

# **Sermons for Saints and Sinners**



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**To my Mother and Father**



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## FOREWORD

In sending forth this little volume of sermons, I must confess it is with some reluctance. I know the sermons are not perfect, because I know their author too well. I am confident that others have done and can do a better job of preaching and writing than I am able to do. I rejoice in this! I have experienced the fact, from what little writing I have attempted to do, that there are a few of my brethren who are highly critical of the efforts that others make in teaching what they believe to be the truth. I am also conscious of the permanency of the printed page as far as changing views when more light on any subject is given to us. These, and possibly other factors, have influenced me to be content with the efforts of others in the field of Christian literature.

It may be, though, that there is a place for another book of sermon outlines in our great brotherhood. It is my hope that the preachers who are old enough to buy a sermon outline book are wise enough to use it properly. The purpose in writing a book of this kind is not to encourage the lazy preacher to waste his week, and then to equip him on Saturday night for his work the next day. That kind of a hireling does not deserve the name of a gospel preacher, and it would be a blessing if a sermon outline book never fell into his hands. But there are young preachers who need help in preparing sermons, and there are older preachers who can profit from others' ideas, and it is with a consciousness of these needs that I venture forth with this little book.

A statement disclaiming originality is always in order for a book of sermons. I have tried to do my own thinking and my own organizing of thoughts in these sermons, but I must admit that not everything in the book is original.

For example, it is seldom that I hear a preacher preach without getting an idea for a sermon from his lesson. Again, occasionally a friend tells me about an excellent sermon he heard someone preach, and he says, "Here are his main points. " I listen, I like his points, and I prepare a sermon from it. Is my sermon original? The text is not, perhaps the main points are not, but as far as the development of the thoughts is concerned, I hope I am not guilty of plagiarism.

A word about the form and content of the sermons may be in order. Because some sermon outlines are so brief they are not understandable, I have tried to make these full enough to be really useful. Again, some prefer sermons that are completely written out, and there is certainly a place for them as well as outlines. My thinking has been, though, that the preachers who obtain the book will get more in fifty fully outlined lessons, than in a hundred brief outlines or only ten or twelve sermons completely written out. I hope I am right in this belief.

Some of the outlines may be divided into three or four lessons each and preached in a series. I have done this with several of them, for example, *Abounding in the Work of the Lord*, *What Do I Owe the Church?* and *The Tragedy of Being Lost*. When one adds a few additional thoughts to each of the main points and elaborates upon them, he finds that instead of one sermon he has a short series of sermons.

My hope and prayer is that good may come from this effort, and that God's name may be glorified through the continued proclamation of His Word of truth.

EUGENE W. CLEVENGER



# ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

I Cor. 15: 58

## *Introduction:*

1. The Christian life is a life of work. Matt. 9: 37f. 20: 1ff.; I Cor. 3: 9.
2. All of us sing of work, but few abound in the work of the Lord. "I Want To Be A Worker, " "Hear the voice of Jesus say, Loudly crying unto all... "
3. The work of the Lord involves the greatest privileges, responsibilities and rewards.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Universality of the Work.*

- A. The admonition is addressed to "my beloved brethren. "
  1. It is not the elders only, though they must set the example. I Pet. 5: 3.
  2. It is not the deacons only, though deacon means means "servant. " Cf. Acts 6: 1-3.
  3. It is not the preacher only, though he has a work to do. II Tim. 2: 15; 4: 5.
- B. New Testament teaches that every Christian must be a worker.
  1. Parable of the talents. Matt. 25.: 14ff. If only one talent, we have a work,
  2. The church as a body. Rom. 12; I Cor. 12. Each member has a function.
- C. There will be differences but no exceptions.
  1. There will be differences of ability, desire, opportunity, etc., but no exceptions as to education, age, sex, etc. Cf. Acts 8: 4.
  2. There will always be a work in the church for

a Paul and a Timothy; a Eunice and a Dorcas;  
a Barnabas and a Mark.

## II. *The Basic Requirement for the Work.*

- A. Conviction (steadfastness and immovability) is necessary for the Lord's work.
1. The Corinthians were hindered in their work by doubts, opinions, etc. Illustrations: the problem of eating meat (chaps. 8-10); the questions of the veil and Lord's Supper (chap. 11); the importance and use of gifts (chaps. 12-14).
  2. The Philippians were admonished to be steadfast and united as they strove for the faith of the gospel. Phil. 1: 27.
- B. Zeal for the Lord is impossible without strong faith and conviction. James 2: 18. Our work is in proportion to our faith, conviction and hope.

## III. *The Constancy of the Work.*

- A. The religion of Christ is the religion of *always*.
1. Always: let your speech be with grace (Col. 4: 6); rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4: 4); obey (Phil. 2: 2); be ready to give answer (I Pet. 3: 15).
  2. To work always means to "Be urgent in season, out of season" (II Tim. 4: 2).
- B. Spasmodic service is not acceptable to the Lord.
1. *Always* means six days a week plus Sunday. Sunday only is no good.
  2. *Always* means when we are watched and praised plus when our work is unseen and unpraised.
  3. *Always* means during the gospel meeting plus the fifty-one weeks afterward.
  4. *Always* means youth plus age. Cf. Luke 9: 62.
- C. Lack of constancy in Christian service means we are not dependable (maybe hot, cold or lukewarm).

and it means taking a chance on our eternal salvation.

IV. *The Fervor of the Work.*

- A. The Greek word translated "abounding" is an interesting study.
1. It is the word *perisseuo*: "to be over and above; to excel. "
  2. It is used of excelling others. Matt. 5: 20.
  3. It is used of exceeding the minimum. Luke 15: 17, "and to spare. "
  4. It is used of exceeding what was done in the past. Mark 15: 14.
- B. Christian service must be abounding service.
1. Abounding service is willing service. Cf. Matt. 20:1ff. (the 11th-hour men).
  2. Abounding service is fervent service. Rom. 12: 11 (heated to boiling).
  3. Abounding service is from the heart. Eph. 6: 6.
  4. Abounding service is first place service. Matt. 6: 33.

V. *The Motives for the Work.*

- A. The final resurrection. "Wherefore" connects with the preceding verses.
1. The entire chapter is a discussion of the resurrection and immortality.
    - a. Proof of the resurrection: the resurrection of Christ. V. 12f.
    - b. Consequences if no resurrection: all is in vain. Vs. 14-19.
    - c. Nature of resurrected body: incorruptible, glorious, etc. Vs. 35-49.
  2. In view of the fact that there will be a life be-

yond this, work! The future life is reason **for** all to abound in the work of the Lord.

B. The final judgment. "Forasmuch" introduces the day of reckoning.

1. The judgment day will be a day of accounting. II Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 20: 12.

2. The judgment day will be a day of reward. Gal. 6: 9; II Tim. 4: 8.

Our labor is not vain in the Lord. Often in this life our work is in vain. Illustrate: the farmer whose crops are ruined. The certainty of God's word is the certainty of the reward of our labors for Christ.

#### VI. *The Nature of the Work.*

A. This is not included in the text, but the work of the Lord is that work He has commanded us to do, that gives Him the honor and glory that is due Him.

1. To work for the Lord means to do God's will. Cf. John 4: 34; Matt. 26: 39.

2. To work for the Lord means to honor Him. Phil. 1: 20.

B. The work of the Lord is the work of:

1. Evangelism. Proclaiming Christ and His salvation to others. Mk. 16: 15f.

2. Benevolence. Sharing with those who are less fortunate. Gal. 6: 10.

3. Edification. Building ourselves up **through** study, worship, etc. Eph. 4: 12.

#### *Conclusion:*

1. Abounding in the work of the Lord means happiness here and heaven hereafter.

2. Let us examine our Christian service and ask our-

selves individually, "Am I abounding in the Lord's work?" Let us remember that soon "the night Cometh, when no man can work" (John 9: 4).

3. Those not in the Lord's church cannot work for Him, and you are urged to obey Him by believing, repenting and being immersed for the remission of sins.

# THE ANEMIC CHRISTIAN

I Cor. 11: 30

## *Introduction:*

1. There are many things right with the church, and there are some things wrong with it. If I may be permitted a diagnosis of the principal malady afflicting churches and their members, I would say, "Anemia. "
2. Anemia — what is it? Literally, it means "no blood. " It is from the Greek word *haima* (blood) with the alpha privative before it, negating it.
  - a. Definition: "A condition in which the red corpuscles of the blood are reduced in number or deficient in hemoglobin. "
  - b. Symptoms: "Pallor, shortness of breath and palpitation of the heart. "
  - c. It is a synonym for weakness.
3. A child physically or mentally weak is indeed pitiable. A Christian spiritually or morally weak is far more pitiable. In our prayers we ought to pray for the spiritually weak as well as the physically weak.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Possibility of Spiritual Anemia.*

- A. New Testament congregations had weak members.
  1. The church at Rome had its weak members. Rom. 15: 1; 14: 1.
  2. The church at Corinth had its anemic members. I Cor. 11: 30.
  3. The church at Thessalonica had its weak to be supported. I Thess. 5: 14.
- B. Other terms which describe the anemic Christian.

1. He is one with a divided allegiance: no conviction. Cf. Matt. 6: 24.
  2. He is one with a slow Dace: no purpose. Cf. Gal. 5: 7.
  3. He is one with a lukewarm devotion: no fervor. Cf. Rev. 3: 16.
- C. Spiritual anemia is spiritual immaturity.
1. Some of the Corinthians were babies — carnal and immature. I Cor. 3: 1.
  2. Some were making no spiritual development. Cf. Heb. 5: 12-14.

## II. *The Symptoms of Spiritual Anemia.*

### A. Weak in Resistance.

1. To temptation. Cf. Eph. 6: 10, 16. He offers excuse that all are weak.
2. To error. Cf. Eph. 4: 14. Ashamed of the truth and afraid to defend it.
3. To offenses. He has thin blood and thin skin, and must be handled with gloves.

### B. Weak in Appetite.

1. An appetite for spiritual food is necessary. Cf. Matt. 5: 6; Heb. 5: 14.
2. The anemic Christian has a good appetite for: television, movies, ball games, card games, magazines, etc. He literally "eats them up. "
3. But he has no appreciation of:
  - a. Strong meat. He must have faith, repentance and baptism and not Christian living.
  - b. Distinctive preaching. It must be positive and not negative, and when error is contrasted with truth, there comes that "shortness of breath and palpitation of the heart. " He is too weak to take it!

c. Admonitions to Bible reading and study. One sermon a week is enough.

C. Weak in Exercise.

1. Spiritual exercise is essential. Cf. I Tim. 4: 8: John 5: 17.
2. The anemic Christian can exercise much in the home, at the school, on the job, for the club. He is "busy here and there" (I Kings 20: 40).
3. But he cannot exercise much for the Lord and His cause.
  - a. He does not attend regularly because he feels bad, has company, etc.
  - b. He does not visit the sick because he does not have time.
  - c. He does not teach his neighbor because that is the preacher's job.

D. Weak in Estimate of his Ability.

1. When asked to do something he replies, "I can't, " while the strong says, "I'll try. " Cf Phil. 4: 13.
2. He has been in the church five, ten, or twenty years, and can't: lead a prayer, teach a class, instruct a sinner, lead a song. He is anemic!
3. It is not that he can't, but he won't; not humility but indolence.

E. Weak in Conscience.

1. He does not, and after a while, will not discriminate between faith and opinion. Cf. I Cor. 8: 9-12.
2. The anemic is sure to make trouble with his opinions and hobbies.

III. *The Proper Attitude Toward the Spiritually Anemic.*

- A. We are not to despise and hate the weak.



1. We must not hate even those withdrawn from. II Thess. 3: 15.
  2. We are taught not to offend the weak.. 1 Cor. 9: 22; Matt. 18: 6.
  3. We must receive them, and bear with them. Rom. 14: 1; 15: 1.
- B. While we bear with them, it is our duty also to admonish them.
1. Paul admonished the weak to get strong. Eph. 6: 10; cf. Heb. 5: 12.
  2. We must try to restore to first love. Gal. 6: 1; Rev. 2: 4.
  3. Mutual edification is necessary to Christian strength.
- C. The Lord's attitude toward the anemic Christian.
1. He understands that we start out as babies, born of the water and Spirit. John 3: 5; 1 Pet. 2: 2.
  2. He understands that it takes time to grow and become strong. Heb. 5: 12.
  3. But after a time, spiritual weakness is SIN. It is inexcusable! It is wickedness and slothfulness (Matt. 25: 26). Cf. Rev. 3: 17.
- D. Why is spiritual anemia so bad?
1. It is wilful. Unlike physical anemia, for God has made every provision for our growth and strength: food, exercise, environment.
  2. It is contagious. It influences others to indifference. "No one can go to heaven (or hell) by himself. "
  3. It is damning. There is no hope for the wilfully weak, for the life must be lived, the race run and the battle fought.

*Conclusion:*

1. Repentance and confession are necessary. Rev. 3: 19;  
James 5: 16.
2. God can heal (Hosea 14: 4) and Christ can strengthen  
(Phil. 4: 13).

# THE PARADOX OF CONTENTMENT

Phil. 4: 11-13

## *Introduction:*

1. Contentment is a great virtue and a great vice. Thus, a paradox or seeming contradiction.
2. We are living in a world of anxiety, worry and frustration. A large percent of hospital beds are filled with people with emotional and mental disturbances. In view of this we need to learn contentment.
3. We are also living in a world of apathy, indifference and unconcern. We hear on every hand, "So what?" and "Who cares?" There is a wholesome discontent which we need to learn.
4. The problem is this: we are content when we ought to be discontent and vice versa.

## *Discussion:*

### I. *The Realm of Contentment.*

#### A. Definition of Contentment.

1. It is not satisfaction. This is "the state of having one's desires fully appeased. " This is the "man who has everything. " Actually, satisfaction is beyond the reach of all. Illustrate: the rich man may not have health; the beautiful woman may not have brains; the one who has both may not have happiness in family life. Satisfaction, at best, is only relative.
2. It is not suppression of desire for better things. Illustrate: Paul, as a Roman prisoner, desired to live in his own hired dwelling. This was much better than a dungeon, and since he was able to afford it, he did.

3. It is not stoicism: "the principle or practice of showing indifference to pleasure or pain. " Christianity is not stoic. Cf. Rom. 12: 15; Phil. 4: 4.
  4. It is submission to the vicissitudes of life without anxiety in the belief that there is a good heavenly Father who knows our needs and will supply them. The dictionary defines contentment as "that state of not being disquieted or disturbed by desire, even though not every wish is gratified. "
- B. The Scriptures Emphasize Contentment.
1. Be content with wages. Luke 3: 14. (And let capital be content with its profits. )
  2. Be content with material things. I Tim. 6: 6-8; Heb. 13: 5.
  3. Be content in times of adversity. Acts 20: 24.
- C. The Necessity of Learning Contentment.
1. We are not born with contentment; it is not bestowed by another; it cannot be bought; it must be learned. Where had Paul learned contentment?
  2. He had learned the truths regarding contentment in the school of Christ.
    - a. The pattern of Christ. Luke 9: 58.
    - b. The precepts of Christ. Matt. 6: 25ff.; Luke 12: 15.
    - c. The promises of Christ. Matt. 7: 11; 28: 20.
  8. He had applied these truths regarding contentment in the school of adversity.
    - a. He had suffered much for Christ. II Cor. 11: 23-27.
    - b. Now as he writes Philippians he is an aged minister unjustly confined.

4. The meaning of Paul's contentment.
  - a. Peace. Phil. 4: 7, 9. "There comes to my heart one sweet strain... "
  - b. Joy. Phil. 1: 12f., 18; 4: 4. The theme of Philippians is, "I rejoice — rejoice ye. " Some twenty times in the letter are found such words as "joy, " "rejoice, " "thanksgiving, " "content, " and "peace. "

## II. *The Realm of Discontentment.*

- A. For the Christian contentment can be a vice and not a virtue.
  1. It is a sin to be contented with our own shortcomings.
    - a. To be contented with one's lot in life is to be desired; to be contented with one's self in life is to be abhorred. Cf. Paul. Phil. 3: 12-14.
    - b. Moral progress is dependent upon discontent. In looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, we ought to be disturbed — moved — to improve. "Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith on heaven's tableland. "
  2. It is a sin to be contented with the sufferings of others.
    - a. Around us everywhere are the hungry, naked, widows and orphans. As we see them we must be disturbed — moved — to assist them. James 1: 27; 2: 15f.
    - b. Jesus was not contented to see men suffering; He was moved with compassion to help the blind men, lepers, widow of Nain, the multitudes.
  3. It is a sin to be contented with the ignorance of others.

- a. As you see the crowd on the street or at the game, what do you think about? I cannot but reflect that one day everyone of them must meet Christ at the judgment. As I see them in their ignorance of Christ and the gospel, I ought to be disturbed — moved — to tell them of salvation.
  - b. As Paul thought of the world, lost in sin and darkness, he was moved to be a soul-winner. Cf. Rom. 1: 14f.; 10: 1. We cannot be content until every soul has heard the message of salvation!
- B. For the congregation there is no place for contentment.
1. With number of members. Don't be content with 200 when there could be 300.
  2. With attendance at services. Don't be content with a single empty bench.
  3. With knowledge of God's Word. Don't be content until all are daily readers.
  4. With interest in one another. Don't be content until every member knows every other member. We must grow in love, concern and closeness.
  5. With giving to support the Cause. Don't be content with \$500 budget when, with a little more sacrifice, it could be \$600.
- As a congregation we must be disturbed — moved — to greater evangelization, attendance, study, fellowship and liberality.

*Conclusion:*

1. We need to pray, "Lord, help us be content with the material and unimportant things, and help us be discontent with the spiritual and really important things. "

2. The paradox is this: maintaining our equilibrium, yet turning the world upside down; being unconcerned, yet concerned; being immovable, yet moved to do greater things for Christ.

# EXPECTING THE IMPOSSIBLE

**Matt. 7: 15-20**

## *Introduction:*

1. The words of the text are a warning against deception. Appearances are deceitful but fruit is evidence of good or bad. It is impossible for a good tree to produce evil fruit and vice versa, and to go to a bad tree expecting good fruit is to expect the impossible.
2. It is foolish to expect the impossible of others, but sometimes a preacher expects the impossible of the church, and often a church expects the impossible of the preacher. God expects only what is possible.
8. Regarding the possible and the impossible, we must remember three things:
  - a. There are some things we think impossible that are in the realm of possibility. Illustrations: (1) Television fifty years ago; (2) Doubling the membership and contribution.
  - b. There are some things that are impossible under any circumstances today. Illustration: The miracles of the first century.
  - c. There are some things that are impossible under certain conditions, and our lesson concerns some of these things.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *The Non-Christian Often Expects the Impossible.*
  - A. To expect forgiveness without faith and repentance is to expect the impossible.
    1. The Jew and the Modernist expect God's blessings without faith. Cf. John 8: 24.
    2. The worldlings may expect God's favor without repentance. Cf. Acts 17: 30.



3. God's laws are inviolate; don't expect to be saved without complying with them.
- B. To expect remission of sins without baptism is to expect the impossible.
  1. The gospel must be obeyed (Rom. 6: 17f. ), and baptism is a part of the gospel (Mark 16: 15f.; Acts 2: 38).
  2. The question is asked, "Can't God save without baptism?" It is not a matter of what God can or cannot do, but a matter of what He said He will do. Cf. Matt. 19: 26 and Heb. 6: 18.
  3. Baptism is a condition of remission, and no exceptions are revealed.
- C. To expect security at the judgment without doing Christ's will is to expect the impossible. Matt. 7: 24-27.
  1. Contrast the two: builders, houses, foundations and results of the test.
  2. The rock represents the word of Christ; the sand, the feelings, creeds and traditions of men.
  3. Safety and security in eternity are impossible without a proper respect for and a strict obedience to every word that Christ has spoken.

