go. How foolish we would be to disregard our present location and say, "We're here, " when we are yet miles from our destination. We will never get there that way.
- II. There must be some "eliminating. "
 - A. Paul says, "This one thing I do. " (Greek text has simply "one thing. ")

1. Paul realized the necessity of eliminating from his concentration all the superficial goals of worldly accomplishment.
 2. If he was able to accomplish only one thing, it was going to be eternal salvation!
- B. Many things would desire to be the "one thing" in Paul's life and ours.
1. In the case of Paul,
 - a. Money — indications are that Paul was of a family possessing some wealth. He might have been a success at business.
 - b. Power - he was an influential person among Jews. He could have been a member of the Sanhedrin.
 - c. Politics - he was a Roman Citizen. He would have sought to represent Cilicia in the Roman Senate.
 2. In the case of modern men,
 - a. Money - for many, the "one thing" in life is financial accumulation.
 - b. Political power - many spend their lives in pursuit of political office. (Ex. the Kennedys.)
 - c. Sports success — for many, the "one thing" is to be an athletic star.
- C. Paul knew how to eliminate all these things which should be "one things". His effort was concentrated on one thing: eternal salvation. We must be characterized by the same.

III. There must be some "forgetting" and some "reaching forth".

- A. If anyone had something to remember, it was Paul. I. Asa Jew, (vv, 5, 6.)
2. As a Christian; establishing many great churches, world wide travel for the cause of Christ, some of the greatest sermons ever preached, a tremendous writer of letters and treatises.
 3. Yet, Paul didn't say to himself, "Relax, you've got it made. Just look at all the good you have done these few years you have been a Christian, " He forgot all those things and fixed his eyes on what was yet to be done.
- B. Such forgetting was characteristic of Jesus.
1. As He prayed in Gethsemane, He could have said,

"Father, I have healed many thousands, I have raised the dead, I have taught the world's finest parables, I have cast out demons, I have withstood direct temptation from Satan himself, I have forgiven the sins of many already. I have done enough."

2. But Jesus forgot all that and fixed His attention on the cup of suffering yet to be drunk.
- C. We must be characterized by the same forgetting and reaching forth.
1. Too many want to remind themselves and others of what they have done in the past. (I know of some preachers who keep up with the number of conversions they have made - need to forget such and reach forth to the millions yet lost.) Still unprofitable servants. (Lk. 15:10.)
 2. The need is to forget the past and realize there is still much to be done.
 3. Paul used the word "reaching" which means "straining forward. "
 - a. Used of a racer going hard for the tape. If a runner starts thinking, "I have been ahead all this time, I can relax and win, " he will not likely win the race.
 - b. Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. " (Lk. 9:62.)

IV. There must be some "pressing" and "aiming".

- A. Paul said, "I press".
1. Means, "I pursue, " with the idea of speeding on earnestly.
 2. Imagery of a footrace again. It is not enough to just enter the race and run in it. God expects our best and most diligent effort. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9:24.)
- B. Paul said, "I press for the mark. " What is the "mark?"
1. Is it just keeping pace with others? Many just judge their performance by that of others.
 2. Is it just running for a while until one thinks he has gone far enough?
 3. No, the mark is the finish line I (Heb. 12:1)—run with patience, endurance. (Rev. 2:10) — faithful unto death.

Conclusion

1. The prize — the crown of life — awaits those who follow the words of Paul.
2. This prize is "of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. No prize outside of Christ: must be in Him.

Your Marriage Can Be Great

Introduction

1. It is obvious to all that a lesson about making marriages better is a timely one.
 - a. There are many good, strong, happy marriages, it is true.
 - b. But they comprise an ever increasing minority, even among members of God's church.
2. I've entitled our lesson, "Your Marriage Can Be Great, " and I suppose that you would expect such a lesson to deal with the "do's and don'ts" or "Ten Commandments for Married Couples, " or the nature of love, etc.
 - a. These things are good to think about and helpful in making marriages better.
 - b. I have chosen for us to try to get down to the root of trouble in marriages, to try to deal with cause rather than effect.
 - c. The very first words of a new book on marriage and the home by a member of the church who is also a leading marriage counselor are:
"Selfishness is the greatest single enemy of a happy marriage. Selfishness is the root of all other sins. " (What Every Family Needs or What Ever Happened to Mom, Dad, and the Kids, Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner, p. 5.)
3. In view of this, if we can attack marriage's "Public Enemy #1 — selfishness" we will be attacking the basic root to marital problems. Of course there are other things to be considered as we think of building great marriages, but this is essential and must take top priority. We must defeat the root of the problem, its cause, before we can solve the problem itself.

Discussion

- I. Selfishness - let's identify it at work.

- A. Selfishness or self-centeredness is easily recognized in marriage partners.
 - 1. It is evident when I ask my wife what TV program she wants to watch and then we watch the one I want to see.
 - 2. It is evident when I get angry and impatient, and raise my voice: when I "cloud up and storm. "
 - 3. It is evident when I pout or sulk when things don't work out my way.
 - 4. It is evident when my wife suggests that I might be a part of the problem, but I quickly deny it and place the blame on someone else without honestly evaluating my position.
 - 5. It is evident and at its worst stage when I lie, cheat, or risk another individual to cover my mistake.
- B. Often, we tend to hide our personal selfish interests behind OUT rights.
 - 1. Like the man who came to Jesus upset because he didn't feel his brother had been fair with him in dividing their inheritance. He felt his rights had been violated.
 - 2. Jesus, able to search this man's heart and see that he was consumed by self concern, said, "Take heed and beware of coveteousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. " (Lk. 12:15.)
He told the story of the rich farmer to illustrate the folly of self-centeredness. (Relate the story.)
- C. Selfishness has from the beginning been one of Satan's most effective tools of temptation.
 - 1. When he tempted Eve, every bit of his appeal was directed at her self-interest: convinced her of what the forbidden fruit would do for her.
 - 2. He used the three aspects of self-centeredness mentioned in 1 John 2:15, 16:
 - a. The lust of the flesh - "I want it. "
 - b. The lust of the eyes - "It's so pretty. "
 - c. The pride of life — "It will make me intelligent. "
 - 3. Satan uses this self-centeredness to destroy marriages:
 - a. God's intent — that husband and wife become "one flesh" — a coming together of and blending of two lives into one.

- b. Satan uses selfishness and self-centeredness to separate, divide husband and wife. Thus destroy one flesh relationship.

II. Selfishness - Let's look at where it leads - It is a dead-end street.

A. Selfishness clouds judgment.

1. King Saul went to battle with the Amalekites; he was instructed to "utterly destroy all that they had... man and woman, ox and sheep, camel and ass. " (1 Sam. 15:3.) But Saul used his own judgment and returned with a huge surplus of loot. God sent Samuel to meet Saul to challenge his disobedient actions.
2. Saul defended himself and said, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord. " Selfishness had so blinded him that in doing things his way, he actually thought he was doing them God's way.
3. In like manner, when self dominates the mind of a marriage partner, it clouds his judgment and perhaps even his memory. He may think he is being a good mate, but is really serving himself.

B. Selfishness is never satisfied. The more it gets, the more it wants.

1. King Solomon began his reign as a man of God, full of wisdom and splendor. But he began to serve self. He accumulated many wives, concubines, gold, riches — many of which came from heavy taxation of his people.
2. Toward the end of his life, Solomon looked back on his selfish accumulation of wealth and said, "Vanity of vanities... all is vanity. " (Eccl. 1:2—3.) He had quenched every physical appetite, but it was all in vain. Howard Hughes and J. Paul Getty are among the modern Solomons and their lives attest to the fact that selfishness is never satisfied.
3. When this selfishness is present in the marriage relationship, it is never satisfied until it consumes.

C. Selfishness is shortsighted.

1. It treats life on this earth as the total package. It is like a caterpillar that sells its right to become a butterfly for one stomach of leaves.

2. Esau is a classic example of the shortsighted nature of selfishness. He sold his birthright for one morsel of food (Heb. 12:16) but failed to recognize the long term consequences of his selfishness. He didn't receive the blessing.
3. The prodigal son in Luke 15 didn't investigate the results of self-indulgence. This parable so well illustrates the folly of serving self and the unhappiness that results when one wakes up in the "far country. "

III. Selfishness — God has the answer to it.

- A. God's answer is seen in a proper understanding of what occurs in baptism. (Rom. 6:1—17.)
 1. In baptism, "self" dies and is buried along with its desires and passions. (Gal. 5:24; Col. 3:5.)
 - a. Before baptism "self" is the center of one's life. But in baptism, one allows God to dethrone "self.
 - b. In Argentina some Christians baptize with this formula: "I now kill you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. "
 - c. The death of the self is clearly emphasized by the fact that in Rom. 6:1—17, Paul uses some form of the word "death" 15 times.
 - d. If "self is not put to death in baptism, one just gets wet.
 2. Not only is "self put to death and buried in baptism, but a new self takes its place — Christ becomes the center of the life.
 - a. In baptism, 'I am crucified with Christ... and then "Christ liveth in me. " (Gal. 2:20.)
 - b. In baptism, one "denies himself, takes up his cross and follows Jesus. " (Lk. 9:23.)
 - c. In baptism, "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. " (Col. 3. 3.)
- B. God's answer to selfishness is also seen in obeying Jesus' teaching on servanthood.
 1. At least seven of the parables of Jesus and much of his other teaching cautions against selfish idolatry.
 2. Jesus' disciples were as slow to absorb His teaching as we are.

- c. In Matt. 20:20-23, the mother of James, and John asked Jesus to let them sit on His right hand and left hand in His kingdom. They were desirous and willing to accept such positions, (vv. 22, 23.)
 - b. The rest of the disciples were indignant when they heard this. (v. 24.) So Jesus called them all together and told them that they were acting like worldly people who love to be exalted to high positions so they can control others, (v. 25.)
 - c. He told them that the exact opposite would be the case in His kingdom. If you want to be at the top, you must serve like a slave, (vv. 26, 27.) He said your attitude must be just like His, for He came not to be served, but to serve, giving His life like a ransom for many.
- 3. They soon forgot this, because during the last supper, as on several other occasions previous, the disciples were disputing about which was to be the greatest in the kingdom. (Lk. 22:24.)
 - a. Jesus, without saying a word, arose from eating, took off His clothes, wrapped Himself in a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash and dry His disciples' feet. Imagine their amazement as their master did this.
 - b. After he had washed their feet and clothed Himself and resumed His place, He asked them if they knew the meaning of this.
 - c. He then explained what it meant. (Jn. 13:13- 16.)
- 4. John 13:17 gives the key to making your marriage great: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. " To be a husband or wife according to God's plan means servanthood!, because what is true for the Savior and His disciples is true for the husband and wife. (Eph. 5:21-23.)
- C. Some practical steps to overcoming selfishness:
 - 1. Be humble enough to admit that self-centeredness is sin. So don't rationalize, play selfishness down, or project it on circumstances or others. (Matt. 6:24 — "No man can serve two masters"... cannot serve God and self.)
 - 2. Rely on God to help live beyond my self interest.