## II. *The Local Church Often Expects the Impossible.*

- A. To expect growth without diligence is to expect the impossible.
  1. It may be asked, "Why doesn't this church grow?" or "Why doesn't it grow faster?" The fault is not with God, the message, nor a lack of opportunity.
  2. The reason often is a lack of diligence on the part of the elders or deacons or preacher or members or all of them combined. Illustrate:
    - a. To expect attendance without coming our-

- selves and inviting others is to expect the impossible,
- b. To expect conversions without contacting sinners is to expect the impossible.
3. Progress anywhere is dependent upon diligence (in the office, on the farm, on the athletic field, in the church). Don't expect one without the other.
- B. To expect diligence without love is to expect the impossible. There can be no fervent zeal for the Lord's cause without a sincere love for: the lost, the brotherhood, God. Cf. Rom. 10: 1; I Pet. 2: 17; Matt. 22: 37.
  - C. To expect love without concern is to expect the impossible.
    1. As we see the warm spirit of brotherly love that prevailed in churches of the first century (cf. Acts 2: 44-47), we might desire such pure love to characterize every member of this church. Cf. Psalm 133: 1; John 13: 34.
    2. But love is basically concern, and where we are too busy and too selfish to get acquainted and to be really concerned with one another, there can be no fervent love. To expect real love in a cold church is to expect the impossible! It is the folly of expecting warmth without a fire!
- III. *The Individual Christian Often Expects the Impossible.*
- A. To expect satisfaction without sacrifice is to expect the impossible.
    1. A spirit of sacrifice is indispensable to a sense of satisfaction. Cf. Luke 14: 26f.; Matt. 16: 24; Rom. 12: 1.
    2. Often I ask myself, "Why am I not the Chris-

tian I ought to be?" The answer is: I am unwilling to sacrifice my time, money and talents for the Lord. I need to say again and mean it: "Take the world but give me Jesus. "

3. To expect Christian character without sacrifice is to expect the crown without the cross. It is utterly impossible.
- B. To expect the love of God without chastening is to expect the impossible.
1. God's love does not preclude chastening. Heb. 12: 6; Rev. 3: 19.
  2. We expect the good things of God's love (Matt. 7: 11; James 1: 17), but we have no appreciation of the dark things. When sorrow comes we say, "God doesn't love me. " How foolish! Cf. Rom. 8: 28; Heb. 5: 8.
  3. To expect God's love without His chastening is to expect the sun without the clouds, the gold without the refining.
- C. To expect happiness without holiness is to expect the impossible.
1. True happiness is dependent upon holiness. Psalm 1: 1; Beatitudes.
  2. No sin brings true and lasting happiness. Cf. Heb. 11: 25.
  3. Happiness here and heaven hereafter depend upon holiness. Heb. 12: 14.

*Conclusion:*

1. God has made the conditions, and the results desired are impossible without meeting the conditions.
2. Let us not be so foolish as to expect the impossible, but rather let us meet the divine conditions and accomplish God's purpose in us.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFULNESS

I Cor. 10: 1-13

## *Introduction:*

1. The lesson of faithfulness is badly needed in the church.
  - a. Many obey the gospel, but fewer remain faithful. Cf. Matt. 10: 22; Rev. 2: 10; II Tim. 4: 8.
  - b. In view of the danger of unfaithfulness, each ought to ask himself the question, "Can the Master call me faithful?"
2. The context of the lesson explained.
  - a. The word "for" which introduces this chapter connects 9: 27 with 10: 1-13. From this verse it is clear that Paul recognized the necessity of his own faithfulness. Explain the boxing term translated "buffet" or "pommel."
  - b. The example of Israel is given to show the possibility and consequences of unfaithfulness.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Privileges of Israel. 1-4.*

- A. God had abundantly blessed the children of Israel.
  1. God had delivered them from Egyptian bondage when He caused them to pass through the sea. Cf. Exod. 14: 30f. They had been slaves of cruel taskmasters for 430 years. Cf. Gal. 3: 17; Exod. 12: 40f.
  2. God had permitted them to be baptized into Moses. At the Red Sea they were baptized into spiritual union with him, and thus were constituted his disciples. It was an honor to be disciples of Moses. John 9: 28.
  3. God had given them food and drink in their wil-

derness wanderings. The supernatural food was manna (Exod. 16), and more than once water was brought forth miraculously (Exod. 17; Num. 20).

4. God had led them by the cloud on their journey to the land that flowed with milk and honey. Exod. 13: 21; Num. 10: 11.
- B. God has abundantly blessed *ills* children today.
1. God has delivered us from the bondage of sin and Satan. Rom. 6: 17f.; Col. 1: 13. This bondage is far worse than Israel's in Egypt.
  2. God has permitted us to be"- baptized into Christ. Gal. 3: 27; Rom. 6: 3f. It is the greatest honor to be united with and disciples of the Son of God.
  3. God has spiritually sustained us by Him who is the Bread of Life (John 6: 48-51) and the Water of Life (cf. John 4: 7ff.; 7: 37ff. ).
  4. God is leading us by His Word as we journey to that heavenly Canaan where we shall be eternally blessed and satisfied. The blessings of Israel were but a type of the greater blessings which *we enjoy in Christ*.

## II. *The Unfaithfulness of Israel.* 5-10.

- A. In spite of God's blessings, Israel sinned and proved unfaithful.
1. Sin of Lust. V. 6.
    - a. The reference is to Num. 11: 4-35. Relate the incident as to how they tired of manna, desired meat and longed for Egypt.
    - b. God was highly displeased and punished them with a great plague.
  2. Sin of Idolatry. V. 7.
    - a. The reference is to Exod. 4 32. Relate the in-

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cident as to how, under the leadership of Aaron as they waited for Moses, they built the golden calf and worshipped it.

b. God was sorely displeased and 3,000 men were killed.

### 3. Sin of Fornication. V. 8.

a. The reference is to Num. 25: 1-9. Relate the incident of Israel's adultery with the women of Moab and the idolatry which followed.

b. God's righteous anger caused 24,000 to be killed by a plague.

### 4. Sin of Tempting the Lord. V. 9.

a. The reference is to Num. 21: 4-9. Relate the incident of Israel's trying God's patience at Mount Hor regarding their food and drink.

b. God, in His displeasure, sent fiery serpents to bite the people and many of them died.

### 5. Sin of Murmuring. V. 10.

a. The reference is to Num. 14: 1-38. Relate the incident of the evil report of the spies and the people's murmuring against Moses and Aaron.

b. God was not pleased with them, and decreed forty years of wandering, during which all twenty years old and upward would die. On the "Destroyer" cf. Exod. 12: 23; II Sam. 24: 16.

B. In spite of God's blessings, Christians often commit the same sins today.

1. Lust (desire) is worldliness. Apply to dancing, drinking, vulgarity, etc. We remember our life in the world and desire to return. Cf. James 4: 1-4; II Tim. 4: 10; Rom. 12: 2.

2. Idolatry is putting other things first. Apply to jobs, recreation, families, etc. Cf. Matt. 6: 33:

3. Fornication and adultery are too often found and tolerated in the church. Cf. I Cor. 5: 4f., 9; Gal. 5: 19.
4. Children of God frequently tempt God today by being discontent with His dealings with us. Cf. I Tim. 6: 6-8; Heb. 13: 5.
5. The sin of murmuring is the expression of discontent. To grumble and complain is as sinful today as it was then — more so! "Count your blessings. "

### III. *Encouragement to Faithfulness.* 11-13.

- A. Warning against self-righteousness and self-confidence.
  1. We must "take heed" lest we fall. Israel did not take heed and she fell.
  2. The admonition is for self-examination regarding our faithfulness to duty. Cf. II Cor. 13: 5; Heb. 3: 12; 4: 1.
  3. Too many are resting on: baptism, attendance at 11 a. m. service, God's mercy, satisfaction with the minimum requirements, and think we are bound for the Promised Land.
- B. Faithfulness is possible for our temptations are capable of being overcome.
  1. Our temptations are not any worse than others' — they are "common to man. " Ours may be strong but consider Moses, David, Paul and Christ.
  2. Our temptations are controlled by God. "He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength. "
    - a. God does not tempt us to sin (James 1: 13), but He does permit Satan to tempt us (Job 1: 12).
    - b. Good can come from temptation, for in re-

sisting it, we come forth strengthened and purified. Job 23: 10.

- c. Since temptations are never beyond our strength, we have no excuse for our guilt in yielding.
3. Our temptations always have a way of escape. If we really want to escape, God will provide it in some way, perhaps a reminder of God's goodness, a scripture, a plan.

*Conclusion:*

1. Christian faithfulness is necessary and it is possible.
2. Let us not fall as Israel did, but by the grace of God and the strength of Christ, let us overcome evil with good.
3. If Christ should come today, would He find you and me faithful and ready?



# FLIGHT FROM DUTY

Jonah 1: 1-3

## *Introduction:*

1. This is the picture of a man running *from* God when it should have been the picture of a man running *for* God. Jonah's flight from God was a flight from duty.
2. Some interpret Jonah as a myth or parable, but the believer in Christ and the Bible accepts it as historical fact. Jonah was the son of Amittai, of the village of Gath-hepher in Zebulun, and lived c. 800 B. C. Cf. II Kings 14: 25.
3. There are several great lessons found in Jonah: the omnipresence of God (cf. Psalm 139: 7-11), the omnipotence of God (1: 17), the providence of God, the universal love of God, etc.
4. Life is not pleasure nor popularity but purpose — duty!

## *Discussion:*

### I. *Jonah and His Duty.*

#### A. His duty was Clear.

1. What constitutes duty? God's command. When God speaks, duty begins, and as Creator, sustainer and redeemer, God has the right to command.
2. God's command to Jonah could not have been misunderstood: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it. "
3. There are many mysteries in the Bible, but our duties have been made clear. Illustrate: Plan of salvation.

#### B. His duty was Disagreeable.

1. Jonah did not want to do his duty. Why? Possible reasons:
    - a. Distance. Nineveh was far to the north and east. This is unlikely for he started on a longer journey in the opposite direction.
    - b. Prejudice. The Assyrians were foreigners who hated Israel. Sometimes prejudice hinders us in doing God's will.
    - c. The task was unpleasant at best and perhaps, like Moses, he felt he was unable to do it. (Cf. Moses' excuses. )
  2. The real reason his duty was disagreeable was that his heart was not right. No love, concern, sacrifice. Cf. the calls of Samuel and Isaiah.
- C. His duty was Evaded.
1. He tried to flee to Tarshish. This place is unknown, but some have conjectured Spain. Wherever it was, it represented the place of ease, do as he pleased, have his own way.
  2. The circumstances were conducive to his flight. He happened to find a boat, a boat with accommodations, and he happened to have the money for the ticket. When we are running from duty Satan makes it easy!

## II. *The Christian and His Duty.*

- A. The Christian life is a life of duty and service.
  1. The word "duty" is found only twice in the New Testament (KJV): Luke 17: 10; Rom. 15: 27.
  2. But our duties are found on every page in such words as: owe, ought, must, should, necessary, I command, etc.
- B.. The examples of duty and application of the lesson.
  1. Love one another. I John 4: 11. It is clear (John 13: 34f.; I John 4: 20; I Cor. 13). It is

- difficult (unacquainted with him, he is strange and aloof, he wronged me in the past, etc. ). Like Jonah, we flee from duty and try to justify ourselves in some way. We have sinned!
2. Worship. John 4: 24. It is clear (Heb. 10: 25; Acts 20: 7; I Cor. 16: 2). It is difficult (feel bad, guests, I'll go tonight, etc. ). Like Jonah, we flee from duty and try to justify ourselves in some way. We have sinned!
  3. Personal evangelism. Rom. 1: 14f. It is clear (Ezek. 33: 8f; John 1: 45; Acts 20: 20). It is difficult (too close to him, he will not appreciate it, I can't, etc. ). Like Jonah, we flee from, duty and try to justify ourselves in some way. We have sinned!
  4. Growth and Development. II Pet. 3: 18: It is clear (Heb. 5: 12; II Tim. 2: 15; Heb. 6: 1). It is difficult (too busy, recreation, etc. ). Like Jonah, we flee from duty and try to justify ourselves in some way. We have sinned!
  5. Benevolence. James 1: 27. It is clear (Gal. 6: 10; Titus 3: 1; Luke 10: 33ff. ). It is difficult (must provide for family, spiritual more important than physical, etc. ). Like Jonah, we flee from duty and try to justify ourselves in some way. We have sinned!

### III. *The Truth Regarding Duty.*

- A. Duty is inescapable. Once God has put us under duty, there is no escape. Jonah did not escape his duty, and he would not have escaped it even if God had not rescued him. Illustrate: the student does not escape his duty to study by leaving books and having fun.
- B. Duty is non-transferable. Christianity is person-

al: obedience to gospel, living the Christian life and standing in judgment. We cannot serve the Lord by proxy. *The only way to be relieved of duty is to discharge it!*

C. Duty is revealing.

1. It reveals our love: self or Christ; world or church.
2. It reveals our character: weak or strong. "See him under pressure and see what he is made of. "
3. It reveals our destiny: hell or heaven.

*Conclusion:*

1. Flight from duty means wilfulness, disobedience, desertion. It is either duty or desertion.
2. Flight from duty is always down: down to Joppa (1: 3), down into the ship (1: 3), down into the sea (1: 15), down into the fish (1: 17). Down, down, down, down!
3. Let us realize that life is duty and let us discharge it. Eccl. 12: 13; Luke 17: 10.

# TRUE GREATNESS

Matt. 20: 25-28

## *Introduction:*

1. Explain the context beginning with verse 20. The request of the mother of James and John: positions of honor for her sons in the kingdom. The reason for the request: the concept of a political kingdom and the human desire for greatness.
2. There are two standards of greatness. The world's standard is: wealth, power, education, social prominence, etc. The Lord's standard is humility.
3. Few can be great by the world's standard, but all can be great by the Lord's standard. We should strive for greatness in the eyes of God.

## *Discussion:*

### I. *Humility Toward Sin Is True Greatness.*

- A. The Bible has much to say on the subject of sin: definition, prevalence, heinousness, punishment, forgiveness, etc.
- B. There are different attitudes toward sin which people take.
  1. Some say they live above sin. "Holier than thou" (cf. Luke 18: 11). I John 3: 9 refers to a continuation in sin and not to a single act.
  2. Some regard sin lightly, explain it away and not bothered. The "So what?" attitude.
  3. Some are either ashamed of their sin or afraid of being caught, and, thus, conceal it as far as possible. Cf. Adam and Eve; Achan (Josh. 7).
  4. Some are proud of their sins. Illustrate: the woman who boasted of her infidelities. Cf. I

Cor. 5: 2. The Corinthians were puffed up in spite of, and not because of, the fornicator, but sin often makes one smart!

- C. Sin never makes one great, but humility toward sin is a mark of greatness.
1. We must realize that none is above sin (Rom. 3: 23; I John 1: 8, 10); sin is real and serious (Rom. 6: 23); sin cannot be hidden from God (Gen. 3: 8f.; cf. Rev. 2: 2); sin ought to humble us (James 4: 8-10).
  2. In deep contrition we ought to repent of sin (Acts 8: 22); confess sin (I John 1: 9; James 5: 16) and ask forgiveness (Acts 8: 22). This is true greatness in spite of sin.
  3. Relate the examples of David and Peter, their sins and their penitence.

## II. *Humility Toward Service Is True Greatness.*

- A. The world's standard of greatness in this respect is not the Lord's standard.
1. Being served instead of serving is greatness with the world. Matt. 20: 24.
  2. Prominent service instead of inconspicuous service is what the world desires. Cf. Naaman (II Kings 5: 13).
  3. The world determines greatness by big things. He is great who is a big: general, politician, business man, player, etc.
- B. There is a trend in the church toward aspirations for bigness and disparagement of little things.
1. He is great who preaches for a big church, teaches with a big degree, writes with a big pen, debates with big opposition. One gospel preacher boasted publicly that he was "known from coast to coast, " and lamented the fact that

among our younger preachers there are no "giants of the faith" as in his day, and, of course, he was one of them.

2. We are living in a day of big missionary and benevolent programs; big revival meetings (crusades for Christ), etc. It is great if it is big!
  3. Am I opposed to these? Certainly not, but may we ever remember that this is not the only way of doing the Lord's work, and may we never despise "the day of small things" (Zech. 4: 10).
- C. God's attitude toward small things.
1. God has always chosen little men for great service: Moses, Saul, Gideon, the lowly fishermen, et. al.
  2. Jesus was not unmindful of little things: little child (Matt. 18: 2); little birds (Matt. 6: 26); little cup (Matt. 10: 42).
  3. The great man is the one who will serve in little ways: preach in little churches, visit in little homes, associate with little people, do little tasks. Jesus set the example for us in this matter.

### III. *Humility Toward Self Is True Greatness.*

- A. True greatness is determined by our attitude toward our talents.
1. Everyone has some ability, even, the dead. Cf. Heb. 11: 4.
  2. Some have more ability than others. " Parable of the talents, 5-2-1.
  3. Salvation is dependent upon the use of our talents. Are we using them?
- B. The little person is one who is not humble with respect to his ability.

1. He is proud of his ability and accomplishments. Cf. Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 4: 30.
2. He continually seeks to display his virtues. Pharisee. Luke 18: 11f.
3. He desires. the praise of his fellows. Matt. 6: 2; 23: 5-7.
- A. He is jealous of others' ability. Cf. I Cor. 3: 3.
5. He boasts of his ability (cf. Prov. 27: 2) and permits it to separate himself from others.
- C. The truly great person is one who has the right attitude toward his talents.
  1. He determines his talents by a candid and honest self-examination.
  2. He develops his talents as God has directed. He uses them and grows.
  3. He is dissatisfied with his talents and accomplishments. Cf. Phil. 3: 13.
  4. He discounts his talents in his own estimation. He appreciates a compliment and at the same depreciates it a little in his own heart.
  5. He delights in the talents of others. Cf. Phil. 2: 3.

*Conclusion:*

1. Let us examine our attitude toward our shortcomings, toward little things of service and toward our own capabilities, and let us strive for true humility.
2. Our only desire should be to be great before God and not before men. The Lord needs men and women and boys and girls who have the marks of true greatness.



# THE HAND OF GOD

Isa. 59: 1

## *Introduction*

1. The expression "hand of God" is found many times in the Bible, and it is also found in some of our hymns.
2. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit" (John 4: 24), yet by a figure called anthropomorphism (the ascription of human attributes to deity), we read of God's: eyes, ears and face (I Pet. 3: 12); back (Exod. 33: 23); feet (Matt. 5: 35); and hands (Isa. 59: 1).
3. By metonymy the term "hand of God" refers to His activity and power. Cf. I Pet. 5: 6; Eccl. 12: 3 (the keepers of the house). God's hand is seen in many marvelous ways.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Hand of God is the Hand of Creation.*

- A. The hand of God created the world in which we live.
  1. We are living in an age of atheism and infidelity. The Bible account of creation is denied on every hand in articles in leading magazines, and even in the textbooks of our public schools.
  2. Where did the world come from? There can be but one answer: God's omnipotent voice spoke and His hand moved, and the universe came into existence. Psalm 8: 3f.; 19: 1; Heb. 1: 10; Acts 7: 50; Gen. 1: 1.
  3. The picture of the heavenly bodies praising God in the song, "The Spacious Firmament, " is a beautiful one. "In reason's ear they all rejoice, And utter forth a glorious voice, Forever

singing as they shine, 'The hand that made us is divine. "'

- B. The hand of God also created man from the dust of the ground.
  - 1. The evolutionary theory is very popular today in many quarters. Briefly explain its principal aspects and consequences.
  - 2. Where did man come from? Again, there can be but one answer: God's omnipotent voice spoke and His hand moved, and man came into existence. Gen. 1: 26; 2: 7; Psalm 119: 73.
  - 3. The hand of God in the creation of man explains the dignity, worth and immortality of humankind.