3. Turn my life from serving self to serving others. Repent of the sin of selfishness.
4. Be willing to kill the old self-centered self and be resurrected to a new self. This illustrated by baptism. (Gal. 2:20.)
5. Restore peace destroyed by my selfishness. Make apologies, repair damage as best I can.

Conclusion

1. When trouble comes in marriage we need desperately to live by Matt. 7:4—5 — Get the beam out of my own eye, so I can see clearly to get the mote out of yours.
2. There is no problem too big to overcome in a marriage if you are able to defeat self-centeredness.
 - a. Selfishness is the rain that erodes the foundation of a home.
 - b. If a brick house is beginning to crack, it is useless to reset the bricks until the foundation is repaired. Builders may make an unstable house look pretty for a while, but eventually a house without a strong foundation will fall. (The proper foundation for marriage is selflessness!)
3. As we said in the beginning, "Selfishness is the root of all other sins. " Just as it can destroy the home and separate marriage partners, selfishness separates men from God. If you are willing to die to self (in baptism or restoration) the chasm between you and God can be eliminated.

What Shall We Do... With The Gospel?

We say we have the truth - What are we going to do with it?

- I. **Celebrate - The good news of the gospel is something to celebrate!**
 - A. Christ died for our sins - we don't have to. (1 Cor. 15:1 — 4.) We may celebrate our return from death row.
 - B. The gospel, by our obedience to it, made us free from slavery to sin. (Rom. 6:16-18.) We may celebrate OUT emancipation proclamation: our return from Egypt.
 - C. Possessing the gospel, we possess the greatest riches available. (Eph. 3:8.) We may celebrate instant wealth.

- II. Evaluate the need others have for it.
 - A. They are lost without it — the gospel is their only hope for salvation. (Rom. 1:16.)
 - B. The fields are white unto harvest. They need the gospel now — not four months from now! (Jn. 4:35.)
 - C. The harvest is plenteous. Every minute the number of souls that need the gospel increases. (Matt. 9:37.)

- III. Communicate — men must hear the good news. (1 Cor. 1:21.)
 - A. By word of mouth they must know it. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:15, 16.)
 - B. By virtue of life of godliness they must know it. (Matt. 5:14-16.)
 - C. This is no difficulty if we have celebrated the good news and evaluated the need others have for it.
 - D. Annie J. Flint - "Christ has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He died. "

- IV. Facilitate — make it easier for more to know and obey it.
- A. Pray for laborers. (Matt. 9:38.)
 - B. Invite others to services to hear it preached.
 - C. Encourage others to listen via radio.
 - D. Increase your giving that more mission work may be done.
 - E. Study that you may be able to "contend for the faith. " (Jude 3.)

Conclusion

1. Again, what shall we do with the gospel?
2. Keep it or preach it?
3. Live it or allow it to destroy us?

How A Church With Everything Ended Up With Nothing!

Rev. 2:1-7

- I. The Church at Ephesus — a church with everything going for it.**
 - A. An overview of Acts and Ephesians — Ca. A. D. 50—65.
 - B. Look at what they had:
 - 1. Great preaching.
 - a. Paul — three years with them altogether (two in the Hall of Tyrannus). Acts 19.
 - b. Apollos — Mighty in the scriptures, eloquent. (Acts 18.)
 - c. Timothy — 1 Tim. 1:3.
 - d. Tychicus - 2 Tim. 4:12.
 - 2. Great leadership — elders. (Acts 20; 1 Tim. 3.)
 - 3. Great program of work. (Acts 19:10.)
 - a. Great Bible class teachers — Aquila and Priscilla. (Acts 18.)
 - b. At least 12 prophets in Ephesus. (Acts 19.)
 - 4. Great literature — Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians... provided information about:
 - a. The church. (Chs. 1—3.)
 - b. Unity and righteous living. (Ch. 4.)
 - c. The home and worship. (Ch. 5.)
 - d. The spiritual warfare. (Ch. 6.)
 - 5. Great faith and love. (Eph. 1:15, 16.)
- II. The Church at Ephesus — later a church on the decline.**
 - A. Rev. 2:1-7; Ca. 96 A. D.
 - B. What is to be said of Ephesus now?
 - 1. Well, they are still working and patiently enduring, (v 2a.)
 - 2. They cannot bear evil men but have tested false teachers, (v. 2b.)
 - 3. They hate the works of the Nicolaitans. (v. 6.)

4. They have become great defenders of the faith ... upholders of the old paths... doctrinally sound, theologically pure!
- C. What happened?' Jesus said they had abandoned the love they had at the first, (v. 4.)
 1. They had abandoned the love for Christ they had at first — most of the romance had gone out of the marriage. (Cf. Jer. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:2.)
 2. They had abandoned the love for one another they had at first.
- D. Whatever finally became of Ephesus?
 1. Rev. 2:5.
 2. If you could go to Asia Minor today, you'd find neither the church at Ephesus nor Ephesus itself!