## II. *The Hand of God is the Hand of Salvation.*

- A. The power of God to save sinful man is proclaimed throughout the Bible.
  - 1. Man, the creation of God, sinned. Gen. 3: 1-6; Rom. 5: 12.
  - 2. God in His mercy was willing to save the sinner. Gen. 3: 15; II Pet. 3: 9.
  - 3. God in His power was able to save him. Cf. Rom. 1: 16; Heb. 7: 25.
- B. God's hand of entreaty shows that He desires to save man.
  - 1. God stands with outstretched hands inviting the sinner to come to Him. Rom. 10: 21 (Isa. 65: 2); cf. Matt. 11: 28.
  - 2. The hands of Jesus would have gathered the Jews of Jerusalem to Him for salvation, but they would not. Matt. 23: 37.
  - 3. The hand of the Lord knocks at the door of the sinner's heart as Jesus desires to come in to bless. Rev. 3: 20.

- C. God's hand of deliverance shows that He is able to save man.
1. God's hand reaches into the horrible pit of sin (Psalm 40: 2) and lifts the sinner to the firm rock of salvation. Cf. Isa. 59: 1.
  2. This, of course, is not without the sinner's consent and assistance. He must accept God's hand of salvation by obeying the gospel of Christ.
  3. The hand of God is the hand of salvation. "From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand He lifted me; From shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me. "

### III. *The Hand of God is the Hand of Providence.*

- A. The hand of God that made us, and the hand of God that saved us, is the hand of God that sustains us. Of a certainty we may know that "God's hand is in it all. "
- B. The hand of providence is the hand of blessing.
1. God has bountifully blessed man from Adam and Eve (Gen. 1: 28) unto the present time. Cf. James 1: 17; Matt. 6: 25ff.; 7: 7.
  2. His hands have ever opened the windows of heaven and poured forth abundant gifts to man (Mai. 3: 10). If He should withhold His blessings one day, every person on earth would die. Acts. 17: 28.
- C. The hand of providence is the hand of direction.
1. God's hand has always led His people. Hosea 11: 3; Psalm 23: 2f.
  2. Paul recognized God's hand of direction. I Thess. 3: 11.
  3. It is not by miracle that He directs us, but it is through the teachings of His word and the overruling of all things for our good (Rom. 8:

28). We can truthfully sing, "He leadeth me  
O blessed thought. "

- D. The hand of providence is the Hand of protection.
1. God's hand has always protected His children. Dan. 3: 17; Psalm 139: 10; John 10: 29.
  2. God is our refuge (Psalm 46: 1) from: temptation, danger, evil men, etc.
  3. "I am safe whatever may betide me, I am safe whoever may deride me, I am safe as long as I confide me, In the hollow of God's hand. "
- E. The hand of providence is the hand of fellowship.  
I John 1: 7. "My God and I.. We clasp our hands,  
Our voices ring with laughter. "
- F. The hand of providence is the hand of correction.
1. God in His love must sometimes chasten us to purify us. Heb. 12: 6f.
  2. David preferred to fall into God's hand of correction than into man's hand. II Sam. 24: 14.

*Conclusion:*

1. There is also God's hand of retribution. To those who will not acknowledge His hand of creation, accept His hand of salvation nor appreciate His hand of providence, He reserves His hand of retribution.
2. We must ever remember the picture of Jesus with the fan in His hand at the final judgment to separate the chaff from the wheat (Luke 3: 17), and we must never forget, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10: 31). The picture of the "sinner in the hands of an angry God" is terrifying.
3. Let us trust and appreciate the hand of God, so that one day we can say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23: 46).

# THE HAZARDS OF FAITH

Phil. 2: 30

## *Introduction:*

1. Relate the story of the Georgia farmer. When asked about his cotton he replied that he did not plant any because of the boll weevil; no corn because he feared a drouth; no potatoes because of the bugs. He said, "I just played it safe. "
2. Many things are built on faith: our economic system (credit, checks, etc. ); private schools; Christianity. Heb. 11: 1; II Cor. 5: 7.
3. Faith relates to the future, and the future is uncertain. Therefore, we may say that faith take a chance, faith risks, faith ventures, faith gambles (the word translated "hazarding" is a gambling term). As an individual Christian and a congregation, let us ask: "Are we playing it safe, or willing to venture?"

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Hazards of Gaining Christ.*

- A. To become a Christian requires great faith.
  1. Necessity of faith. John 8: 24; Rom. 10: 9; Gal. 3: 26.
  2. Necessity of an active faith. James 2: 17; Acts 2: 36ff.
  3. Necessity of a sacrificial faith. Matt. 16: 24.
- B. This faith involves hazards and risks.
  1. The hazard of estrangement. Matt. 10: 35-37; Luke 14: 26.
  2. The hazard of insecurity. Illustrations: the economic pressure applied to Christians in Italy; the man who said he would be fired by

his denominational boss if he became a New Testament Christian.

3. The hazard of contempt. Matt. 5: 11f.; John 15: 18; I John 3: 13.
- C. Examples of some 'who hazarded all to gain Christ.
1. The paralytic borne of four. Mark 2: 1-12. He risked the indignation of the crowd, the displeasure of the owner of the house whose roof was broken up, the contempt of the scribes, etc.
  2. The woman with the issue of blood. Mark 5: 25-34. She risked the displeasure of the crowd, embarrassment because of her disease, etc.
  3. Paul. Phil. 3: 5-8. He hazarded his friends, family, economic security, life, "all things, " to gain Jesus Christ.
- D. There is good reason, though, for hazarding all for Christ. There is a far greater risk in not becoming a Christian (cf. Matt. 16: 26), and being a Christian pays now and hereafter (Matt. 19: 29; I Cor. 3: 21-23).

## II. *The Hazards of Serving Christ.*

- A. Faithful Christian service often means risking one's life.
1. Epaphroditus risked his life to serve Paul. Text. He was willing to take the Philippians' gift to Rome and minister to Paul there.
  2. Paul had often risked his life to preach the gospel of salvation. II Cor. 11: 23-27; I Cor. 15: 31f.
  3. Cf. Old Testament examples: David risked his life to fight for the Lord (I Sam. 17); the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali did the same (Judges 5: 18).

- B. Faith, love and devotion often involve great hazards.
1. Nurses and doctors. It is interesting to note that from the same Greek word translated "hazarding" came *Parabolani*, those who tended the sick and buried the dead in times of pestilence in the medieval church.
  2. A mother's love for her child will cause her to risk her life if necessary. Relate the story of the mother who returned to a burning house to get her baby, and died with the baby in her arms.
- C. To what extent are we willing to jeopardize our health and life for Christ?
1. To minister to the sick? The fear of germs or filth repels us. Matt. 25: 45.
  2. To preach in a hostile land? The fear of persecution dissuades us, while preachers of error hazard their lives. Cf. Rom. 1: 14f.
  3. To worship in inclement weather? Cf. Heb. 10: 25.
- D. The reason we ought to hazard our lives in Christian service is: life is brief and uncertain (cf. Acts 20: 24), and if we lose it in service to Christ we gain it (Matt. 16: 25). Christ gave His life for us; we ought to sacrifice ours for Him. Cf. Rom. 12: 1; II Cor. 12: 15.

### III. *The Hazards of Supporting Christ.*

- A. It takes great faith to venture liberality.
1. The example of James. James 2: 15f.
  2. The example of the Macedonians. II Cor. 8: 1-5.
  3. The example of the Poor Widow. Mark 12: 41-44.

- B. Liberality involves hazards and risks.
1. The risk of not supporting one's family. Cf. I Tim. 5: 8.
    - a. One brother's idea was that supporting family was giving to God, and, therefore, his contribution was figured *after* his family was supplied every need and every desire. He was afraid to venture liberality.
    - b. It is interesting to note that Tissot paints the poor widow of Mark 12 with a child in her arms.
  2. The risk of not providing for old age. Many church members are more interested in old age security than eternal security! It is not wrong to think of later years, but remember Prov. 27: 1 and Matt. 6: 19-21.
  3. The risk of missing some comfort or luxury. We must remember that we are soldiers (II Tim. 2: 31) and pilgrims (I Pet. 2: 11).
- C. We must trust God's promises and venture liberality.
1. God dares us to be liberal and promises abundant blessings. Mai. 3: 10.
  2. God dares us to sow bountifully and promises a rich harvest. II Cor. 9: 6.
  3. God dares us to seek Him first and promises material gifts. Matt. 6: 33.
- D. The reason we ought to venture liberality in our giving is: God's promises are sure (II Pet. 3: 9), and the true riches are not material (cf. I Tim. 6: 7). Are we like the rich young ruler or the poor widow?

*Conclusion:*

1. True faith is a reckless abandon to the will of God.



2. The faith that ventures is a faith that launches **out** into the deep (Luke 5: 4).
3. Are you "playing it safe" or are you "willing to venture" for Christ?

# KEEPING THE CHURCH PURE

Eph. 5: 25-27

## *Introduction:*

1. The necessity of Christian purity is taught throughout the New Testament.
  - a. Christ died for the purity of the church. Text.
  - b. Admonitions to purity are many: Phil. 4: 8; I Tim. 5: 22; James 1: 27; 4: 8.
  - c. We sing of purity. "Purer in Heart"; "Purer Yet and Purer. "
2. The greatest danger of the church is impurity.
  - a. Too frequently we hear such expressions as: "I'm no saint, " "Don't be a freak, " "Puritanical brethren, " etc.
  - b. Too many have compromised, lowered the standards and mixed themselves with the people of the world (Hosea 7: 8).
3. Christian purity is necessary for happiness, influence and heaven!

## *Discussion:*

### *I. Pure Doctrine Must Be Preached.*

- A. The purity of God's Word is taught.
  1. It is said to be pure. Psalm 19: 8; 119: 140; Prov. 30: 5.
  2. It is that which make one pure. John 15: 3; Eph. 5: 26.
  3. We are admonished by God to keep it pure.
    - a. We are to preach sound (wholesome) doctrine. II Tim. 1: 13; Titus 2: 1.
    - b. We are not to add to nor subtract from. Rev. 22: 18f.

- B. The purity of God's Word is jeopardized.
1. Corruption is possible. II Cor. 2: 17. Explain the reference to a huckster of wine or fruit who mixes the bad with the good and thus deceives.
  2. Corruption is certain. II Tim. 4: 3. Men dare to mix their opinions, theories, human philosophies and errors with the pure gospel.
  3. Corruption is condemning. II Pet. 3: 16; James 3: 1.
- C. The purity of God's Word must be guarded and maintained.
1. Watch. The elders must see that the pure gospel is preached from the pulpit and taught in the classrooms. Cf. Acts 20: 28-31.
  2. Warn. Anyone who preaches a corrupted gospel is first to be admonished and warned. II Tim. 2: 14; Titus 3: 10.
  3. Withdraw. If the admonitions and warnings go unheeded, fellowship must be withdrawn from the heretic. Titus 3: 10; Rom. 16: 17.

## II. *Pure Lives Must Be Lived.*

- A. Purity of life for the Christian is taught throughout the New Testament.
1. We must be pure in heart (Matt. 5: 8); pure in speech (I Pet. 3: 10), and pure in deed (II Cor. 7: 1). Jesus is the perfect example of purity.
  2. Figures used to illustrate Christian purity.
    - a. A chaste bride. Eph. 5: 25ff.; II Cor. 11: 2.
    - b. Refined gold. Job 23: 10; I Pet. 1: 6f.
    - c. Purged branch. John 15: 2. Pruned of useless shoots.
  3. Heaven is a pure place for pure people. Pure gold and pure water. Rev. 21: 18; 22: 1.

- B. Purity of life is constantly jeopardized.
  1. It is jeopardized by the stain of indifference. Christian purity means Christian zeal (James 1: 27). Pure religion is fervent service for Christ.
  2. It is jeopardized by the pollutions of worldliness. Cf. I John 2: 15; Rom. 12: 2; I Thess. 5: 22.
- C Purity of life can and must be maintained by every Christian.
  1. By the reading of God's Word. Psalm 119: 11; I John 3: 9.
  2. By contemplating the hope of heaven, I John 3: 3.
  3. By mutual admonition and discipline. I Cor. 5: 5.

### III. *Pure Love Must Be Practiced.*

- A. Purity of Christian love is emphasized in the New Testament.
  1. Brotherly love is evidence of our love for God. I John 4: 20.
  2. Brotherly love is the greatest gift we may possess. I Cor. 13.
  3. Brotherly love is the fulfillment of the whole law. Gal. 5: 13-15.
- B. Purity of Christian love is always in danger.
  1. In danger of ignorance. We might think that this brother or sister does not need nor want our love, but most every time he does.
  2. In danger of selfishness. Cf. Phil. 2: 4.
  3. In danger of hypocrisy. Rom. 12: 9. Purity means "freedom from sinister or improper motives." Cf. I Pet. 1: 22.
- C. Purity of Christian love must be developed and practiced.

1. We should study God's Word on the importance and beauty of brotherly love. Cf. the love of David and Jonathan. II Sam. 1: 26.
2. We must pray for the ability to love others more. "When your heart was filled with anger, Did you think to pray? Did you plead for grace, my brother, That you might forgive another Who had crossed your way?"
3. We ought to use the little opportunities we have to show our love to others. Don't wait to do something big — just a little word or gift will do so much.

*Conclusion:*

1. Christ intended that His church be pure in doctrine, life and love.
2. Each one has a responsibility for personal purity, and if each one will do his part, the church will be pure.
3. Do you see the church in its purity and beauty? Remember that heaven is the home of the pure and blest.

## LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matt. 20: 1-16

### *Introduction:*

1. This is regarded as one of the most difficult parables of Jesus. Why?
  - a. It seems to deal with future rewards, many aspects of which are vague.
  - b. It seems opposed to the parable of the pounds (Luke 19: 11-27) where there is a difference of reward. Here each one received the same reward.
  - c. The details, which have little or no significance, are pressed. For example, those rewarded murmured against those who received the same remuneration. The saved complaining because others are saved? No.
2. The applications of the parable.
  - a. Some say that because the apostles thought the highest place in the kingdom would go to the ones who had served the longest, Jesus corrects this view.
  - b. Some say that because the Jews would think they were better than Gentile Christians, Jesus teaches that the eleventh hour Gentiles would be equally blessed in the kingdom.
  - c. The usual application is to Christian workers. Vineyard is the church; market place is world; end of day is judgment; penny (shilling) is eternal life; laborers are Christians of different ages.
3. The key to the interpretation of the parable is the context of Matt. 19: 16-30, and especially Peter's question of verse 27. But there are other lessons we shall notice briefly before coming to the main point of the parable.

*Discussion:*I. *It Teaches the Lesson of Good Will Toward Others.*

- A. Notice the attitude of the laborers toward their fellows.
  - 1. Jealous and envious of their fellow-laborers' good fortune.
  - 2. Angry (they threw their money down) because of the master's generosity.
  - 3. Murmured when they did not receive more.
  - 4. Pitied themselves because they had worked so hard and the other had not.
- B. Christians must have the spirit of magnanimity and generosity toward others.
  - 1. The complainers were like the elder brother. Cf. Luke 15: 1, 2, 28-30.
  - 2. We must not fret at another's good fortune. Rom. 12: 15; Phil. 2: 3f.

II. *It Teaches the Lesson of Trust in God.*

- A. God's will is absolute and not to be questioned by man.
  - 1. Man must recognize God's authority and never question His decisions. Illustrate: If God has decreed baptism essential, accept it. These men couldn't see *why* the master acted as he did. We walk by faith (II Cor. 5: 7).
  - 2. God's will is none of man's business. Jesus impressed this upon Peter (John 21: 21f. ). The servant must say, "Thy will be done. "
- B. God's will is right and we must trust God to deal justly with all.
  - 1. He is a God of all wisdom, goodness and justice. II Tim. 4: 8; Rev. 19: 2.
  - 2. As He deals with us now and hereafter, whatever He does is right and good.

- a. In life, even amidst suffering, trust God's goodness. Cf. Rom. 8: 28.
- b. In eternity, though a loved one lost, trust God's justice. Some say, "I don't want to go to heaven if mother is not there. " God will be right regardless of who is there or who is not.
3. There may be disappointment at the judgment. I may be surprised at His mercy to others and His severity toward me. But God's will is right!

### III. *It Teaches the Lesson of Work for the Church.*

- A. It teaches that the Lord wants workers.
  1. The householder went out to hire laborers, not loafers, bosses, etc.
  2. The need is for workers in the vineyard. I Cor. 15: 58; John 9: 4; Amos 6: 1.
  3. We sing the song written from this parable, "Hear the voice of Jesus say, " but are we working? How much visiting, teaching, helping, etc. am I doing?
- B. It teaches the place of work.
  1. The vineyard is the place of work; the vineyard is the church; the Lord has but one church. Col. 1: 18; Eph. 4: 4.
  2. The Lord will not recompense those who work outside His vineyard, though they work hard. Illustrate: man who worked in the wrong field.
  3. Necessity of getting into the Lord's vineyard. Matt. 7: 21-23; I Cor. 15: 58 (in the Lord); Gal. 3: 27.
- C. It teaches the kind of workers the Lord wants. This is the main lesson.
  1. Three classes of workers: those with a contract (a penny a day); those with a promise (what-



soever is right); those with neither (notice that 7b is omitted in ASV and RSV), but with only a desire to work. The eleventh-hour men, with no contract nor promise, showed great faith, love and zeal.

2. Peter's question (19: 27) reflected somewhat of a wrong attitude.
    - a. The Lord does not want a hireling: so much pay, so much work; time and a half for over-time. The Lord wants willing workers, and the eleventh-hour men were willing workers.
    - b. The Lord does not want those who do not want to work and sacrifice. Cf. the rich young ruler.
  3. The parable illustrates the principle, "The last shall be first and the first last. " Notice the parable begins and ends with this truth.
    - a. The ruler was regarded as first by the apostles (19: 25), but the Lord regarded him as last because he was not a willing worker.
    - b. The first are those who will not work or work for a wrong motive, while the last are those who are devoted, willing workers.
- D. It teaches the basis of reward for our work.
1. Not the amount of time spent. Illustrate: Methuselah and Jesus; the hour and **a half** sermon.
  2. Not the actual, visible results accomplished. Illustrate: James and John (one died young and the other lived long); preacher with big church and the other in mission field.
  3. The basis will be the attitude assumed and the effort put forth wherever we find ourselves. With regard to my ability and my location, am

I doing what I can in service to my Lord? am I a willing worker for Christ?

IV. *It Teaches the Lesson of Action When Called.*

- A. It does not remotely imply death-bed repentance.
  - 1. The eleventh-hour men responded when they were called. If they had been called early, then refused and later entered to get the reward, it would teach death-bed repentance.
  - 2. Sinners are called by the gospel (II Thess. 2: 14), and even though many do not accept the very first call, it speaks for conviction and love when men do. Cf. Pentecostians, Eunuch, Lydia.
- B. Relate the story of the 75-year-old man who was converted. After his baptism, he said honestly he had never seen the truth of the gospel before that time, and when he saw it, he was ready to obey it. Seemingly he was in good health when he was baptized, but a short time later he suddenly died. He did not spend long in the vineyard, but he gave every evidence of a willing worker.

*Discussion:*

- 1. If you are not in the Lord's vineyard, enter it now by obeying Him. Heb. 3: 7.
- 2. If you are in the vineyard, but have quit working for Him, repent and renew your allegiance.

# LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH

Luke 17: 5

## *Introduction:*

1. This petition may be properly regarded as a prayer.
  - a. It is a short prayer, consisting of only four **words** including the salutation.
  - b. It is a prayer which we sing. "O for a faith that will not shrink, Tho' pressed by every foe, That will not tremble on the brink Of any earthly woe. "
  - c. It should be the prayer of every child of God.
2. This is the same prayer of the father who brought his child to Jesus. Mark 9: 24. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. "
3. We often pray God to improve our health, increase our wealth or prolong our days. How often do we pray, "Lord, Increase our faith"?

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Apostles' Dissatisfaction With Their Faith.*

- A. They were dissatisfied because their faith had failed them more than once.
  1. In the storm their lack of faith caused fear. Matt. 8: 26.
  2. On the sea Peter's little faith had caused doubt. Matt. 14: 31.
  3. At the Mount of Transfiguration their lack of faith kept them from performing a miracle. Matt. 17: 20.
- B. Their dissatisfaction had not led them to despair.
  1. The apostles are to be complimented because they did not despair.
    - a. They had failed in **a miracle. It is always**

- bad to fail in any good undertaking. Illustrate: Student failing in school,
- b. They had failed publicly and, no doubt, brought reproach upon the cause of Christ.
2. Many give up when their lack of faith results in apparent failure.
    - a. We despair when we see that our actual faith is so small and our potential faith is so great.
    - b. We give up when we see what we are is so poor, and what we would like to be is so sublime.
- C. The apostles' dissatisfaction led them to seek improvement.
1. Progress is possible only where there is dissatisfaction. Illustrations:
    - a. Transportation. Man became dissatisfied with horse and buggy and the result was the automobile. Then the airplane followed.
    - b. Living Standards. If one is satisfied with an income of twenty-five dollars a week, he will never make more.
  2. Regarding faith the Christian can never be satisfied. Cf. Phil. 3: 13f.
    - a. If we honestly examine ourselves (II Cor. 13: 5), we will find our faith small and weak. A recognition of our weakness is an evidence of maturity. Phil. 3: 15.
    - b. Recognizing our weakness, we must not try to justify it but rather pray for an increase of faith.

## II. *The Necessity of Increasing Our Faith.*

- A. Christianity is the religion of faith.
  1. We are saved by faith. Eph. 2: 8; **Rom.** 5: 1; Gal. 3: 26f.

2. We live the Christian life by faith. II Cor. 5: 7.
  3. Faith is the foundation of our hope. Heb. 11: 1, 6.
- B. In time of temptation great faith is needed.
1. Temptation is a trying of our faith. James 1: 1-3.
  2. Faith is the means of overcoming the world. I John 5: 4; Eph. 6: 16.
  3. Therefore, the greater our faith the better we can overcome temptation. As we face the Tempter daily we ought to pray, "Lord, Increase our faith. "
- C. In time of sadness and sorrow great faith is needed.
1. Illustrations: Syrophenician woman (Mark 7: 24ff. ); woman with issue of blood (Mark 5: 24ff).
  2. Often grief leads to bitterness and despondency, but faith will lead us to the Great Physician, the Balm of Gilead, the Resurrection and Life.
  3. Great faith is one "That will not murmur or complain Beneath the chast'ning rod, But in the hour of grief or pain, Will lean upon its God. "
- D. In time of duty and obedience great faith is needed.
1. Commands of the Lord require faith to obey. Illustrations:
    - a. Forgiveness. Luke 17: 1-4; Matt. 18: 21f.
    - b. Giving. I Cor. 16: 1, 2; II Cor. 9: 6, 7.
    - c. Assembling. Heb. 10: 25; Acts 20: 7.
    - d. Seeking kingdom first. Matt. 6: 33.
  2. Obedience to the Lord is in exact proportion to faith.
    - a. Lukewarm member boasts of great faith, but James says, "Show me your faith by your obedience. " Jas. 2: 18.

- b. Faith is defined in Thayer's Greek Lexicon as "conviction, trust and *obedience*. "
- c. In the face of God-given duties and responsibilities, each ought to fervently pray, "Lord, Increase my faith. "

### III. *The Manner of Increasing Our Faith.*

- A. Three things are necessary for an increase of faith.
  - 1. Desire for more faith. Christian religion is the religion of desire.
  - 2. Resort to the source of faith, God's Word. Rom. 10: 17.
  - 3. Appropriation to our hearts and lives of the teachings of God's Word.
- B. God's answer to prayer is conditioned upon our cooperation with Him.
  - 1. If we pray for health, we must take good care of our bodies.
  - 2. If we pray for prosperity, we must work diligently with our hands.
  - 3. If we pray for the salvation of the heathen, we must either go or send.
  - 4. If we pray for an increase of faith, we must use the measure of faith we have.
- C. A law of the natural and spiritual world is: Use leads to increase and disuse leads to decrease. Cf. Matt. 13: 12.
  - 1. This is true in the natural world. Limb of body; fish of Mammoth Cave.
  - 2. It is also true in the spiritual world. Talents (Matt. 25); faith.
- D. An increase of faith means an increase of every Christian virtue: love, zeal, knowledge, etc., because these are dependent upon faith.

*Conclusion:*

1. Ours is a fight of faith (I Tim. 6: 12); a work of faith (I Thess. 1: 3); a household of faith (Gal. 6: 10).
2. Unless this is our prayer we are in the wrong fight, wrong work and wrong family.
3. Our eternal salvation is dependent upon this little prayer and its answer.

# THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Matt. 26: 26-29

## *Introduction:*

1. The institution of the Lord's Supper is found in Matt. 26: 26-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22: 191; I Cor. 11: 23-25.
2. The Christians of the first century observed it weekly. Acts 20: 7.
3. To know its significance and observe it properly is most important,.. I Cor. 11: 27.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *The Lord's Supper is a Commemoration.*
  - A. It is observed in memory of Christ. Luke 22: 19.  
The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel and redemption. I Cor. 15: 1-4.
  - B. Man's inclination to forget is admitted by all.
    1. The best of memories fail. So often we confess, "I forgot. "
    2. The best of people are forgotten. Jer. 2: 32; cf. Eccl. 12: 1.
    8. The admonition 'to remember is found often. II Pet. 3: 1; Rev. 2: 5.
  - C. The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of the death, burial and resurrection.
    1. The emblems are appropriate: bread for body and fruit of vine for blood.
    2. The emblems are accessible: they can be found anywhere on earth.
    3. In the Lord's Supper by faith I can see Christ's death for me, and be stirred to humble gratitude. God has provided "lest we forget. "
- II. *The Lord's Supper is a Communion.*
  - A. The cup and the bread are the communion of the blood and body of Christ. I Cor. 10: 16.



1. Communion is *koinonia*: participation or sharing in the benefits of Christ's blood and body.
  2. The Lord's Supper brings us to a realization of our union with Christ. Paul's argument is that eating idolatrous meat in the idol's temple unites the eater with the idol, and he proves this by the fact that eating the Lord's Supper identifies the Christian with Christ.
  3. Therefore, the Lord's Supper is proved to be, for Christians only. Cf. Matt. 26: 29.
- B. The Lord's Super is a twofold communion.
1. With Christ. In eating it we signify our union with Christ; we are one with Him; we share His grace and salvation. V. 16,
  2. With one another. In eating it we also show we are united with one another; we are one body; we are mutual sharers of His grace. V. 17.

### III. *The Lord's Supper is a Proclamation,*

- A. The Lord's Supper is an announcement, publication, declaration... I Cor. 11: 26.
1. The gospel must be proclaimed to the world. I Cor. 2: 1; Acts 17: 23; Mark 16: 16.
  2. The Lord's Supper is one way every Christian can proclaim the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to the world. Therefore, we ought not to forsake the assembling. Heb. 10: 25.
  3. "Those who come to it, therefore, should come, not to satisfy hunger, nor for the gratification of social feelings, but for the definite purpose of bearing their testimony to the great fact of redemption, and to contribute their portion of influence to the preservation and propagation of the knowledge of that fact. " (*An Exposition*

*of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Charles Hodge. )*

- B. The Lord's Supper as a proclamation to the world suggests:
1. A sermon of God's love, grace and salvation that every Christian can preach every week.
  2. The Christian virtues of faith, courage and zeal are thus exhibited every time we observe it.

IV. *The Lord's Supper is a Dedication.*

- A. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (I Cor. 11: 25).
1. The same words are found in Luke 22: 20; cf. Matt. 26: 28; Mark 14: 24.
  2. *Covenant* is better than *testament* (KJV), and the reference is to the sealing or ratifying of agreements.
  3. Exod. 24: 5-8 records the sealing of the covenant of God with Israel — the animal was slain and its blood sprinkled on the people. The blood sprinkled on the contracting parties solemnly bound them to their agreements: God promised to bless Israel, and Israel promised to obey God's commandments.
- B. The Lord's Supper represents the blood-ratified covenant between Christ and Christians. Cf. Heb. 8: 6-8, 12.
1. Christ has promised to bless us with forgiveness, peace, prayer, hope and every spiritual blessing. Eph. 1: 3.
  2. Christians, in eating the Lord's Supper, bind themselves to implicit obedience to Christ. Israel said, "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do, and be obedient" (Exod. 24: 7).

8. We must eat the Lord's Supper with a consciousness of our promised dedication to Christ. Christ will keep His part of the covenant. Do we keep ours? Apply.
  - a. Liberality. We have promised it. Are we true to our pledge?
  - b. Purity. We have pledged it. Are we keeping our part of the covenant?

V. *The Lord's Supper is an Anticipation.*

- A. It has been given for Christian observance "till he come" (I Cor. 11: 26).
  1. In eating the Lord's Supper, the hope of the second coming of Christ fills our hearts. Cf. John 14: 3; Acts 1: 11; I Thess. 4: 16.
  2. The Lord's Supper spans the gulf between the first and second advents. "And thus that dark betrayal night, With the last advent we unite By one bright chain of loving rite, Until he come!"
- B. In view of the marvelous blessings that shall be ours when He comes again, we should desire, anticipate and rejoice in His coming, and we should have this hope rekindled within us every week as we observe the feast divine!

*Conclusion:*

1. This is the significance of the Lord's Supper, and there is far more involved in eating it than meets the eye of the casual observer.
2. If properly observed by Christians, it will result in greater love, appreciation, unity, faith, zeal, obedience, hope and joy.
3. May we come to appreciate its meaning more and thus to partake of it more worthily, and be blessed both now and eternally.

# PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE LOST

Acts 20: 18-21

## *Introduction:*

1. One of the greatest tragedies of the church is our apathy toward the lost. If the gospel is true, and men are lost without it, why don't we preach it?
2. An individual or a congregation is great only in proportion to their concern for the lost.
3. The text is a part of one of Paul's great addresses (cf. his sermons at Antioch, Lystra, Athens, etc. ). On his third missionary journey, as he returns to Jerusalem, he calls the elders of Ephesus to Miletus and speaks to them. Paul regards it as a farewell address, and he tells of his past, present and future.
4. The verses of our lesson show Paul's concern for the lost, and what his attitude toward the lost was must be ours. Cf. I Cor. 11: 1.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Basis of Paul's Concern for the Lost.*

- A. He regarded himself as a servant of the Lord. V. 19.
  1. His past work in Ephesus was the work of a servant. Cf. Eph. 3: 7.
  2. Paul delighted in referring to himself as a "bondservant. " Phil. 1: 1; Rom. 1: 1; cf. I Cor. 9: 19.
  3. He was willing to serve in any capacity in behalf of the lost: planter, waterer, cultivator, reaper; lay the foundation or build the superstructure.
- B. The service concept is essential in soul-winning.

1. Jesus set the example in serving others. Matt. 20: 28; Phil. 2: 7.
2. Christians are called to serve others. Matt. 20: 26f.; Eph. 2: 10.
3. Our greatest service is in saving the lost. "Rescue the Perishing. "

## II. *The Characteristics of Paul's Service.*

### A. Humble Service. "With all lowliness of mind. "

1. The greatest work demands the humblest heart. Cf. Eph. 4. 1f.
2. Salvation by grace understood and appreciated makes for great humility. Cf. Paul the Pharisee. Phil. 3: 5-8.
3. Paul gloried to preach a humble, crucified Saviour. Gal. 6: 14.

### B. Tearful Service. "And with tears. "

1. He admonished with tears (Acts 20: 31), **and** wrote with tears (II Cor. 2: 4).
2. At Ephesus his tears, no doubt, were caused by: ignorance (Acts 19: 2); blasphemy (19: 9); idolatry (19: 28). Cf. Jesus (Luke 19: 41).
3. We should be moved to sadness and tears when we think of sin (cf. Eph. 4: 30), its misery now and its condemnation in eternity. Cf. Matt. 8: 12.

### C. Trying Service. "And with trials. "

1. To reach and rescue the lost is not easy. **Paul** had suffered: scourging, imprisonment, slander, etc. II Cor. 11: 23-28.
2. In addition, he also had worked with his own hands. Acts 20: 34.
3. The Christian teacher, as a soldier of Christ, must be willing to endure trials. **Eph.** 6: 10; II Tim. 4: 5.

#### D. Rewarding Service.

1. Paul's service in Ephesus had resulted in the existence of a strong church there. It was a church: of enlightened Jews and heathen; organized with elders; with a deep concern for the lost (Acts 19: 10). This was Paul's reward. Cf. I Thess. 2: 19f.
2. Paul lived to save the lost, and saved souls was what he wanted most in life. Phil. 1: 21f.

### III. *The Extent of Paul's Concern for the Lost.*

#### A. He went to the lost of Ephesus.

1. Jesus said, "Go, " and Paul did on three missionary journeys. He visited Ephesus briefly on the second and returned on the third.
2. When Christians are really concerned for the lost, we will go to the mission fields. John 4: 35; Matt. 9: 37f.
3. If we cannot go ourselves, we can support those who do. Phil. 4: 16.

#### B. He taught fearlessly. "I shrank not from declaring unto you... "

1. He loved those people enough to teach them what was profitable, not what was popular, pleasant or agreed upon. He was not afraid of offending them. Illustrate: a doctor cannot be timid nor afraid of hurting.
2. The result of his fearless preaching: pure from their blood (v. 26). Cf. Ezek. 3: 181

#### C. He taught "publicly and from house to house. "

1. He realized the necessity of public preaching. I Cor. 9: 16; II Tim. 4: 2.
2. He also knew the value of personal work. It takes both public and private teaching, and

may we never be guilty of disparaging either one!

3. This is Acts 20: 20, and as someone has said, "Every church needs this 20: 20 vision, " and not until we get it, will we see the lost and save them.
- D. He taught all. "Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks. "
1. He was the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26: 17; Gal. 2: 7), but he also preached to the Jews (Acts 14: 1). Cf. v. 31, "every one. "
  2. He knew that all were lost (Rom. 1 and 2) and needed the gospel (Rom. 1: 16).
  3. We must be concerned for all of the lost: white-black; rich-poor; far-near.
- E. He taught persistently.
1. He had stayed in Ephesus three years (v. 31); he had been with them "all the time" (v. 18); he had admonished "night and day" (v. 31).
  2. Reaching and saving the lost had been an obsession with Paul (cf. John 9: 4), and he had certainly redeemed the time (Col. 4: 5).

### *Conclusion:*

1. Paul's passion for lost souls is also expressed in Rom. 10: 1; 9: 3.
2. How do you and I compare with the Apostle Paul in concern for the lost? We must realize that we are here on earth for one purpose — to save souls — and as individuals and congregations, we must be concerned for the lost.
3. May each resolve to save one lost soul this year, and to give liberally to support the preaching of salvation.

# LOVEST THOU ME MORE THAN THESE?

John 21: 15-19

## *Introduction:*

1. The apostle Peter on former occasions had ardently professed greater love for Jesus.
  - a. He loved Him so much he would not let Jesus die. Matt. 16: 22; cf. 26: 51.
  - b. He loved Him so much he would never be offended though others might. Matt. 26: 33.
  - c. He loved Him so much he would even die for Jesus. Matt. 26: 35.
2. Peter's love for Jesus had weakened in temptation, and he had denied Him three times. Relate Matt. 26: 69-75. Now Peter has the opportunity to confess Jesus publicly.
3. The question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" is most important and applicable to us today. We sing, "More love to Thee, O Christ, " but do we really mean it as we sing it?

## *Discussion:*

### I. *An Exposition of the Text.*

#### A. The question of Jesus.

1. Jesus really asked three different questions.
  - a. "Lovest (*agapao*) thou me more than these?" v. 15.
  - b. "Lovest (*agapao*) thou me?" v. 16.
  - c. "Lovest (*phileo*) thou me?" v. 17.
2. The two words for "I love" in the Greek present an interesting study.
  - a. The first two times Jesus used *agapao*: a higher love resulting from moral choice; in-



telligent esteem and adoration; love directed toward one whom we believe worthy to be loved.

- b. The third time Jesus used *phileo*: an impulsive, instinctive affection; a strong attachment.
  - c. *Agapao* is the love of devotion, as for a benefactor; *love*. *Phileo* is the love of emotion, as for a companion; *like* more than love.
3. The antecedent of "these. " The gender may be either neuter or masculine.
- a. If neuter: the fishing equipment (boats, nets, etc. ) and all that it implies — material matters and secular occupation.
  - b. If masculine: the other apostles. "Do you love me more than these (apostles) love me?" The question is difficult and scholarly opinion is divided, but the application of the lesson is not dependent upon the answer.
- B. The answer of Peter.
1. Each of the three times Peter replied with *phileo*, the humbler word for love as a friend. "Jesus uses the more dignified, really the nobler, but, as it seems to Peter, in the ardor of his affection, the colder word for *love*" (Vincent).
  2. Peter makes no reference to a comparison of his love with others': he omits "more than these. " "Peter makes no claim here to superior love and passes by the 'more than these' " (Robertson).
  3. In Peter's reply his humility is now clearly evident.
- C. The admonition and prediction of Jesus.

1. "Feed my lambs; tend my sheep; feed my sheep. " No reference to the primacy of **Peter**, but simply a call to service.
2. Jesus foretells Peter's suffering and death. Peter's love will grow deeper from *phileo* to *agapao*.

## II. *An Application of the Text.*

### A. The Necessity of Loving Christ.

1. He commands our love. Matt. 22: 37 (applies also to Christ); I Cor. 16: 22.
2. He desires our love. Men seek the love of those higher; Christ seeks the love of those lower.
3. He first loved us. I John 4: 10; 3: 1; Rom. 5: 8.

### B. The Meaning of Loving Christ.

1. What love for Christ really is.
  - a. Not a shallow emotionalism that one merely feels.
  - b. Not a hollow profession that one makes. Matt. 23: 3; I John 3: 18.
  - c. But an active obedience to the will of Christ. John 14: 15; I John 5: 3.
2. Characteristics of true love for Christ.
  - a. It is proof of our devotion to Him. Cf. II Cor. 8: 24.
  - b. It is sincere and unfeigned. II Cor. 8: 8; 6: 6.
  - c. It is pleasant. Love's service is pleasant service. Illustrate: the poor mother who works hard, but happily, for her family.
  - d. It is ever growing. When we serve out of love we are led to greater love. Try this experiment: volunteer to teach a class for a period of time and I will guarantee you that

your love for Christ, His word and **for people** will be greatly stimulated.