III. This is an allegory concerning the church of today.

- A. We have seen the church when it had everything going for it (and it still does.)
 1. Great preaching. Hardeman, Brewer, Baxter, Holland, etc.
 2. Great leadership. Collins, Overton, Coil.
 3. Great programs of work — Madison, Centerville, etc.
 4. Great literature. Millions of Bibles... major publishing houses among the brethren... World Evangelist, Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, etc.
 5. Great faith and love — great mission efforts and care for the needy... great fellowship among brethren.
- B. Yet, the church of today has begun to abandon the love it had at first.
 1. We have abandoned the love for Christ we once had.
 - a. How many can remember the excitement, zeal, love and enthusiasm you felt when you first obeyed the gospel?
 - b. Yet, today that love and zeal you have abandoned. (Evident from negligence and indifference. Cf. Jn. 14:15.)
 2. We have abandoned the love for one another we once had.
 - a. There was a time in the Lord's church when outsiders felt welcome, when dinners on the ground were the

- common thing, and love abounded among brethren: — "in all things, charity. "
- b. Nowadays, love and friendliness have been replaced by prejudice and liquishness. The church at large is doing all it can to alienate and divide.
 - i. E. g. "Witch-hunters"; "brotherhood watchdogs",
 - ii. Debaters have humiliated and mistreated opponents in the name of God. "Dead dog when he's down. "
 - iii. "Is he one of us... ?" "faithful brethren... " Opinions of prominent brethren have become the determining factor... Many preachers use the Lord's money and pulpits to judge and condemn,
 - iv. Meanwhile, few are baptized... little goodwill is engendered... but we are faithful to the doctrine of Christ... the old paths!
 - C. We must ask, "Will the fate of the church of today be that of Ephesus?" Not if we apply the lessons they failed to learn:
 1. Love for God and fellowman is part of the teaching of Christ. (Mk. 12:30, 31; Jn. 13:34.)
 2. Anything that the church might do is worthless if without love. (1 Cor. 13:1-3.)
 3. We must take heed to ourselves as well as the doctrine. (Acts 20:28.)
 4. We must be rooted and grounded in love, not only in doctrine: (Eph. 3:17.)
 5. We must learn to forbear one another in love. (Eph. 4:2.)
 6. We must not only speak the truth but do so in love. (Eph. 4:15.)
 7. Every part must be working properly so the body will build itself up in love. (Eph. 4:16.)
 8. We must adopt love as our way of life! (Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 1:22; Eph. 6:24.)

Amazing Grace!

Introduction

1. What amazes you? Someone who can recite the entire Bible from memory? The wonders of the human body? The marvels of the universe and of nature? If you are like most people, you never cease to be amazed as long as you live!
2. But behind all these things we have mentioned is the most amazing thing ever to exist: the amazing grace of God, the loving kindness, favor, goodwill, and graciousness of the Almighty!
 - a. Life itself, the turning of the earth, the rising of the sun, each morsel of daily food, is made possible by the gracious-ness of God. He gives us everything we have. (Jas. 1:17.)
 - b. But the grandest, most glorious gift of the riches of His favor is salvation from sin.
 - c. Said John Newton:
"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see. "
 - d. The Apostle Paul said,
"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." Eph. 2:8, 9.
3. Why is the goodwill and loving kindness of God so amazing? I'm convinced that there are many reasons, but there are a few that make us wonder why anyone would refuse to accept it!

Discussion

- I. Amazing because it is so plainly taught yet so widely misunderstood!
 - A. Nothing perhaps more misunderstood than saving grace,

but few things are as uncomplicated! We do not have time to go into the Misunderstandings concerning grace, but we do have time to understand it! All one absolutely must know about the saving grace of God is recorded in 2 Tim. 1:9, 10.

1. By it we are saved and called with a holy calling.
 2. It is not given on account of our righteousness. When we committed our first sin, our door to heaven on our own goodness was closed.
 3. God planned to give it to us in Christ before the world began.
 4. He fulfilled His plan - It has been manifested in the coming of Jesus, His victory over death, communicated through the gospel.
- B. Salvation by grace is a gift of God. God gave it to us in Christ. Must be in Christ to receive salvation by grace. Get into Christ by baptism into Him. (Gal. 3:27.)
- C. Illustration.
1. Before Christ died, promised the Holy Spirit to His apostles. After His resurrection, told them where they would receive it: Jerusalem. Suppose they had waited for it at Jericho or Nazareth — would they have received it there? NO!
 2. In like manner, God purposed that salvation by grace would be located in Christ. Shall we expect to receive it outside of Christ? (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:1.)

II. Amazing because it cost heaven so much to make it available.

- A. We are cost conscious. We are confronted daily with the high cost of living.
- B. But have we ever considered the amazingly high cost of the grace of God? In order to make grace available, to us, it really cost God and Christ.
1. God gave His only begotten Son. (Jn. 3:16.)
 2. Christ gave up riches untold. (2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 1:1-3.)
 3. Christ gave up heavenly glory and majesty. (Phil. 2:5-11.)
 4. Christ gave His life and gave up His life!
- C. What is so amazingly amazing about the cost that God and

Christ were willing to pay is the fact that it was all for wicked, filthy, hateful sinners! (Rom. 5:8.)

- III. Amazing because it gives men the opposites of what they deserve.
 - A. What is the obvious thing we think when we read of a criminal being sentenced or a man being shot to death while committing a crime? "He got what he deserved!" That's human nature: "Give him what he deserves!"
 - B. Look at what sinful man deserves (Rom 6:23.)... What all of us deserved! (Rom. 3:23.) How amazing that God is not like men! But how glad we are that He is not I
 - C. It is amazing to consider that when man deserved death, God gave him life; when man deserves punishment, God gives him justification; when man deserves justice, God gives him mercy. How? Christ took our place. (Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:21.) Now that God did that is truly amazing!

- IV. Amazing because it offers so much in exchange for so little.
 - A. Amazing that many, like Naaman, expect to have to do something great or big in order to have "so great salvation. " (2 Kings 5:13.) But when God tells man what he must do, he rejects it. It disappoints Him.
 - B. All that is necessary to obtain the favor of God is to accept it by faith and obedience. (Eph. 2:8; Heb. 5:8, 9.) Yet the majority of men reject it! Now that's amazing!
 - C. How can you begin to compare the price of salvation — obedience to Christ — with all the wondrous blessings given to us by God?
 - 1. Compare coming to Christ with the rest He gives. (Matt. 11:28-31.)
 - a. Compare the effort of faith with the peace of God. (Rom. 5:1.)
 - b. Compare the effort of repentance with the escape from peril it provides. (2 Pet. 3:9; Lk. 13:3.)
 - c. Compare the effort in confessing Christ with the joy of His confessing you some day. (Matt. 10:32.)
 - d. Compare the effort of being baptized with the good

conscience, all spiritual blessings that are yours as the result. (1 Pet. 3:21; Eph. 1:3.)

2. Compare the effort in living of the faithful Christian life with heaven and the crown of righteousness.
3. There is no comparison] How amazing that God offers so much in exchange for so little! Yet, the majority reject God's mercy!

Conclusion

1. Have you ever stopped to seriously consider what it will be like to face God on judgment day without His grace to your credit because you refused to accept it?
2. If you reject the grace of God, you will be judged on the basis of a perfect and sinless life.
3. If you reject the grace of God, you will receive nothing save justice! There will be no pardon for you, no mercy, only condemnation.
4. You need pardon, you need mercy, you need grace, and you need it now! Come and obey Christ while together we sing!

Various Heart Conditions

Luke 8:4-15

Introduction

1. It has been said that this parable could be named, "The Parable of the Soils. " But I choose to call it, "The Parable of Various Heart Conditions. "
2. It is a parable about seed - that seed being the word of God. (v. 11.)
 - a. Though now ancient, it is yet a living and active seed! (Heb. 4:12.)
 - b. It is a reproductive seed — reproducing a new creature and the ancient church of Jesus. (1 Pet, 1:23; Jas. 1:18.)
 - c. Cf. The often used story of ancient seeds found in Egyptian pyramid that were planted. They grew!
3. It is a parable about sowing the seed — evangelism — spreading the good news of Jesus.
4. But the reason Jesus spoke it... what it is really all about, is how the soil receives the seed... how hearts receive the word of God. (Vv. 16-18.)
5. The four soils are four heart conditions. Let's examine each of them.

Discussion

- I. The soil of the foot path.
 - A. You've heard, "Grass doesn't grow on a busy street. " This was the path around the field or through it where people walked.
 1. The ground, because of the traffic, would have been as firm as pavement and the seed would be stepped on as people walked the path.
 2. In the east, when sowers went forth to sow, there was always a flock of birds hovering nearby to devour the seed.
 - B. There are people whose hearts are like the path — they are

hard-hearted — the devil snatches the word away before they can believe it.

1. When they hear the word, they turn it off as soon as it is spoken.
 2. They "turn it off because their ideas are fixed; they have already made up their minds.
 3. Their major problem is a failure to understand the word and they apparently do not make any effort to. (Matt. 13:19.)
- C. If you look closely in Luke's gospel, you may see portrayed the different kinds of people whose hearts are like the path.
1. People obsessed with money and property, like the rich farmer... (Lk. 12.)
 2. People preoccupied with social class like the Pharisees and Scribes. (Lk. 15:1, 2.)
 3. People whose prejudices have immunized them against the power of the gospel. (E. g. when you try to teach someone about salvation and they want to discuss incidentals and non-essentials, like, Where did Cain get his wife? etc.)
- D. Are you among the hard-hearted? "Take heed HOW you hear!" "Today when you hear His voice, do not harden your heart..." (Heb. 3:7, 8.)

II. There is the soil of the stone.

- A. Understand that He is not talking about stoney ground but refers to the ledges of stone which surrounded the field. These stone ledges were covered with a shallow layer of earth.
1. The problem was not the fact that there are rocks, but that the soil is shallow there.
 2. When the seed falls there, it cannot root down deep. All its energy, therefore, is going into the stalk and it shoots up rapidly.
 3. Such ground provides little nourishment and moisture, so that the plant withers away.
- B. Jesus is describing hearts that are shallow like that soil on the stone. They are dazzled by the gospel - it provokes an instant emotional response — it is too fast to last!

1. The masses of Jesus' day fit into this category. (Lk. 4:15; 4:22; 4:28; 4:38; 5:26.) Cf. masses responding to emotionally charged evangelistic movements, etc.
 2. People often are dazzled by the good news, the wonderful promises, the promising results, and do not stop to consider the cost of discipleship, the demands of the Christian life, its trials, its temptations.
 3. Their response is often superficial, based on false expectations. E. g.:
 - a. Many people believed what Jesus said because of the loaves and fishes. When they found out it would cost them something to be Jesus' disciple, they walked no more with Him.
 - b. Many today are attracted to preaching which emphasizes the joy, blessing, and pleasures of Christianity. They believe expecting Christianity to immunize them from problems.
 4. When the going gets rough, these people fall away... the emotional high is over... there is no moisture.
- C. Is your faith based solely on emotions? Are you shallow minded? Then, "Take heed how you hear. " Listen for all the facts - learn that the Christian life has both blessing and trial.