C. The Degree of Loving Christ.

1. Love is relative and capable of being increased. Therefore, we should strive for *more* love as parents, children, husbands, wives; more love as disciples, soul-winners, etc.
2. We should certainly love Christ *more than these*:
  - a. Pride (self). Illustrate: swallow our pride and forgive. Luke 17: 4.
  - b. Ease and pleasure. Illustrate: attend regardless of other attractions. Cf. II Tim. 3: 4; Heb. 10: 25.
  - c. Money and possessions. Illustrate: sacrifice regardless of whether or not we have every material thing we want. II Cor. 8: 2.
  - d. Friend or family. Illustrate: obey the Lord in baptism even if it means being deserted by all men. Matt. 10: 37.
  - e. Life itself. Luke 14: 26.
3. Our love for Christ is either *more than* or *less than* our love for these things. Which is it for you? for me?

*Conclusion:*

1. Peter did not compare his love for Christ with others' love, and neither ought we, but we should compare our love for Christ with our love for material things.
2. Christ is asking you and me the same question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" Heaven depends upon the answer!

## THE WIDOW'S MITE

Mark 12: 41-44

### *Introduction:*

1. The widows of the Bible present an interesting- study: Zarephath (I Kings 17: 8-24; Anna (Luke 2: 36-38); Nain (Luke 7: 11-15); Grecian (Acts 6: 1-6); Impor-  
tunate (Luke 18: 1-8); Indeed (I Tim. 5: 3ff. ).
2. This one is the Poor Widow. Two words for poor: *ptochos*, utterly destitute (as Lazarus); *penes*, of narrow means. The former word used here.
3. The setting of the lesson: On Tuesday before His death Jesus was in the temple opposite the treasury, which was in the court of the women. There were thirteen chests (trumpets) for gifts, each marked, four of which were for voluntary offerings.
4. The widow's mite has been badly misunderstood and misapplied. Illustrate: the covetous member with the dollar habit pleads "the widow's mite. " Absurd!

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *Christ Beholds Our Giving.*

- A. God and Christ are omnipresent and see everything that we do.
  1. Psalm 139: 7-10 and I Pet. 3: 12 apply to our worship and giving.
  2. We can hide our gifts from the brethren (some-  
times) and perhaps from the government, but we cannot hide them from Christ.
  3. God saw the liberality of Cornelius (Acts 10: 2). and He saw the covetousness of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11).
- B. What does the Lord see with regard to our giving?

1. He sees the amount we give. He knows every dollar we have ever given.
    - a. Christ saw the large gifts of the rich and the small gift of the widow.
    - b. The amount given may represent a gift out of: habit, abundance or sacrifice.
  2. He sees the attitude of heart. Cf. Acts 1: 24; John 2: 24f.
    - a. He knows if it is to be seen of men. Matt. 6: 2-4.
    - b. He knows if it is merely to relieve compulsion. II Cor. 9: 7.
    - c. He knows if it is to show our love for God and man. The poor widow.
- C. The reason for God's beholding our giving.
1. It is not to spy on us. He looks to approve and not to condemn.
  2. It is not in anticipation of being enriched. Cf., Psalm 24: 1.
  3. It is because He knows giving is important to *us* and He is interested in us.

## II. *Christ Evaluates Our Giving.*

- A. The fact that He sees our giving implies that He appraises it.
1. The Lord recognizes that there are differences in those who give and their gifts: rich-poor; mites-millions; more-less; poverty-abundance; all-part.
  2. The Lord recognizes that some gifts are better than others: the widow's gift was better than others.
- B. The Lord has always evaluated the gifts of His children.
1. Cain and Abel. Gen. 4: 1-5; Heb. 11: 4.

2. The Jews of Amos' day. Amos 5: 21f.
  3. The Jews of Malachi's day. Mai. 1: 7f.
- C. God's basis for evaluating our gifts.
1. What the basis *is not*:
    - a. The perfect use of the money we *give*. The scribes and Pharisees misused the money contributed (cf. Mark. 12: 40) many times, Apply: Elders are not infallible in the use of funds, but this is no excuse for not giving.
    - b. The intrinsic value of the gift. A farthing (penny) was not much!
  2. What the basis of evaluation *is*:
    - a. The motive: it must be sincere (II Cor. 8: 8) love for God and man.
    - b. The manner: it must be willing and cheerful. II Cor. 9: 7.
    - c. The measure: it must be liberal (Rom. 12: 8) and sacrificial.
  3. The giver's ability and not the amount is important with the Lord. A little gift is often big; Cf. Matt. 10: 42 (a little cup of water).

### III. *Christ Responds To Our Giving.*

- A. Our giving affects God and Christ.
1. All of our actions, good and bad, affect heaven. Cf. Luke 15: 7; Eph. 4: 30.
  2. Why does our giving affect God?
    - a. It is an index of our heart. Matt. 6: 21.
    - b. It indicates our gratitude or ingratitude. The grateful give!
    - c. It reveals our estimate of God. The better we give the more we love Him.
  3. Our giving affects the Lord in one of two ways: pleased or displeased; accepts or rejects; blesses or condemns.

- B. Our giving can condemn us.
  - 1. It brought misery and condemnation to: Cain, the Jews, Ananias, et al.
  - 2. The wrong attitude toward money was the ruin of: Achan, Nabal, Judas Iscariot, Simon the sorcerer, Laodiceans, et al.
- C. Our giving can bless us in many ways.
  - 1. The Lord responds to acceptable giving by showering upon us His: compliments, love, blessings.
  - 2. He will bless us now in this life and in the life to come. Matt. 6: 33; Mark 10: 29f; Mal. 3: 10.

*Conclusion:*

- 1. There are some who would rebuke the poor widow by saying, "What you did was rash, reckless and useless; at least you should have kept one mite for yourself. " Jesus did not rebuke her, but blessed her.
- 2. The story of Mary and the alabaster box (John 12: 1-8) illustrates the same lesson. She was criticized for her liberality, but blessed by the Lord.
- 3. We give acceptably when we give ourselves first to the Lord. II Cor. 8: 5. Our heart's desire and prayer to God should be for greater liberality!

# PRAYER IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

## I Tim. 2: 1-8

### *Introduction:*

1. Prayer is a great source of Christian strength. We read, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5: 17), and we sing, "Pray all the time. "
2. This lesson has to do with public prayer. Prayer was an important part of the worship of early Christians (Acts 2: 42; 13: 3; 20: 36; I Cor. 14: 14ff. ).
3. The subject of I Timothy 2 is public worship: public prayer (vs. 1-8); women's apparel in worship (v. 9f. ); women's conduct in worship (vs. 11-15).

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *The Content of Public Prayer.*

##### A. Prayers: *proseuche*.

1. This is the general term, and it includes any one or all of the other forms mentioned below.
2. The contents of this word are unrestricted, and it is used only of our talking to God (not to man).
3. It is a term of reverence and devotion emphasizing one's frame of mind in prayer. It is found in: Acts 2: 42; 10: 4; 16: 13; James 5: 17; et al.

##### Supplications: *deesis*.

1. This word refers to a petition for a particular benefit; a request for need. We are taught to ask God for blessings (Matt. 6: 11; 7: 7; James 4: 2).
2. The idea of personal need is emphasized in this word, and it is used of our requests of man as well as God.



3. It is found in such passages as: Luke 1: 13; James 5: 16; 1 Pet. 3: 12; Rom. 10: 1, et al.

C. Intercessions: *enteuxis*.

1. This word literally means, "a falling in with." A "free, familiar prayer such as boldly draws near" (Trench). Cf. Gen. 18: 23.
2. The idea of freedom and boldness of access is inherent in the word. The noun is found in I Tim. 4: 5 and the verb in Rom. 8: 27, 34; 11: 2, et. al.
3. It is translated: "plead, petition, intercede." From John 17 and Col. 1: 9 we learn it is right to petition God in behalf of others.

D. Thanksgivings: *eucharistia*.

1. This word expresses gratitude for past Blessings. Gratitude and joy are emphasized, and examples may be, found in Matt. 15: 36; Philemon 4, et al.
2. Thanksgiving is a vital part of our present Christian life, and it shall continue in heaven (Rev. 4: 9; 7: 12).
3. Concerning these terms, it is not necessary that all three be included in every prayer, but at some time in each worship service all ought to be included.

## II. *The Subjects of Public Prayer.*

- A. All men. Saints, sinners; black, white; high, low.
1. We ought not to pray for ourselves only. Cf. Gal. 6: 10.
  2. We should pray for brethren. James 5: 16. Paul requested prayer (Eph. 6: 18f.; Col. 4: 2f. ).
  3. We should pray for those who are in darkness. Cf. Matt. 9: 38f.

4. We should remember the less fortunate: sick, poor, etc. Cf. Gal. 2: 10.
  5. We are taught to pray for our enemies. Matt. 5: 44. Timothy must remember that the men of 1: 4-11 are included in "all men. "
- B. Kings and all that are in high places.
1. The Christian's attitude toward civil authorities: Rom. 13: 1; Titus 3: 1.
  2. Two reasons are given for praying for civil authorities:
    - a. God wants us to lead a tranquil and quiet life. Cf. I Cor. 7: 15b.
    - b. God wants all men (even rulers) to be saved. Cf. II Pet. 3: 9.

### III. *The Leaders of Public Prayer.*

- A. The men of the congregation are to lead the public prayers (v. 8).
1. The word is *aner* (male) and not *anthropos* (the generic term, often used to include women).
  2. Christian women are also forbidden to teach in public worship (v. 12; cf. I Cor. 14: 34).
  3. Some have suggested that the admonition was necessary for two reasons:
    - a. Paul had taught that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3: 28).
    - b. Women had been prominent in serving Christ and the apostles.
- B. The men who lead the public prayers must meet three requirements.
1. Holy hands.
    - a. Their hands must not be polluted by blood, bribes, evil deeds.
    - b. Holiness is a requirement for acceptable

- prayer (I Pet. 3: 12; James 4: 8).
- c. Illustrate: The man who dances on Saturday night is unfit to lead the prayer on Sunday morning.
2. Without wrath.
    - a. The right feeling toward others is necessary for acceptable worship (Matt. 5: 21-24).
    - b. A prayer from an angry heart is the lowest kind. Cf. Judges 16: 28.
    - c. Wrath, malice and ill will must be left outside. Eph. 4: 31f.
  8. Without disputings.
    - a. The word refers to wrong thoughts of any kind. "Quarreling" RSV.
    - b. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of forgiveness. Matt. 6: 14f.

*Conclusion:*

1. There are practical differences between public and private prayers. Public prayers should be short, general, simple, loud enough to be heard and appropriate for the occasion. Private prayers might be longer and more personal. All prayers must be sincere (cf. Matt. 6: 5).
2. "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11: 1). May we come to a deeper appreciation of the beauty, blessings and power of prayer. May we improve our public prayers.

## REMEMBERING JESUS

I Cor. 11: 24

### *Introduction:*

1. Jesus was the greatest person who ever lived. Everything about Him was great: His person, work, influence, etc. More books written, songs sung and discourses given regarding Jesus than all other men combined.
2. To remember Jesus is the most important responsibility of life.
  - a. The tragedy of forgetting God is suggested in Jer. 18: 15; Hosea4: 6.
  - b. A continual consciousness of Jesus is necessary to successful Christian living; happiness and peace of mind are impossible without it.
3. In the past God impressed upon His people the importance of remembering Him.
  - a. At the crossing of Jordan the memorial stones erected. Josh. 4: 1-7.
  - b. The feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) reminded of God's goodness.
4. There are three things regarding Jesus we must always remember.

### *Discussion:*

#### *I. We Must Remember the Sacrifice of Jesus.*

- A. What was involved in the sacrifice of Jesus?
  1. A death. Remember that Jesus died outside Jerusalem 1930 years ago. The Lamb of God was slain, His blood was shed. John 19: 31-37.
  2. A death of suffering. Some deaths are easy, but not crucifixion. Describe briefly the excruciating pain of the nails, heat, thirst, etc.

3. A death of humiliation. The six trials were but mockery; scourging; crown of thorns and spit; between the robbers, etc. Acts 8: 33.
  4. A vicarious death. Isa. 53: 4f.; Rom. 5: 8.
- B. God has provided us with means of remembering this sacrifice.
1. The New Testament record of His death.
    - a. We are told that the angels desired to look into His sufferings (I Pet. 1: 11f.; cf. Eph. 3: 9f. ). What an honor for us to see and know!
    - b. Ninety-three verses in the four gospels describe the crucifixion.
  2. The plan of salvation. The symbolism of repentance and baptism is a reminder of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Rom. 6: 3f.
  3. Christian worship.
    - a. Songs. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, "  
"On A Hill Far Away. "
    - b. Lord's Supper. The bread and fruit of the vine. "By Christ redeemed, In Christ restored, We keep the memory adored, And show the death of our dear Lord, Until He come. "
- C. As we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, we are brought to a deeper sense of humility, gratitude and love.

EL *We Must Remember the Presence of Jesus.*

- A. Christians may be assured of the daily presence of Jesus.
  1. We have His promise. Matt. 28: 20; Heb. 13: 5; cf. Acts 17: 27.
  2. We believe His omnipresence. As God He can always be with us. Cf. I Pet. 3: 12.

3. We know by experience. Jesus has shown **His** nearness to us so many times.
- B. Christians must remember the power of Jesus' daily presence.
1. So often we do not realize and utilize the power of His presence. We remember His presence on Sunday but forget it on Monday.
  2. Think what we have accessible to us in the presence of Jesus:
    - a. All power. Matt. 28: 19; cf. Eph. 3: 20. Why fear with this power available?
    - b. All wisdom. Col. 2: 3; cf. James 1: 5. Why live in doubt?
    - c. All wealth. Phil. 4: 19. Why be anxious?
  8. A daily consciousness of His presence will make for holiness, confidence, happiness, etc.
- C. In view of these blessings, we should remember His presence:
1. In temptation (I Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 4: 15) and doubt (II Tim. 1: 12).
  2. In loneliness (Matt. 28: 20) and fear (Heb. 13: 5f. ).
  3. Paul's secret of successful living was the presence of Christ. He walked, talked and worked *with* Christ. Phil. 4: 13.
- III. *We Must Remember the Coming of Jesus.*
- A. The early Christians remembered vividly the promise of the second coming.
1. It was promised by: Jesus (John 14: 1-3); angels (Acts 1: 10f. ); apostles (Phil. 3: 20).
  2. Some misunderstood it but they remembered it. Cf. II Thess. 2: 1f.
  3. The fervor of the early church lay in part to

their belief in and hope for an early return of Jesus.

- B. We ought to remember that the second coming of Jesus is imminent.
  - 1. It was not imminent in the first century. II Thess. 2: 1-12.
  - 2. If the man of sin has been revealed, Christ can come and may come any day and any hour.
  - 3. Death is also imminent for everyone of us. Prov. 27: 1. A consciousness of this fact ought to help prepare us for the Lord's coming.
- C. We as Christians ought to anticipate the joy of the second coming of Jesus.
  - 1. It will be a time of resurrection. Phil. 3: 21; II Cor. 5: 1f.
  - 2. It will be a time of reward. II Tim. 4: 8.
  - 3. It will be a time of reunion with Christian friends. "Out on the hill of that wonderful country, Happy, contented and free, Loved ones are waiting and watching my coming: Heaven holds all to me. "

*Conclusion:*

- 1. Let us do our best to forget the unimportant things of life, and to remember Jesus' past sacrifice in behalf of us, His present nearness to us, and His future coming for us.
- 2. Remembering these truths will keep us close to Him and prepare us for life with Him.

## SEASONAL RELIGION

II Tim. 4: 2

### *Introduction:*

1. It is a wonderful compliment to be able to say of one, "You can count on him. " Dependability is necessary for success in any undertaking.
2. There is too often a tendency in every congregation to "let up" occasionally, perhaps in the summer or in the winter, when school is in session or out, but we must always remember that Christianity is not a seasonal religion.
3. The tragedy of the church is "seasonal members. " Spasmodic, undependable; cold today, hot tomorrow; here, today, gone tomorrow. In contrast to this kind, relate the example of the couple who could be counted on at every service to be in their pew, and if they were not there, something was wrong. Dependable!

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *An Analysis of the Text.*

- A. This passage (II Tim. 4: 1-8) is Paul's great and final charge to Timothy.
  1. He is a prisoner in Rome, and his death is imminent (vs. 6-8).
  2. The charge is verse 2 and the reason is verse 3f. Discuss briefly.
  - S. The admonition was to an evangelist, but the text is applicable to all.
- B. Christians must be "urgent" (ASV) or "instant" (KJV).
  1. The Greek word *ephistemi* means: to place at (disposal), to be ready, on hand. " Cf. the departure of v. 6, "is come" from the same word.



2. Christianity demands a spirit of readiness. Titus 3: 1; Rom. 1: 15; II Cor. 12: 15. When duty calls, the Christian must be on hand!

C. Christians must be urgent "in season, out of season."

1. This simply means "at all times": opportune and inopportune; convenient and inconvenient; easy and difficult; when you want to and when you do not.

2. There is no "off season" for the Christian. It is a seven-day-a-week, twenty-four-hour-a-day matter!

## II. *The Nature of Christianity Demands Faithfulness.*

A. Christianity is a *practice* and not a mere profession.

1. Christianity is not a mere intellectual philosophy nor emotional feeling, but a practical demonstration. James 1: 27; Matt. 7: 21.

2. Saving faith is a working faith (James 2: 14), and acceptable love is a laboring love (I John 5: 3; I Thess. 1: 3).

B. Christianity is a practice demanding *fervor*.

1. Indifference and slothfulness are everywhere condemned. Matt. 25: 26.

2. The Lord demands that we be hot in zeal. Rom. 12: 11; Rev. 3: 15f.

3. Every part of the Lord's work must be done with diligence and fervor — teaching, preaching, personal work, attending, singing, etc. Eccl. 9: 10.

C. Christianity is a practice demanding *constant* fervor.

1. "In season, out of season" means constancy. We can never quit! Luke 9: 62.

2. Ours is the religion of "always": I Cor. 15: 68; Col. 4: 6; Phil. 2: 12; 4: 4; I Pet. 3: 15.

### III. *Christianity Is Not A Seasonal Religion.*

- A. Christianity is not circumstantial in nature. It is not dependent upon:
  1. Place. We must be Christians wherever we are.
    - a. The Pharisee's religion depended on where he was — he practiced it on the street corner and in the chief seats. Matt. 6: 2, 5; Luke 14: 7.
    - b. The seasonal Christian is good at church, but not so good at home or on the job; a saint in the presence *of* the preacher, a reprobate when he leaves. It all depends upon the circumstances.
  2. Time. We must be Christians regardless of the day or hour.
    - a. The seasonal Christian is zealous except on vacation. Cf. Heb. 10: 25.
    - b. The seasonal Christian serves well at 11 a. m. but not at 10.
    - c. The seasonal Christian remembers Christ on Sunday but not on Wednesday.
  8. Weather. We must be Christians in spite of the weather. Many are constant in fair weather, quit when it rains. We are all for the Lord if it is not too hot and not too cold, not too wet and not too dry!
  4. Feelings. We must be Christians regardless of our feelings. The seasonal Christian works when he feels fine, shirks at a headache. He prays long and loud when he is sick, forgets to pray when he is well.

**B. Reasons for not being seasonal Christians.**

1. The real test of Christianity is in serving in spite of circumstances.
  - a. How much faith and love would be required if: one lived next door to the church house, the weather was always 65 degrees, he enjoyed excellent health and had nothing else to do? One ought to go even under such pleasant circumstances, but that would not test our devotion.
  - b. In serving Christ we must sacrifice: feelings, convenience, time, etc.
2. The uncertainty of the future should inspire to constant fervor.
  - a. Death is certain to come, and what if death should find me: on my job instead of at the Lord's house; sunning on the beach instead of worshipping with the saints? What if the end should be for me when it's raining or when I have a headache, and these have hindered me from doing my duty? Cf. Matt. 24: 44; I Thess. 5: 4-6.
  - b. I can be ready for my Lord only if I make my Christianity a seven-day, twenty-four-hour matter. If not, He may come when I am in duty or He may come when I am not!
3. Examples of seasonal Christians: John Mark (hindered by difficulties, Acts 13: 13); Demas (hindered by worldly attractions, II Tim. 4: 10); Galatians (hindered by heresies, Gal. 1: 6). Example of a constant Christian: Paul (faithful in prison, out of prison; when supported, not supported; with friends, without friends). Practiced what he preached!

*Conclusion:*

1. If the Lord should come this summer, this week, this day, would He find me at the post of duty?
2. Seasonal religion is a gambling religion—maybe in, maybe out! We cannot afford to take a chance. "Be thou faithful unto death" (Rev. 2: 10).

# SINGING IN WORSHIP

Col. 3: 16

## *Introduction:*

1. Christianity is *the* singing religion.
  - a. Singing is old. Cf. Lamech's "Song of the Sword" (Gen. 4: 23f); Moses and Miriam (Exod. 15: 1, 21), David (Psalm 95: 1f.; 96: 1-4).
  - b. In the Old Testament singing was mainly by priests and accompanied by instruments; in the New Testament every Christian, as a priest, is to sing and it is unaccompanied.
2. The power of singing is great.
  - a. Its power was seen in the Reformation. Luther's *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.
  - b. "Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who writes its laws. "
  - c. Singing can be a great influence, not only in public worship, but also at home, at work and at play.
3. There is a need for emphasizing singing in worship. Many (including some preachers) do not sing; others do not sing acceptably; we need to develop our appreciation of singing and the ability to sing.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *The Purpose of Singing in Worship.*
  - A. It is an act of praise to God.
    1. It is a means of expressing our happiness to God. Christians are a happy people (cf. Matt. 5: 3-12); we have so much for which to be happy. In songs we can express this happiness. James 5: 13.. "I'm happy with Jesus my Saviour and Friend. "
    2. It is a means of expressing our gratitude to

God. Singing and thanksgiving are inseparable (Eph. 5: 19f.; Col. 3: 16f. ) We should count our blessings and "praise God, from whom all blessings flow. " Cf. Heb. 13: 15.

3. It is a means of petitioning God. We need forgiveness, so we sing, "Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways. " We need grace and holiness, so we sing, "More holiness give me, More strivings within, More patience in suffering, More sorrow for sin. "
- B. It is an act that influences others.
1. It is a means of teaching a non-Christian in the audience. Cf. I Cor. 14: 15, 23-26. Sinners may be enlightened by song and persuaded to come to Jesus.
  2. It is a means of teaching and admonishing one another as brethren. Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16. Every part of the worship service should be directed toward the edification of the saints, and by meaningful singing from the heart, we should be made stronger and better able to live the Christian life.
  3. It is a means of promoting the unity of the church. Singing identifies us all with the Cause of Christ, and impresses upon us the fact that we are all of one heart and one soul. Illustrate: singing the national anthem together unites us as American citizens. True harmony in song means true harmony in the Cause.
- C. It is an act that affects the individual Christian.
1. It is a means of reminding us that there is a God. We can never forget God as long as we sing of Him and His existence, power, mercy, forgiveness, etc.

2. Singing for the Christian is a source of comfort, courage, trust, consecration, hope. A singing Christian is usually a consecrated Christian!
3. In affliction and sorrow we must remember that God "giveth songs in the night" (Job 35: 10). Illustrate: Paul and Silas in prison, (Acts 16: 25).

II. *The Content of Singing in Worship.* Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16.

A. Psalms.

1. Although the distinction between the three forms of praise in these passages is difficult to determine, there is no doubt that by *psalms* is meant an Old Testament psalm of David, Asaph or some other sweet, singer of Israel. Because the definite article is omitted, they may not be exclusively the Old Testament psalms but any composition of that type.
2. Concerning the psalms and instrumental music, in the New Testament the idea of accompaniment had passed from *psallo* (verb) and *psalmos* (noun), and the verb meant only *to sing* (unaccompanied). "The word (*psallein*) means *to touch*; then *to touch the cords* of a stringed instrument, i. e. to play upon it; then to sing or chant in harmony with such instrument; and then to sing or chant. This last is its New Testament meaning." *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Charles Hodge, I Cor. 14: 15.
3. Some of the Old Testament psalms which we sing are: Psalms 8, 19, 23, 90, 119, 121 and

## B. Hymns.

1. These were musical settings of either inspired or uninspired words of praise to God or Christ. Augustine listed three essentials of a hymn:
  - (a) It must be sung;
  - (b) It must be praise;
  - (c) It must be to God.
2. Examples of hymns.
  - a. Inspired hymns: Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1: 46-55); Benedictus of Zacharias (Luke 1: 68-79).
  - b. Uninspired hymns: "We Praise Thee, O God, " "Christ, We Do All Adore Thee, " "O God, Our Help in Ages Past. "
3. In the epistles of Paul there are probably fragments of hymns in such passages as Eph. 5: 14; I Tim. 3: 16; II Tim. 2: 11-13.

## C. Spiritual Songs.

1. This is a general term and would include all other poetical compositions appropriate for Christian worship not included in psalms and hymns.
2. The qualifying term "spiritual" does not suggest they were divinely inspired, but they were composed by spiritually-minded men and they were spiritual in content.
3. Examples of spiritual songs: "Blest Be the Tie, " "Come to Jesus, " etc.

III. *The Manner of Singing in Worship*

- A. We must sing the spirit. I Cor. 14: 15; John 4: 24.
  1. The "spirit" of the Corinthian passage is understood by some to be the Holy Spirit, by others the spiritual gift exercised, and by still others, the mind or heart as the seat of our thoughts, desires and intentions.



2. To sing with the spirit means that our singing must be spiritual: it must come from the heart; it must be fervent; it must be sincere.
- B. We must sing with the understanding. I Cor. 14: 15.
  1. The context suggests the necessity of singing so that others may understand. To sing in an unintelligible tongue would not edify those who heard.
  2. It is equally true that the singer must understand what he sings if he is to be edified.
    - a. We must study the words of our songs. Examples: Ebenezer; ebion pinion; walking the vale with Christ; etc.
    - b. We must understand and mean what we sing in songs of work, purity and love.
  3. To sing with the understanding implies study, endeavor and practice.
- C. We must sing with grace. Col. 3: 16.
  1. There are several different explanations of singing with grace: prompted by grace; with a conscious dependence upon divine grace; with gratitude or thanksgiving (RSV).
  2. Our conscious dependence upon God's grace prompts us to express our thanksgiving to Him in song.

*Conclusion:*

1. Singing in Christian worship is very important. We should remember that the New Testament begins and ends with songs of praise to God.
2. One of the greatest joys of heaven will be to join the chorus of the redeemed and sing around the throne of God forevermore.
3. Let each one of us strive to make our worship in song the very best.

# THEY TOOK KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS

Acts 4: 13

## *Introduction:*

1. Peter and John are on trial before the Sanhedrin. Briefly review the healing of the lame man, Peter's sermon and their arrest.
2. The scene presents a vivid contrast: the Sanhedrin in all of its dignity and authority sitting in a semi-circle, and before them are Peter and John, two unlearned and ignorant fishermen on trial for their lives.
3. The truth is that Peter and John had a knowledge superior to all of the wisdom of the Sanhedrin. Their teacher had been the Master Teacher and they are now endowed with the Holy Spirit.
4. We may learn from this scene that conviction and boldness are far more important than formal education. Cf. I Cor. 1: 27f.; Matt. 11: 25.

## *Discussion:*

### I. *Christianity Is Living With Jesus.*

A. Becoming a Christian means being united with Jesus.

1. Every responsible person is either with Him or against Him. Matt. 12: 30.
2. To be united with Him we must die with Him, be buried with Him and raised with Him. Rom. 6: 4; Col. 3: 1.
3. The Christian is in Christ and with Christ, and Christ is in him and with him.

B. Living the Christian life means living with Jesus.

1. The Christian must constantly be with Jesus in study and meditation.
  - a. What a wonderful blessing the disciples enjoyed in the physical presence of the Master! How often we think of what it must have been like to walk, talk and eat with Jesus! This is impossible for us, but we can live with Him through reading and studying. Cf. Psalm 1: 2.
  - b. By faith we can live with Him by reading the gospels and pondering His spirit, deeds, death, etc. "One blessed hour with Jesus our Lord. "
2. The Christian may be with Jesus in public and private worship.
  - a. Prayer is talking with Jesus. If we appreciate the presence of Jesus, the hour of prayer is sweet to us and we delight to meet Him in the beautiful garden of prayer. How often do we pray? Cf. I Thess. 5: 17.
  - b. Singing of Jesus brings us into fellowship with Him. Enjoy the presence of the Master by singing with the spirit and understanding such songs as, "We Saw Thee Not" and "O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee. "
3. The Christian may live with Jesus daily as he serves others. Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10: 38), and if we would walk with Him, we must go to the homes of the poor and lowly and minister to those in need.

The tragedy is too often we are not interested in being with Jesus.

1. Our time is consumed with others: family, politicians, athletes, actors and actresses, et al.

How much time do we spend each day with Jesus?

2. Many members of the church find little room and little time for the Lord. Cf. Rich Fool, Demas, Laodiceans. We must take time to be holy!

## II. *Christian Character is Developed Only by Living with Jesus.*

### A. Courage and conviction can best be learned from Jesus.

1. This was needed by early disciples then, and it is needed by Christians today. Cf. Eph, 6: 10, 19; I Pet. 4: 16.
2. Examples of Jesus' boldness: Matt: 23: 13ff; John 18: 5ff. He could not be scared!

### B. Purity of heart can be learned from the Master Teacher.

1. Purity is absolutely necessary. Matt. 5: 8A I Tim. 5: 22; Heb, 12: 14.
2. It is easy to sing, "Purer in Heart, " but if we really desire it, we will let Jesus teach us and then we will try to apply the lesson personally.
3. Jesus was perfect in purity and innocence — He thought, said, did no evil.

### C. Forgiveness is best learned in the school of Christ.

1. It is so necessary to Christian character, but often is sadly lacking even among professed Christians.
2. Examples of Jesus' spirit of forgiveness: Luke 9: 54f; Luke 23: 34.

### D. The spirit of sacrifice and unselfishness is exemplified in Jesus.

1. This virtue is indispensable. Rom. 12: 1; II Cor. 8: 2; 12: 15; Matt. 16: 24.

## THEY TOOK KNOWLEDGE

2. Jesus' life and death were evidences of unselfishness. II Cor. 8: 9; Phil. 2: 5-8.
  - E. Christians must add the graces and grow in grace and knowledge (II Pet. 3: 18), and this can best be done by living with Jesus.
- III. *The World Will See If We Have Been Living with Jesus.*
- A. Our associates are vitally important to us.
    1. Youth. If our children constantly associate with bad boys and girls, read bad comic books and watch bad television shows, they cannot help being bad. And the same is true of the good. Our hearts and lives are molded by our association.
    2. Adults. The same is true of older people. "Bad company ruins good morals." I Cor. 15: 33 RSV. Cf. Psalm 1: 1f.
  - B. The world does take knowledge of Christians.
    1. Others are continually watching our attitude, language and conduct. We are a watched people, sometimes kindly, sometimes unkindly, but always keenly. Cf. Matt. 5: 16.
    2. The influence of our lives is great either for good or bad. We are either bringing others to Christ or leading them from Him. We are either living with Jesus or living away from Him.
    - S. Professing to be with Jesus is not enough; this is hypocrisy. We must actually live with Him from day to day.

### *Conclusion:*

1. Every Christian has the responsibility of living in

such a way that others may see Christ in him. Cf. Gal. 2: 20; Col. 3: 3.

2. Our influence for good is in direct proportion to the amount of time we spend with Jesus. If we want to live with Jesus in heaven, we must live with Him here on earth.

# WHAT DO I OWE THE CHURCH?

Rom. 1: 14

## *Introduction:*

1. The appropriateness of the question. Do we owe the church anything? We are indebted to the Lord, but we must pay our debt through His church. Our love and service to Christ is our love and service to the church.
2. Becoming a Christian and a member of a local congregation puts one in debt. We sing, "Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe. " This debt is not incompatible with salvation by grace nor freedom in Christ, but it is a debt of gratitude.
3. As Christians, how do we pay our debts? What kind of credit rating with God do we have?

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Reason For Our Indebtedness To the Church.*

#### *A. Universal Church.*

1. As a Christian rich blessings are bestowed in the church. Eph. 1: 3; cf. Eph. 4: 8.
2. These blessings are: forgiveness, peace, prayer, fellowship, Holy Spirit, hope, etc.. Cf. James 1: 17; Matt. 7: 11.
3. We must be grateful and show our gratitude. Illustrate: Ten Lepers.

#### *B. Local Church. The benefits of membership in a local church are many:*

1. Esteem of right-thinking people. Although this is but a result and not a reason, it is usually true that church membership is more of an asset than a liability.

2. Association with the best people on earth. Fellowship in a Christian community makes for real happiness. Cf. the tragedy of the disfellowshipped.
3. Comforts of worship. To be able to worship in a clean building that is warm in winter and cool in summer, and to sit in a comfortable pew, is a blessing that some members take for granted. These may not be necessary for acceptable worship, but they are conducive to it.
4. Sense of security. As a member of a local church I know that I have brethren upon whom I may call in times of sickness, sorrow or even financial distress, and I know they will be glad to help me. In these and a thousand other ways we are indebted to the Lord and His church!

## II. *What Is Our Indebtedness To the Church?*

### A. The debt of Commendation.

1. We must appreciate, esteem and commend the local church of which we are members. Talk it up and not down! See what's right and not always what's wrong. Be sold on the church and be happy as members.
2. There is no room in the congregation for a chronic complainer. If we can't work in the church, work out of it. This is true of any group: civic organization, job, etc. This does not mean we cannot make suggestions and offer constructive criticism, but let us not commit the sin of murmuring. I Cor. 10: 10.
3. The example of Paul.
  - a. He thanked God for the Corinthians. I Cor.



- b. He expressed his confidence in the Philip-  
pians. Phil. 1: 6f.
  - c. He was anxious to tell others of the Thessa-  
lonians. I Thess. 1: 8.
- B. The debt of Consecration.
- 1. We are obligated to live to bring honor to the  
church. Rom. 8: 12f.
  - 2. Christian influence is so important. We are:  
light of world (Matt. 5: 14), leaven for good  
or bad (I Cor. 5: 6), shadows of blessing, or  
curse (cf. Acts 5: 15).
  - 3. The world is watching our: recreation, business  
dealings, speech, etc.
- C. The debt of Cooperation.
- 1. Membership demands willingness to work.
    - a. The work of the church is the greatest work  
for it has to do with: more people, most  
valuable possession (soul), greatest message.
    - b. Each member is obligated to do his part.  
Illustrate: Body; Army.
  - 2. Membership demands regular attendance.
    - a. Five or six hours out of 168 per week is  
reasonable. Cf. television.
    - b. Minimum attendance reflects minimum  
interest in Lord's cause. We owe it to the  
church to support its public services.
  - 3. Membership demands generous financial sup-  
port.
    - a. Our love for Lord and His church is in pro-  
portion to willingness to sacrifice.
    - b. Scriptures: I Cor. 16: If; II Cor. 8: 1-5;  
9: 6f.

### III. *Are We Willing To Pay Our Debt to the Church?*

- A. Possible attitudes toward our obligations.

1. Can't pay, let others pay it for me, pay some but not all, won't pay, pay it promptly and gladly.
  2. What kind of credit rating do we have with the Lord? Illustrate: Dun & Bradstreet and Retail Credit Men's Association have their Blue Books where our credit rating is kept. God has His book and He knows our attitude toward our debts to Him and His church.
- B. Characteristics of those who are prompt in payment.
1. Appreciation. Do we really appreciate Christ, salvation, heaven?
  2. Honesty. To accept without paying debt of gratitude is dishonest.
  3. Love. I pay in proportion to my love. I John 3: 18; II Cor. 8: 8.

*Conclusion:*

- A. To pay our debt to the Lord and His church means happiness here and heaven hereafter.
2. May the Lord help us to realize the enormity of our debt and may we devote our lives in appreciative service to His church.

# WEARING THE NAME CHRISTIAN

I Pet. 4: 16

## *Introduction:*

1. The name "Christian" is found three times in the New Testament: Acts 11: 26; 26: 28; I Pet. 4: 16.
2. The denominational world wears the name, but contrary to the prayer of Christ (John 17: 20f. ), the plea of Paul (I Cor. 1: 10) and the plan of Paul (Eph. 4: 4-6).
3. This lesson is directed to undenominational Christians — the church of Christ.
  - a. We know that "Christian" is the right and only name, but many do not realize the full significance of wearing it. All of us wear it, but some not well.
  - b. A Christian is more than a baptized person, church member, weekly worshipper. There are many of these, but fewer Christians!

## *Discussion:*

- I. *What Wearing the Name Christian Means.*
  - A. The *honor* of wearing the name Christian.
    1. There is honor or dishonor attached to names.
      - a. Dishonor: Gentile, Samaritan, Nazarene, etc.
      - b. Honor: Husband, American, Texan or Tennessean, etc.
    2. The name *Christian* is the greatest and most distinguished name of all.
      - a. Cf. Isa. 56: 5; 62: 2. "Precious name, O how sweet... "
      - b. Early Christians were proud to wear it. I Pet. 4: 16; cf. Acts 5: 41.
      - c. We wear the name, not of an ordinance, man nor angel, but the name of God's Son. We can glory in this name. Cf. Gal. 6: 14.

- B. The *reward* of wearing the name Christian.
1. The blessings of a benevolent Father belong to the Christian.
    - a. The material blessings of life. Matt. 6: 33; 7: 11; James 1: 17.
    - b. The more valuable spiritual blessings are especially the Christian's. Eph. 1: 3. Forgiveness, Holy Spirit, prayer, etc.
  2. The promise of heaven is given to Christians only.
    - a. Not to unbelievers (John 8: 24); not to disobedient (II Thess. 1: 8).
    - b. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people (John 14: 3), and only Christians are making the preparation for heaven.
- C. The *responsibility* of wearing the name Christian.
1. Wearing a name of honor and blessing brings with it responsibility. Illustrate: Wearing the name "American" involves the duty of believing in the constitution, practicing democracy, being patriotic, displaying good citizenship, etc.
  2. Wearing the name *Christian* means assuming the responsibility: as a disciple, to learn; as a follower, to imitate; as a child of God, to obey; as a servant, to be loyal.
  3. The Christian life is a life of duty. Eccl. 12: 13; Luke 17: 10.

## II. *The Difference Between Being a Christian and Merely Wearing the Name.*

- A. The Bible speaks of different kinds of Christians, and between the following extremes there are various degrees and shades.
1. Strong and weak. Rom. 15: 1.
  2. Spiritual and carnal. I Cor. 3: 1.

3. Hot and cold. Rev. 3: 15f.
  4. Stable and unstable. Eph. 4: 14-16.
  5. Center and peripheral. Cf. Matt. 26: 58.
- B. Truths regarding these different Christians: the first kind wears the name Christian well, the second, ill; the first is a glory to the Cause, the second, a reproach; the first are truly converted, the second, half- or unconverted; the first are going to heaven, the second, are going to hell.
- C. How can I determine if I am a Christian or merely wearing the name?
1. Did I become a Christian from conviction or convenience? If for family, prestige, etc., I am merely wearing the name.
  2. Am I separated from the world in my recreation, language, literature, etc? If I drink, dance, curse, gamble, etc., I am just wearing the name.
  3. Am I really devoted to the church? Does it come first or second? (Matt. 6: 33). Do I love the brethren or have no time for them? (John 13: 34). Do I attend the maximum or the minimum number of services? Do I give liberally or miserly? If I am in the first group, I am a Christian; if not, I only wear the name.
  3. Do I appreciate strong preaching or am I offended when truth and error are kindly but plainly differentiated? Cf. Gal. 4: 16; John 6: 66.
  3. Am I growing in the Christian graces (II Pet. 1: 5ff. ) and in knowledge (II Pet. 3: 18), or am I unconcerned about Christian development?
  6. Am I trying to save the lost according to my opportunities and ability, or do I care about telling others of Christ? I cannot be a real Christian unless I am a soul-winner.