III. The soil infested with thorns.

- A. In the field there are thorns that will grow up with the seed sown... which will compete with it.
- B. There are people whose hearts are like this thorn infested soil.
 1. Their hearts are divided. When they hear the word, its influence is limited. The word has competition. They want the best of both worlds — they want to serve two masters... they are double minded.
 2. There are three "thorn-bushes" which grow up in the heart and strangle the word of God.
 - a. Domestic worries — the cares of life — the things which characterize this age which cause anxiety.
 - b. Economic ambition — whenever a man has a love for money, he has in his heart the root of all kinds of

evil... evil which eventually chokes out the influence of the word of God.

- c. Unregulated leisure.
 - i. Luke uses the word from which we get hedonism — "If it feels good, do it!"
 - ii. When the Bible says something is sin, yet there is within the heart a strong desire to enjoy its pleasure, that desire chokes the word!

C. Is your heart divided? Take heed how you hear! Root out the thorns from your heart! Not until you do, will the word be fruitful there.

IV. The soil that is good.

- A. In the field there was soil which was soft and loose, which was deep and moist, which was free from thorns.
- B. There are hearers whose hearts are like the good soil.
 - 1. They are honest.
 - 2. They hold fast the word in their hearts. (It penetrates and permeates and gets good root there.) It has time and opportunity to change their lives. (Psa. 1:1 —3.)
 - 3. They understand it. (Matt. 19:23.) It is not an emotional response. They realize the costs as well as the joys. When the temptations come, they are strong and prepared and faithful.
- C. Is your heart honest and good soil? Take heed HOW you hear!

Conclusion

- 1. The most important question is, "What must I do to be saved?"
 - a. The Bible says, to aliens, H, B, R, C, B, and take up the cross... to unfaithful Christians, repent and confess.
 - b. How are you hearing that?
 - 1) Is it just bouncing off your heart... your hard heart? Are you turning God's word off and saying, "I believe you do have to do that to be saved?" If so, your heart is like the path.
 - 2) As you hear, are you saying, "Oh, I want salvation from sin" yet you are not counting the cost, considering the cross? If so, your heart is shallow... like the soil on the rock.

- 2) If you are saying, "Yes, I will do it, " yet all the time you have no intention to give up a love for the world, riches and pleasure, your heart is like the thorn infested soil.
 - 4) But if you understand the word and are honest, and willing to hold it fast, your heart is like the good soil. You will not only respond, but your life will continue to be fruitful.
2. Take heed how you hear, as we sing to invite you to respond!

The Influence Of The Home On The Church Of Tomorrow

Introduction

1. If the church of tomorrow is or is not pleasing to God, who shall have influenced it the most?
 - a. I am persuaded that the homes of today will make or break the church of tomorrow.
 - b. The influence of the home on the church of tomorrow is seen from the influence the home of yesterday has had on the church of today.
2. Today the question is often asked: "Is the church losing its young people?" Yet, if young people are lost, it is by the home rather than by the church.
 - a. Between birth and age 21, the average child spends 105, 000 hours awake.
 - b. Of those 105,000 hours, 2,100 are spent in Bible study and worship; 10, 000 are spent in secular schools; and 92, 000 are spent at home.
 - c. The home must shoulder the greater responsibility in training children because the child spends most of his time there.
3. So the question should be, "Is the home losing the church of tomorrow?"
4. Let us consider the influence of the home upon the church of tomorrow.

Discussion

- I. The home's influence on the concept of God held by the church of tomorrow.
 - A. The Bible often refers to God as Father. E. g.:2 Cor. 6:17, 18.
 - B. What do you think of when you hear the term "father?"
 1. The dictionary definition? (Father, from Greek root

which means "nourisher, protector, upholder") Not likely.

2. Rather, faces, pictures, events, and emotions come to mind rather than words. You think of your father. Your concept of what a father is is based upon your experiences with your father.
- C. Our concept of the term father greatly determines our concept of God, the Heavenly Father.
1. God uses earthly fathers as an example of the fact that he disciplines and trains His children. (Heb. 12:5-10.) -If a father does not discipline his child, the child will have difficulty accepting the discipline of God.
 2. God uses earthly fathers to illustrate how he deals with His children's prayers. (Lk. 11:11-13.)
 - a. If a father gives his son everything he asks for, that child will reject God when he refuses to give him what is not good for him. (2 Cor. 12:7—10.)
 - b. If a father does not give his son anything, that child may see God as a stingy being rather than all-benevolent, (cf. Jas. 1:5.)
 3. God uses earthly fathers to illustrate how loving, merciful, and forgiving He is. (Lk. 15 — the prodigal son.)
 - a. If a father is not loving, merciful, and forgiving, the child may see the Heavenly Father as unloving, unmerciful, and unforgiving.
 - b. Luther's father was so stern, harsh and unloving that he had difficulty for a long time with praying, "Our Father who art in heaven... "
- E. Thus, the home will exert a tremendous influence on the church of tomorrow in terms of its concept of God the Father.