III. *Three Facts Regarding the Wearing of the Name Christian.*

- A. We wear it voluntarily. Christ did not compel me to take it and wear it. Therefore, we ought to serve Him gladly and willingly. II Cor. 12: 15.
- B. We wear it incessantly. Wherever we go or whatever we do, we wear the name Christian. We cannot take it off and put it on again. Christianity is a daily and hourly matter. Luke 9: 23; Matt. 24: 44.
- C. We ought to wear it intelligently. We should wear the name Christian ever mindful of our influence on others (Matt. 5: 13-16), and cognizant of the fact of the final judgment (II Cor. 5: 10).

*Conclusion:*

1. Are we Christians or merely wearing the name?
2. Not all who wear the name will go to heaven, but only those who try to live up to the name.
3. Let us ask ourselves, "Wherein may *I* be a better Christian?"

# YE DID IT NOT

Matt. 25: 45

## *Introduction:*

1. Matthew twenty-five contains three parables of preparation: Virgins, Talents, Judgment. These were spoken on Tuesday before His death on Friday.
2. The Bible has much to say regarding the future judgment: its certainty, unity. Cf. II Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 20: 12; Eccl. 12: 14.
3. The words of our Lord to those on the left hand are among the saddest words that can be uttered: depart, cursed, eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. The question is, Why?

## *Discussion:*

### I. *The Reason For the Condemnation.*

A. Some things that were *not* the reason for their condemnation.

1. It was not a refusal to obey the gospel. The gospel must be obeyed (Rom. 6: 17f.; Heb. 5: 8f.; Mark 16: 16; Acts 2: 38), and those who do not obey it will be lost eternally (II Thess. 1: 7-9).
2. It was not the commission of positive sins. Those guilty of overt acts of immorality will be condemned. Gal. 5: 19-21; Rev. 21: 8.
3. It was not a failure to profess Christianity. It is possible to say, to sing and to defend God's will and be lost. Matt. 7: 21-23; Luke 6: 46.

B. The reason for their eternal condemnation Was a failure to do.

1. In the context they were guilty of not doing works of benevolence. In six ways (food, drink,

clothing, medicine, taking strangers in and visiting prisoners) they had refused to help the less fortunate.

2. The principle may be applied to any good work (James 4: 17): sharing with others, teaching the truth, supporting the gospel, speaking a kind word, etc.
3. The nature of these things that they refused to do.
  - a. They were possible. Everyone has some of these necessities of life. God does not require the impossible of us.
  - b. They were small. Not one's whole living (cf. widow, Luke 21: 4), but a small morsel of bread or cup of water (Matt. 10: 42).
  - c. They would have been so helpful. "Have you lifted a stone from your brother's way?"

C. The Lord's estimate of those who failed to do and to prepare. He called the virgins foolish (25: 8); the one-talent man wicked and slothful (25: 26); these are unfit for heaven (25: 41).

## II. *The Reason For Our Failure To Do What We Can.*

- A. Sometimes we do not know of the needs of others.
  1. We have no responsibility if we have no opportunity to help. Gal. 6: 10.
  2. The Philippians lacked opportunity to get their assistance to Paul. Phil. 4: 10.
  3. However, we must look for opportunities (John 4: 35) and seize them when we find them (Col. 4: 5). It is right to look for opportunities to preach the gospel, and it is right to look for opportunities to assist in a material way the less fortunate.



- B. Often we rationalize by saying, "We can't do everything. "
1. It is true that no individual nor congregation can do it all. The Lord recognizes this, for He compares the church to a body with many members. (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12).
  2. But we need to look deep within ourselves and ask, "Am I doing my share? what I can?" Are we using our time, talents and money to the fullest?
  3. Though we cannot do everything, we must remember that doing one thing does not excuse us from all others. Illustration: adding the graces.
- C. The fear of doing the wrong thing makes some hesitant to do anything.
1. There can be a legitimate fear of doing the wrong thing. Illustration: the problem of encouraging the indolent in assisting a family.
  2. Most of the time, though, it is only Pharisaism; no real desire to help.
    - a. The Pharisees' excuse was fear of violating the law (cf. John 9: 16). but they were selfish (Matt. 23: 4).
    - b. When I fail to give the blind beggar a dime, is it really because I think he will buy whiskey with it or because I am selfish and stingy?
- D. The main reason for not doing is unconcern and selfishness. Too many do not care like the man of James 2: 15f.; too many look the other way like the priest and Levite (Luke 10: 31f. ).

### III. *The Reason We Must Do What We Can.*

#### A. The Teaching of Christ.

1. He taught: to say and do not is hypocrisy. Matt. 23: 3.

2. He taught: the wise man is he who hears and *does*. *Matt. 7: 24-27*.
3. He taught: His true kindred are those who do. *Matt. 12: 49f*.
4. He taught: failure to prepare by doing means condemnation. *Matt. 25*.

B. The Example of Christ.

1. He went about doing good (*Acts 10: 38*). He fed the multitudes; healed the sick; had compassion on a prisoner (thief on cross).
2. He was touched with the feeling of others' infirmities (*Heb. 4: 15*). He had compassion on: the blind men; lepers; widow of Nain; et al.
3. He was called the friend of publicans and sinners, and indeed He was.

C. The Identification with Christ.

1. Sharing with others is sharing with Christ. "Ye did it unto me" (v. 40).
2. What we do with or for others is what we do with or for Christ. Cf. *Acts 9: 4*; *Heb. 13: 2*.

*Conclusion:*

1. Doing and not doing contrasted: serving Christ, serving self; pure religion (*James 1: 27*), vain religion; come ye blessed, depart ye cursed.
2. Let us remember that the sin of omission will damn us eternally as quickly as the sin of commission. May God give us a greater portion of His spirit of sacrifice and service.

# YE DID RUN WELL

Gal. 5: 7

## *Introductions*

1. It is a joy and a thrill to see good athletes run well. Illustrate: Bobby Morrow vs. Dave Sime at Odessa, Texas.
2. Yet the words of the text are among the saddest Paul ever penned. Why? The Galatian Christians had started the race well, but they had not continued. They were returning to Judaism. This meant Paul's labor among them was in vain (4: 11); it meant the greatest grief (cf. Ill John 4).
3. How sad it is for a preacher to return to a place for a meeting where he had been before, and when he begins to inquire concerning this brother or that sister the reply comes, "That person has quit the church and returned to the world. " At one time they did run well, but not now!

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Importance of Running Well.*

#### A. This is the language of the Olympian games.

1. Paul was familiar with these games because he frequently used the figure. Cf. I Cor. 9: 24; Phil. 3: 13; II Tim. 4: 8; Heb. 12: 1.
2. Points of analogy between the race and the Christian life:
  - a. Only qualified Greeks could run. The Lord's qualifications for a Christian are: Faith, Repentance, Confession and Baptism.
  - b. Necessity of persevering. Rev. 2: 7, 10.
  - c. The reward at the end of the race. Matt. 25: 46; II Tim. 4: 8.

- B. The Lord demands only a race well run.
  - 1. Jesus' example of doing all things well.
    - a. He answered the Sadducees well. Mark. 12: 28.
    - b. He performed His miracles well. Mark 7: 37.
  - 2. The Lord does not demand of us a perfect race nor an outstanding race, but only a race well run. He does not expect more of us than we can do.
- C. The beginning is important, the continuance more important, and the finish most important.
  - 1. The Galatians had started well (cf. 4: 14, 15), but did not continue.
  - 2. The difference between *did run* (past tense) and *have run* (perfect tense) is heaven. Cf. II Tim. 4: 8.
  - 3. Better never to begin than to begin and quit. II Pet. 2: 20, 21.

## II. *The Hindrances to Running Well.*

- A. The Certainty of hindrances.
  - 1. These are not the Lord's chastening. Heb. 12: 6; Gen. 22: 1.
  - 2. These are the work of Satan through the agency of false teachers. Cf. I Thess. 2: 18; Luke 11: 52.
  - 3. The work of Satan is to hinder our obedience to the truth. He hinders the sinner from becoming a Christian, and he hinders the Christian as he tries to live a faithful, consecrated life.
- B. The Nature of hindrances.
  - 1. The picture of something easier.
    - a. Judaism the popular religion; Christianity **the** persecuted religion. Gal. 6: 12.
    - b. Satan has always said that God's way is too hard. Cf. Israel in wilderness wanderings.

- c. It is easier to: forsake worship; keep money; be self-centered. Cf. Good Samaritan.
  - 2. Ill-feelings and jealousy among themselves. Cf. vs. 15, 26. The Lord's work in many places hindered and stopped by dislike, hatred, etc.
  - 3. Works of the flesh. Vs. 19-21. It is impossible to engage in these and run much of a race. There must be a choice between the world and Jesus. Rom. 12: 2; I John 2: 15.
- C. The Overcoming of hindrances.
- 1. It is possible and necessary to overcome. Rom. 12: 21; Rev. 2: 7; 3: 5.
  - 2. The manner of overcoming. It requires: faith (I John 5: 4), desire (cf. Alcoholics Anonymous), will (James 1: 21), vision (Heb. 12: 1f).

### III. *The Meaning of Running Well.*

- A. To run well is to continue obeying the truth.
- 1. We became Christians by obeying the truth of the gospel. Rom. 6: 16-18.
  - 2. The Christian life is a life of continual obedience. Matt. 28: 19f.; II Cor. 5: 7; Heb. 5: 8f.; John 15: 4-6.
- B. The work of Satan is to slow us down in our obedience.
- 1. In attendance he says, "Once a week is enough." Cf. Heb. 10: 25.
  - 2. In giving he says, "A dollar is plenty." Cf. II Cor. 9: 6.
  - 3. In purity he says, "Don't be a kill-joy." Cf. I John 2: 15.
- C. Heaven is dependent upon faithful obedience unto the end.
- 1. Many church members profess to believe the truth, fewer really obey it.

2. Each should examine himself regarding **his** obedience to the truth.

*Conclusion:*

1. For the Christian who has entered the race, it is folly to look back and turn back. Luke 9: 62.
2. We will be judged at the last day on the basis of how hard we tried to run a good race and to overcome the hindrances of Satan.
3. Christ will help us to run the race well if we want to go to heaven. Phil. 4: 13. "Christ will me his aid afford. "
4. Will we hear Christ say at the judgment: "You *did* run well, but you quit. Depart from me"?

# WHAT DOTH HINDER ME TO BE BAPTIZED?

Acts 8: 36

## *Introduction:*

1. The picture of the Ethiopian Eunuch is the picture of a man desiring baptism. He was asking, "Why *can't* I be baptized?" while many today ask, "Why *must* or why *should* I be baptized?"
2. Why should one not be hindered from being baptized?
  - a. Baptism is the counsel (Greek: *boule*, will) of God. Luke 7: 30.
  - b. Baptism is a command of Christ. Mark 16: 16.
  - c. Baptism is a condition of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2: 38.
3. The work of Satan is to hinder any good work (I Thess. 2: 18; cf. Matt. 13: 19), but to let anyone or anything hinder us from submitting to God's will and Christ's command means certain condemnation.

## *Discussion:*

### I. *Uncertainty Regarding Age Hinders Baptism.*

- A. The question of whether or not a child is old enough to be baptized is a frequent one.
  1. It is a question that disturbs both the child and his parents.
  2. It is a question that is difficult to answer because:
    - a. No example of the conversion of a child in the New Testament.
    - b. No definite age is given nor can be given because of the differences in children.
  3. It is a question that involves dangers on either hand.

- a. There is danger in encouraging (overpersuading). Illustrate: Some preachers appeal too much to emotions to get children to respond.
  - b. There is greater danger in discouraging. Illustrate: A mother dissuaded her twelve year old son, four years later he died without being baptized, and the mother went to a premature grave shortly afterward. She literally grieved herself to death!
- B. The answer to the question lies with the individual child in each case.
1. Basically, it depends upon his knowledge of the plan of salvation and his need of salvation. The difficulties here are; he may recite faith, repentance, confession and baptism, and not understand what they mean; and he may think he needs remission when actually he may be incapable of sin.
  2. His knowledge of the plan and need of salvation will depend upon his training in the home, his mental capabilities and his personality.
  3. Some scriptures for children: Eph. 6: 1; Mark 10: 20; II Tim. 3: 15; Eccl. 12: 1-

## II. *Lack of Understanding Hinders Baptism.*

- A. A failure to understand what baptism is deters many from being baptized.
  1. Understanding is necessary to obedience. Acts 8: 30; cf. John 6: 44f.
    - a. One must know Christ—who He is and what He did. cf. vs. 34f.
    - b. One must know the gospel—its facts, commands and promises.
    - c. The eunuch learned of baptism from Philip's



sermon on "Jesus. " Cf. Acts 8: 5, 12. To preach Jesus is to preach the baptism of Jesus.

2. What is the baptism that Christ commanded?
  - a. Immersion, not sprinkling nor pouring. Col. 2: 12; Rom. 6: 4.
  - b. In water, not Holy Spirit nor fire. Acts 8: 38; I Pet. 3: 20f.
  - c. Of penitent believer, not baby. One who can believe and repent.
- B. A failure to understand the need of baptism hinders many from obeying.
  1. Satan says, "There is no need to be baptized; it is unimportant, nonessential; it is only a figure. "
  2. The need of being baptized is plainly taught in the Word of God:
    - a. For the remission of sins. Acts 2: 38; 22: 16.
    - b. Puts one into relationship with Christ. Gal. 3: 26f.
    - c. Saves. I Pet. 3: 21; Titus 3: 5.
  3. Baptism is a positive divine command of God, obedience to which reveals one's faith, trust and submission to the will of God. Cf. Abram's offering Isaac; the brazen serpent.

### III. *Prejudice and Sentiment Hinder Baptism.*

- A. Prejudice has always been a device of Satan to hinder obedience to God.
  1. Definition: preconceived opinions and unwillingness to see. Matt. 13: 15.
  2. Illustrations: "I'll die and go to hell before I'll be baptized; " "Water is your god and baptism is your saviour; " etc.
  3. Reason: the prejudiced person thinks more of his denomination, his creed, his preacher, than

- he does the word of God. His heart is not good.
- B. Sentiment is a great factor that prevents people from being baptized.
1. Being baptized into Christ inevitably means a change of fellowship, and often a loss of friendship, and these mean more to some than salvation.
  2. Many times one's loved ones are offended. Illustrate: The man who would not be baptized on account of his aged mother. Cf. Luke 12: 51; 14: 26.
  3. Love for family is good, but love for God must come first. Cf. Acts 5: 29.

#### IV. *Indifference and. Procrastination Hinder Baptism.*

- A. The love of the world and its pleasures keeps many from accepting Christ.
1. There are many who know that baptism means a death to sin. Rom. 6: 3f.
  2. Yet they are unwilling to die to the world and its pleasures. Cf. Rom. 8: 7; Matt. 6: 24.
- B. Procrastination is a great hindrance to being baptized.
1. There are many who are convinced of the truth regarding baptism, and of their need to be baptized, but they "haven't got around to it. "
  2. Satan says, "There is plenty of time — don't hurry. " Cf. Felix and Agrippa.
  3. The result is: good intentions, death, damnation.

#### *Conclusion:*

1. The Word of God offers no hope for sinners who are never baptized. Mark 16: 16; II Thess. 1: 7-9.
2. What will you do with Jesus and His command to be baptized? Will you by faith accept Him and be baptized into Him, or continue to reject Him?

# BLESSED IS HE WHOSE SIN IS COVERED

Psalm 32: 1

## *Introduction:*

1. This psalm is called "The Psalm of a Man Made New. " It is one of the seven penitential psalms of David written after his sin with Bathsheba, the visit of Nathan, and his repentance and forgiveness. Relate the story.
2. The word "cover" is used in different senses in the Bible.
  - a. To cover with protection. Isa. 51: 16. Song, "He hideth my soul... "
  - b. To cover with destruction. Ezek. 26: 19.
  - c. To cover with forgiveness, to bury our sins. Text.
3. There are other figures used for the forgiveness of sins: borne away (Isa. 53: 4); blotted out (Acts 3: 19); washed away (Acts 22: 16); healed (Psalm 6: 2).

## *Discussion:*

- I. *Why Does Sin Need to be Covered?*
  - A. The nature of sin. What is it?
    1. Transgression. I John 3: 4.
    2. Unrighteousness. I John 5: 17.
    3. Omission. James 4: 17.
  - B. The heinousness of sin. God regards sin as:
    1. A dirty garment. Rev. 3: 4; Col. 3: 9.
    2. Corruption. As of a dead body, Matt. 23: 27; as of a diseased body, Isa. 1: 6.
    3. Filth and vomit. II Pet. 2: 22.
  - C. The curse of sin.
    1. It separates (Isa. 59: 1, 2) and alienates (Col. 1: 21) from God.
    2. It results in misery and suffering. Illustration:

Three consequences of David's sin (II Sam. 12: 10-14).

3. Its end is eternal punishment. Rom. 6: 23; James 1: 13-15.

Sin is the curse of man, the grief of heaven and the delight of hell! Therefore, sin must be covered.

## II. *How Is Sin Covered?*

A. There are some things that man thinks will cover sin, but they will not.

1. Denial of sin. If one should deny his sins all the days of his life, that would not cover his sins. Cf. Rom. 3: 23; I John 1: 8-10.
2. Concealment of sin.
  - a. It is difficult to conceal from man, impossible from God. Adam and Eve; Achan. Heb. 4: 13.
  - b. David, seemingly, tried to conceal his sin for a while, but only with misery and agony. Psalm 32: 3. Cf. Prov. 28: 13 and explain the "covering. " This is man's covering and not God's.
3. Refusal to think about the sin.
  - a. Some say, "I will forget about it today and think about it tomorrow. "
  - b. David tried this, but it was impossible for him. Psalm 51: 3.
  - c. It may be possible that time may cause you and others to forget sin, but with God "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3: 8). God remembers the sins of youth that have never been covered as vividly as the sins of a moment ago. Time does not heal all things

because times does not cover sin!

4. Distance.

- a. Others try to run away from their sins. Illustration: The man who deserted his wife and children in a southern town, and fled to the west coast and married again. In time, those who had known him back home found him living in sin. He could not run from the brethren, much less from God.
- b. Jonah tried to flee from God, not understanding the omnipresence of God as so beautifully expressed in Psalm 139: 7-12.

5. Good Deeds.

- a. "I will quit sin and start doing good. " A fine resolution, but that will not cover past sins.
- b. David thought of this. Psalm 51: 16. The words of the song are true, "Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone, Thou must save and Thou alone. "

B. God alone can cover sins and only on His terms.

1. David's forgiveness. He lived under the law of Moses, and his sins were covered when he repented, confessed, prayed and offered his sacrifice.
2. The alien sinner's forgiveness today. The blood of Christ covers his sins when he meets the terms God has laid down in the new covenant of Christ. These are: faith (Acts 15: 9), repentance (Acts 3: 19), confession (Rom. 10: 10), and baptism (Acts 22: 16).
3. The erring child of God's forgiveness today. The blood of Christ covers his sins when he: repents, confesses his sin and prays for pardon

(Acts 8: 22; James 5: 16; I John 1: 9). God will cover every sin, regardless of what it is, if these conditions are met. Cf. Isa. 1: 18.