II. The influence of the home on the respect the church of tomorrow has for authority.

- A. There are several areas in which respect for authority is commanded by the Bible. E. g.:
1. Authority of Christ over the church as its head. (Col 1:18, 19.)
 2. Authority of the word of God. (Heb. 12:25.)

3. Authority of elders over the local congregation in matters of expediency. (Hab. 13:7, 17.)
 4. Civil authority. (Rom. 13: Iff; 1 Pet. 2:13ff.)
 5. Authority of husband over wife and parents over children. (Eph. 5:22, 23; 6:1.)
- B. The home is where respect or disrespect for all or any of these is learned.
1. I am persuaded that Jesus' learning of respect for authority began in His home. (Lk. 2:51; cf. Heb. 5:8, 9.)
 2. H. Leo Boles once wrote, "The parent stands to the child, in the years of formation of its character and habits, in the place of God and all other authority. " (Gospel Advocate, April 30, 1931, p. 520.)
- C. If a child is not taught respect for his parents' authority, he will not likely respect authority of any kind, whether teacher, boss, policemen, or even God, Christ, or God's word.
- D. The situation that exist in the world today — e. g. crime, and religious divisions — are the result of lack of proper respect for authority. The answer to these problems begins with Eph. 6:1.
- III. The influence of the home on the moral and spiritual climate of the church of tomorrow.
- A. Moral values are born at home... learned by a child from the ordinary rituals of his family. Deut. 6:1—5 reinforces this, E. g.:
1. From the normal conversations of the day, the child absorbs the parents' attitude toward each other, others, school, government, and other institutions.
 2. From the prayer at mealtime (or from the absence of such a prayer) the child learns something.
 3. From the way his parents express their affection (or do not express their affection for each other) the child learns something.
 4. From the way they use their time, he learns what their real priorities are.
- B. The greatest single factor that shapes our children's behavior, our behavior I E. g. Many adult problems have roots in childhood:

4. Adults who have a history of child abuse are often found to be the people who were beaten severely by their parents when they were children.
 2. Wife-beaters often come from homes where violence, including wife-beating, was a part of the daily routine.
- C. The Bible suggests some areas in which parents' example influences the moral and spiritual climate of the church.
1. Faith. (2 Ti. 1:5.)
 2. Modesty. (1 Tim. 2:9.)
 3. Sobriety. (Titus 2:4.)
 4. Holiness. (Titus 2:3.)
 5. Goodness. (Titus 2:5.)
- D. Will your children be faithful Christians in the church of tomorrow? No stronger lever than the home in determining this:
1. Several congregations have conducted indepth studies of all the factors available to learn what is needed to keep young people faithful.
 2. One central truth emerges from the material gathered: Faithfulness of the young person to Jesus doesn't have anything to do with special programs or teachers. It is not dependent on whether they are members of a large congregation or a small one. The single-most important factor is their own immediate family!
 3. Look at the statistics:
 - a. Where both parents were faithful to the Lord, and that includes active interest in the local congregation's program, 93% of the kids remained faithful.
 - b. If only one of the parents was faithful, that figure dropped to 73%.
 - c. Where the parents were only what we call reasonably active in the Lord's work, 53% of the young people remained faithful.
 - d. *The shocker:* In those cases where both parents attend only infrequently, the percentage of children who remained faithful to the Lord dropped to six percent. *Yet, that is how the majority of parents in this congregation are described!*

Conclusion

1. From these points we learn that the influence of the home upon the church of tomorrow is great.
2. Instead of asking, "Why isn't the church doing more to save my children?", you need to ask, "Why is my home not doing more to train them?"
3. Three-major things are needed.
 - a. More fathers like God. (Eph. 5:1.)
 - b. More parents willing to teach their children to obey them (and consequently all authority.)
 - c. More parents devoted to God and high moral standards.
4. If we can have these, I am persuaded that the church of tomorrow will be more pleasing to God.

Does God Do Anything Anymore?

Jn. 5:17

Introduction

1. God is a disappointment to many. They come to Him expecting Him to perform miracles. When He doesn't do that they reject Him.
 - a. In Acts 17:22-31 Paul spoke to some folks who misunderstood God — so with many today.
 - b. Robert Ingersoll, the famous atheist, had the custom after his speeches against the Bible of holding up his watch and saying, "God, if there is a God, strike me dead within five minutes. " and then smiled when nothing happened.
 - c. Many people say, "If there is a God, why doesn't He stop wars, hunger, and disease? I just can't believe in a God because He doesn't do anything."
2. We live in a "seeing is believing" society. Multitudes refuse to believe in God because they don't see Him doing anything.
 - a. The fact is, God is doing something, more than we are able to conceive of.
 - b. Men are just looking in the wrong direction, looking for the wrong type of activity, thus they have missed seeing what God is doing.
 - c. We have put God into a mold that He doesn't fit into. We have deceived ourselves into thinking that the only way God can do anything is by performing miracles.
3. Our lesson is intended to remind us that though God is not working miracles today, He is at work — He is active! Our text -- Jn. 5:17.

Discussion

- I. In the natural realm — God is at work, we just fail to recognize it.
 - A. We call it the 'law of gravity" but the Bible called it the word of Christ's power. (Heb. 1:3; Col, 1:17.) A little boy asked his mother if he could go out and play catch with

"Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above His own. "

1. These are reasons as to why we can believe Matt. 6:33.
2. The Psalmist said, "Never have I seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread. " Come to think of it, neither have I.

Once we understand HOW God is active in the natural realm, it is not difficult to see that...

- II. God is at work in the spiritual realm, and to look for miraculous work there, just as in connection with His work in the natural realm, is to force God into a mold into which He does not fit.
 - A. He is speaking — revealing Himself and His will. Doesn't need to open heaven and audibly speak, nor does He need to miraculously inspire men today.
 1. Speaks through His book of nature.
 - a. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. "
 - b. Illus. of how God is constantly revealing His infinite wisdom and power: "Some doctors have recently returned from a research expedition into Africa. They went there to study the circulatory system of the giraffe; in a jet-propelled age, He may have something to teach us. The giraffe has a neck about twelve feet long. How does he pump the blood up there into his head? He has a heart that weighs twenty-five pounds; he is a big-hearted animal, but when he lowers his head to drink water, what keeps his from blacking out? How does he prevent the blood from running down? There is an intricate system of valves there that automatically regulate the flow. All things big and small are marvellously put together. "
 2. Speaks through His written book: the Bible. (Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23.) His written word is living.
 - B. He is still engaged in creation — spiritual creation. (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph, 2:10.) Does He need a miracle or some supernatural working upon individuals to bring about this crea-

tion? No, He does it by means of the word written in the Bible.

- C. He is transforming, renewing. (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16.) Again, this is accomplished by means of the written word, and if we wait for a miracle to change us into what God wants us to be, we will never be that. To do so would be to fail to understand HOW God works.
- D. He is still providing a way of escape from temptation. (1 Cor. 10:13.); still keeping the saved; (1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 7:25.) How, miraculously? No, through faith. E. He is still answering prayer. Again, Lowells' words describe the manner in which He works:

Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above His own.

Conclusion

1. God is really doing a lot - He has not stopped working.
2. The God we serve is an active God who want us to be active in seeking Him and serving Him. (Heb. 11:6; Eccl. 12:13.)

(Many of the thoughts came from, Who Goes There? by J. Wallace Hamilton 1958, Fleming H. Revell Co.)

Blaspheming God's Word

Titus 2:1-10

Introduction

1. Problems existed in Crete. (Tit. 1:5.)
2. Obviously problems stemmed from wrong attitude toward and treatment of God's word. (Tit. 1:9, 14.)
3. Danger even among Christians. (Tit. 2:1—10.)

Discussion

- I. It is possible to blaspheme the word of God. (Tit. 2:5; 1 Tim. 6:1.)
 - A. To blaspheme: "To speak against, to speak to hurt the influence of, to discredit. " (metaphorically here.)
 1. You say, "I don't speak against the Bible like the critics, liberals, modernists., humanists, atheists, and evolutionists. "
 2. Yet, Actions speak louder than words. (Ezek. 36:16— 21.)
 3. Some of our actions do more to blaspheme the Bible than all the words of liberals, critics, etc. combined.
 - B. HOW, then is the word of God blasphemed?
 1. Through restraining its influence in our lives, (1 Thess. 2:13.)
 2. Through hypocrisy — preaching one thing and practicing another.
 - a. Like the hypocritical Jews. (Rom. 2:17—24.)
 - b. Like David. (2 Sam. 12:14.)
 - c. Have you by your life caused someone to question the genuineness of your religion?
 - d. Titus 1:16; Matt. 15:8; 23:3; Is this how the world sees YOU?
 3. Through religious division
 - a. False teachers from hundreds of religious groups wrest the scriptures to convince people that the Bible

teaches their churches' doctrines. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:2; Gal. 1:7.)

1) People are confused over this massive division.

5) In disgust and bewilderment, many give up on religion, renounce Christianity, and become atheists.

b. The Bible teaches no such division! (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 1:10.)

4. Through inconsistency.

a. We stress certain doctrines to the neglect of others.

b. Must be governed by every word of God. (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Deut. 4:2.)

II. There is an alternative to blaspheming the word of God — adorning it! (Tit. 2:10.)

A. Adorn: same word trans, world (Kosmoz - order, arrangement; then, ornament.)

1. Used of furnishing a room, trimming a lamp, garnishing a tomb, or a house; used of women. (1 Tim. 2:9.)

2. Here — used metaphorically to mean "to do credit to" the teaching.

B. Why must we adorn — do credit to — the teaching of God? Because the character and value of our religion is judged by the effect it has had upon us!

1. If a person can show that his life is better as a result of his religion, he does a credit to his religion!

2. If a person is a better wife, mother, husband, father, employee as a result of his religion, such recommends his religion.

3. Cf. Phil. 2:15, 16.

C. On Sunday morning, right? (Tit. 2:10; 1 Cor. 10:31.) In everything... in every phase of life.

Conclusion

1. I imagined many times a young man from a poor farm family working his way to graduation from college. After the commencement ceremony is over, he makes his way through the crowds to open arms and tear-filled eyes as his father softly says with a smile, "You done us mighty proud, son."

2. On the other hand, put yourself in the place of a young girl pregnant out of wedlock as she makes her way home from the doctor's office to face her embarrassed and soon to be blasphemed parents. Nothing is said, but pain and hurt fill the room.
3. More importantly, imagine yourself on the day of judgment as God considers what kind of reputation you have made for His word. What will it be in your easel (Tit. 2:5 or Tit. 2:10 and 2 Tim. 2:15?)