### III. *What Is the Result of Sin Covered?*

A. "Blessed" is he whose sin is covered.

1. The primary meaning of the word in both the Hebrew and Greek is *happiness*. Happiness in the true sense because one is approved of God.
2. Cf. Psalm 1: 1; the Beatitudes; Rev. 14: 13.

B. The greatness of this blessedness illustrated.

1. It is the happiness of Deliverance. Illustrate the deliverance from an enemy concentration camp during the war. Deliverance from sin brings a greater happiness.
2. *It is the happiness of a Gift*. A million dollar gift would make me happy, but the gift of forgiveness and salvation brings true joy.
3. It is the happiness of Adoption. What joy there is in the heart of a poor orphan adopted by a loving couple, but the sinner is adopted by God.
4. It is the happiness of a Cure. There is joy when one is rescued from suffering and death through a cure. God can cure us of the malady of sin.
5. It is the happiness of a Reunion. As sins are covered, the sinner is reunited to the best friend he ever had, and this is joy unspeakable.

C. Examples of happiness when sin is covered: Prodigal Son, Samaritans, Eunuch. The greatest joy one can experience is in being saved from sin. Psalm 51: 12; I Pet. 1: 8.

#### *Conclusion:*

1. Sin is the cause of the greatest misery; forgiveness, of the greatest happiness.

2. One whose sins are covered is happy in life and death, with others and alone; he can truly "rejoice evermore. "
3. Come now in obedience to Christ and this blessedness can be yours.

# THE BORDERLAND OF THE KINGDOM

## Mark 12: 28-34

### *Introduction:*

1. The setting of the incident.
  - a. This event happened on the Tuesday before Jesus' death on Friday. The day has been called "the day of controversy. " Everything in Matt. 21: 18-26: 16 occurred on this Tuesday.
  - b. According to Matthew's account the purpose of the scribe's question was to try Jesus. After the deceitful questions of the tribute to Caesar and the resurrection, this scribe asked his question. Yet, even though he came with an ulterior motive, he left with a great compliment from the Lord.
2. Our lesson concerns the statement, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. " The statement must mean that the scribe was almost fit to be a disciple of Jesus. As far as the kingdom, which was then in its preparatory state, was concerned, this man was near it; he was in the "fringe area; " he was in the borderland.
3. What was true of this scribe is true of many people today. What are the lessons of the borderland of the kingdom?

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *The Fact of the Borderland.*

- A. There are degrees of moral and spiritual distance from the kingdom.
  1. "Not far" implies degrees: far, farther, farthest. Sin separates from **God (Isa. 59: 1, 2)**, and the **more** one sins, **the farther he is** removed from **God. This man was closer to God and His kingdom than others.**



2. The scriptures suggest degrees of distance from God. Jer. 2: 5; Matt. 15: 8.
  3. Our songs teach the same thought. "I've wandered far away from God, Now I'm coming home. " "Why from the sunshine of love wilt thou roam, Farther and farther away?"
- B. The borderland residents are better than the hinterland residents.
1. Man recognizes the difference between those far and near.
    - a. We prefer as a neighbor a moral non-Christian to a drunkard, though neither is in the kingdom of Christ.
    - b. We distinguish between active rebellion and passive ignorance, and rightly so.
  2. God also recognizes the difference between those far and near.
    - a. Without going into the difficult matter of degrees of reward and punishment, Jesus did say that some deserve few stripes. Luke 12: 47f.
    - b. The text suggests that an accountable child with one sin is not as far from God as the reprobate who cannot think a good thought. Both have sinned, but God knows there is a difference.
  8. There were others who were not far from the kingdom.
    - a. The Rich Young Ruler. Mark 10: 21, "One thing thou lackest. "
    - b. Joseph and Nicodemus. John 19: 38f. These were secret disciples who withheld their influence from Jesus.
    - c. Agrippa was brought to the borderland. "Almost thou persuadest me... "

## II. *The Meaning of the Borderland,*

- A. It meant that this man was different from others of Jesus' day.
  - 1. Different from the Pharisees with their formality, inconsistencies and hypocrisies. Cf. Matt. 23.
  - 2. Different from the average Sadducee with his arrogance, skepticism and liberalism. Cf. Matt. 22: 23ff.
  - 3. Different from the publicans with their extortion, sinners with their vices, and the multitude with their indifference.
- B. It meant that this man had certain admirable characteristics.
  - 1. He had a good knowledge of God's Word. All scribes, who were copyists of the law, knew what the law said. Knowledge is the first step in coming to the kingdom. John 6: 44f., Matt. 11: 29.
  - 2. He had a discerning mind which gave him a keen insight into the meaning of God's word. He could distinguish between first things and second things, between real love for God and mere ceremony. Cf. I Sam. 15: 22; Matt. 9: 13.
  - 3. He had the courage to confess the truth. Some of the rulers recognized the truth, but would not confess it. John 12: 42.
- C. There are many in the Borderland of the kingdom today.
  - 1. How near are some people to the kingdom?
    - a. They have good habits and disposition. If they would come all the way, it would not be a matter so much of their *giving up* bad things, but *giving in*.

- b. They have a good knowledge of the scriptures. Often better than the member of the church!
  - c. They give assent to the truth of the Bible. Some will argue and defend basic truths regarding salvation, the church, etc.
  - d. They often have noble resolutions. "I intend one day to become a Christian. "
2. These are good but not good enough; close, but not near enough.
    - a. Only one thing often separates this kind from the kingdom. It may be an attachment to a parent, an opinion of a friend or a love of money.
    - b. But even if it is only one thing that keeps one from giving his whole heart to God, he is not in the kingdom but only in the borderland.

### III. *The Tragedy of the Borderland.*

- A. In *life* it is difficult to convince the borderland resident.
  1. He is satisfied with his nearness. He says, "I'm better than some in the kingdom, " and "I have more good in me than bad. " Maybe so!
  2. But he must realize: if not in, he is out; if not forgiven, he is guilty; if not saved, he is lost. No middle ground possible regarding salvation. Cf. Matt. 12: 30.
- B. In *death* the tragedy is seen even more clearly.
  1. Those "not far" from the kingdom cannot die "in" the Lord, and only those who die in the Lord go to heaven. Rev. 14: 13.
  2. Relate the story of the death of Moses (Deut. 34: 1-5). Moses reached the borderland of Canaan, but had to die right there. He died just

outside the land for which he had so long hoped and sighed.

- C. In the *judgment* the tragedy of the borderland will also be seen.
1. There will be only two classes: right and left, sheep and goats, "Come" and "Depart, " heaven and hell. The resident of the borderland will be lost!
  2. "A miss is as good as a mile. " True! To miss heaven a fraction is to miss it altogether.

*Conclusion:*

1. The tragedy of nearly making it is seen so often in life. Illustration: the plane crash at LaGuardia Field in New York. It crashed only about one hundred fifty yards from the runway. So near and yet so far!
2. The invitation song says it is "Only A Step" from the borderland to the kingdom (the step of obedience through faith, repentance and baptism), but this step must be taken by *you*. No one else can take it for you.
3. Others who are in the borderland are accountable children who have not entered the kingdom. They are not far away, but far enough to be lost. Eccl. 12: 1.
4. It is possible for Christians to wander back into the paths of sin, and they are urged to come back to God, His kingdom and His righteousness.
5. The saddest words of all are: "Almost but lost. "

## CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY

Josh. 24: 14f.

### *Introduction:*

1. Man has been endowed with the power of choice with its privileges and responsibilities.
  - a. Adam and Eve were created by God as free moral agents. Gen. 2: 16f.
  - b. Why did God make man so that he could choose evil? God wanted man to be good, but He knew that chosen good is the highest good (cf. a baby), and to give man the choice of good demanded the freedom to choose evil.
2. Man's freedom of choice is taught throughout the scriptures.
  - a. The freedom of choice. Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 11: 28; Psalm 119: 30.
  - b. The kinds of choice. Foolish (Lot's); beautiful (Ruth's).
  - c. The power of choice. It is great but often not realized.
    - (1) The evil influence of heredity can be overcome by moral choice. Illustrate: Ahaz the wicked father and Hezekiah the good son.
    - (2) The evil influence of environment can be overcome by moral choice. Illustrate: Saints in wicked Nero's household (Phil. 4: 22).

### *Discussion:*

- I. *Moral Choice Is Inescapable.*
  - A. The choice of masters is inescapable.
    1. Every responsible person is a **moral servant by choice**, not by birth. Text; cf. **I Thess. 1: 9**.

2. Our choice of masters is narrow.
  - a. There are only two alternatives: God or idols (Text; I Kings 18: 21); Christ or Satan (Matt. 12: 26, 30); obedience or sin (Rom. 6: 16-18).
  - b. Neutrality is not possible — each must choose. Matt. 12: 30.
  - c. Compromise is not possible — each must choose only one. Matt. 6: 24.
- S. Israel had chosen idols, Satan, sin in spite of warnings. Exod. 20: 3; 23: 24). Their choice meant disobedience, ingratitude and punishment. Joshua had chosen God and obedience because of love and faith. This is the choice of masters that you and I must make.
- B. The choice of causes is inescapable. Heb. 11: 24-26.
  1. Moses at the age of forty was confronted with a choice between two causes. Relate the story of Exod. 2.
  2. What were his alternatives?
    - a. It was the cause of God's people or the enemy of God's people — Israel or Egypt; freedom or slavery.
    - b. It was the cause that meant suffering and affliction or the cause that meant worldly wisdom (cf Acts 7: 22), pleasure and popularity.
    - c. This is the choice that confronts everyone. Cf. Jesus (Phil. 2: 5-8); Paul (Phil. 3: 7f).
  3. The reasons for Moses' wise choice of righteousness.
    - a. He knew the pleasures of sin were transitory — for a season.

- b. He realized that spiritual riches were true riches. Cf. Matt. 6: 19.
  - c. He looked to the future recompense. Cf. Rom. 8: 18.
- C. The choice of destinies is inescapable. Mat. 7: 13f.
- 1. Every person determines his own eternal destiny by choice.
  - 2. Our choice of destinies is narrow — only two gates, roads, destinations.
  - 3. Our choice of masters and causes is our choice of destinies.

## II. *Moral Choice Is Individual.*

- A. Reasons moral choice must be individual.
- 1. God created us individually. Each has an immortal soul. Gen. 2: 7.
  - 2. God saves us individually. The invitation is to "all, " but the acceptance is personal. It is: "My God and I. "
  - 3. God will judge us individually. II Cor. 5: 10.
- B. As an individual choice, it must be independent of:
- 1. Family. Luke 14: 26. Illustrate: A Christian wife may pray and plead, but she cannot make the choice for her husband.
  - 2. Friends. Sometimes a young person says, "I will if you will. " No, it must be, "I will even if you won't. " It is individual!
  - 3. Popular choice. It matters not what the majority may choose, *I* must choose the Lord. Cf. Matt. 26: 33; Rom. 3: 4.
- C. Explain "as for me and my house, " if the choice is individual. Joshua was not choosing for his family (cf. Ezek. 18: 20), but he knew their choice and was merely stating it. This was a compliment to him, for he knew he had taught them right.

### III. *Moral Choice Is Immediate.*

- A. Some choices are not immediate and urgent.
  - 1. Education. To college or not? To graduate school or not?
  - 2. Marriage. The if, when or whom of marriage does not have to be decided today.
- B. The moral choice, though, between God and Satan is immediate.
  - 1. The choice cannot be put off until tomorrow. Not to choose Christ *now* is to choose Satan for a while longer.
  - 2. Felix and Agrippa postponed their choice for Christ, but they did not postpone their choice — they made it!
  - 3. The choice for Christ ought to be immediate. II Cor. 6: 2; Heb. 3: 7f.
- C. The day of choice will soon be ended by death. The uncertainty of life should make the right choice imperative now.

#### *Conclusion:*

- 1. To become a Christian and to be saved finally in heaven is not by divine decree nor by accident, but by choice.
- 2. "Choose you *this* day whom you will serve, " because in *that* day (the judgment) Christ will do the choosing.
- 3. His choice then will depend upon your choice now. Whom will you choose today? What will your answer be?



# WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

**Matt. 22: 42**

## *Introduction:*

1. What we think and how we think are most important.
  - a. No one is better than the thoughts of his heart. Prov. 23: 7.
  - b. Thoughts determine character and character determines destiny.
2. Bible teaching on any subject must determine what **we think about it**.
  - a. Some let the preacher do their thinking. Illustrate: "I believe this because my preacher preaches it this way. " Cf. Rom. 3: 4.
  - b. Some let their parents do their thinking. Illustrate: "I belong to this church because my parents do, and what is good enough for them is good enough for me. " Cf. Matt. 10: 37.
3. What we think of Christ is our estimate of Him, and our estimate of Him may be determined in three ways.

## *Discussion:*

### I. *What Think Ye of the Claims of Christ?*

- A. What were the claims of Christ?
  1. He claimed to be the Saviour of the world. Luke 19: 10; 9: 56 (KJV).
  2. He claimed to be the Son of God. Matt. 16: 161; John 9: 35-37.
  3. He claimed to be the King of kings. John 18: 37; Matt. 28: 18.
- B. What some have thought of Christ in view of these claims.

1. Unbelieving Jews thought Him to be an impostor.
    - a. Regarded Him as a blasphemer at beginning of His ministry. Mark 2: 7.
    - b. Scoffed at His divine sonship as He died on cross. Matt. 27: 40.
  2. Modernists today think of Him only as a human philosopher. They deny His virgin birth, miracles, atonement, resurrection, etc., yet pay lip service to Him as a teacher and philosopher.
  3. Premilleniallists think of Him as a weakling. They teach that Jesus came to earth to establish an earthly, material kingdom. When the Jews opposed Him, He postponed the kingdom and substituted the church. This means He could not do what He came to earth to do.
- C. Why is it important what we think of the claims of Christ?
1. A refusal to believe His claims will condemn us. John 8: 24.
  2. A failure to confess Him before men means eternal damnation. Matt. 10: 33.
  3. *No one can think more of Christ than he thinks of the claims of Christ.*

## II. *What Think Ye of the Commands of Christ?*

- A. What are the commands of Christ for the alien sinner?
1. As given by Christ: faith, repentance, baptism. Matt. 28: 19, 20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24: 46, 47.
  2. As preached by the apostles: faith, repentance, baptism. Acts 2: 36-38.
  3. As obeyed by sinners: faith, repentance, baptism. Acts 16: 31-33.

- B. What some have thought of these commands.
1. Judaizers of the first century thought these commands were too narrow and insufficient. They taught: Faith + Repentance + Baptism + Circumcision = Salvation. Cf. Rev. 22: 18.
  2. Many people today think these commands are too comprehensive.
    - a. Some think and teach: Baptism — Faith = Salvation. Infant baptism.
    - b. Others think and teach: Faith — Baptism = Salvation. Faith only.
      - (1) They think Jesus had the wrong order, and it should read: "He that believeth is saved and should be baptized. "
      - (2) They disparage baptism for remission of sins by saying it is a work of merit, a mere figure, and opposed to grace and faith.
- C. Why is it important what we think of the commands of Christ?
1. We will be judged by the word of Christ. John 12: 48.
  2. We will stand condemned if we do not obey the gospel. II Thess. 1: 7-9.
  3. *No one can think more of Christ than he thinks of the commands of Christ.*

### III. *What Think Ye of the Church of Christ?*

- A. What is the church of Christ?
1. It is the body of Christ. Col. 1: 18; the one body of Eph. 4: 4; the saved body of Eph. 5: 23.
  2. It is the kingdom of Christ. Matt. 16: 18f.; Col. 1: 13.
  3. It is the family of God. I Tim. 3: 15. Born into it by the new birth, John. 3: 5.

**B. What some have thought of the church.**

1. Some thought the church was a sect. Acts 28: 22.  
This impossible because:
    - a. Greek word for "sect" (*haireisis*) means heresy, dissension, schism.
    - b. The spirit of sectarianism is plainly condemned in I Cor. 1: 10ff.
  2. Some think the church is non-essential.
    - a. They say, "Christ saves and not the church. " True, but whom does Christ save? Acts. 2: 47; Eph. 5: 23.
    - b. If the church is non-essential, why did Christ die for it? Acts 20: 28.
  3. Some think the church existed once as a separate body, but does not exist today as such, for all Christians in all churches compose it.
    - a. It is possible for 100 saved people to refuse to join a human denomination, yet worship and work for the Lord as Christians only? Certainly. What denomination would they belong to? None. That was New Testament Christianity of the first century, and that Christianity is possible today.
    - b. Illustration: A blueprint, though lost for hundreds of years, if found, can be the means of restoring the original building. The church was lost, but when men went back to the New Testament pattern, the Lord's church was restored.
- C. Why is it important what we think of the church of Christ?
1. The church bears the closest relationship to Christ as His body, **bride and kingdom**.
  2. "**Except the Lord build the house, they labor**

in vain that build it" Psalm 127: 1. Cf. Matt. 15: 13.

3. *No one can think more of Christ than he thinks of the church of Christ.*

*Conclusion:*

1. What think ye of Christ? His claims, commands, church ?
2. Christ thought a lot of you and me, enough to die for us! How much do we think of Him?

# GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH

Eph. 3: 8-12

## *Introduction:*

1. Christianity is the religion of the church. The New Testament reveals its: establishment, membership, work, worship, purpose, etc.
2. Denominationalism has blinded many to the Lord's church of the first century. Many misunderstandings cleared if the purpose of the church is seen.
3. The church of Jesus Christ has a purpose.
  - a. It was eternally purposed in the mind of God. Eph. 3: 11.
  - b. It was lovingly purchased by the blood of Christ. Eph. 5: 25; Acts 20: 28.
  - c. It was beautifully perfected by the gifts of the of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 4: 11f.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Church — The Revelation of God.*

- A. The wisdom of God revealed by the church.
  1. God is wise (Rom. 16: 27) and infinite (Psalm 147: 5).
  2. In redemption God is wiser than man. I Cor. 1: 20, 25.
  3. The church is the revelation of God's infinite wisdom. Eph. 3: 10.
    - a. This wisdom was revealed to the angels (principalities and powers).
    - b. This wisdom was manifold (variegated, many-tinted). God's wisdom regarding the church is seen from every angle: formation of the plan, selection of the Redeemer, beautiful types, incarnation, atonement, etc.

**B. The power of God revealed by the church.**

1. The kingdom was to come with power (**Mark** 9: 1); the gospel its power to save (**Rom. 1: 16**); its members sustained by God's power (**Eph. 1: 19**).
2. The church of Christ represents power over: the law, sin, prejudice between Jew and Gentile and death. Cf. **Eph. 1: 19f.**

**C. The grace of God revealed by the church.**

1. The church is the object of God's supreme love. **Eph. 1: 3-7; 2: 4-9.**
2. The church is composed of God's children, and God is good to His children. **Matt. 7: 11; Eph. 3: 20f.**

**II. *The Church — The Glory of Christ.*****A. The church of Christ is a glorious church.**

1. Christ died to present it to Himself a glorious church. **Eph. 5: 25-27.**
2. The church is the object of His glory. **Rom. 9: 23f.**
3. The church was foreordained to the praise of His glory. **Eph. 1: 111**

**B. Christ is the head of this glorious church.**

1. The fact is clearly stated. **Col. 1: 18; Eph. 1: 22.**
2. As head, His is a most exalted position. **Phil. 2: 9; Acts 2: 33.**
3. As head, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. **Matt. 28: 18; Rev. 17: 14.**

**C. The nature of the glory of the church.**

1. Glorious cost: blood of Christ. **Eph. 5: 25.**
2. Glorious character: pure and holy. **Eph. 5: 26f.**
3. Glorious consummation: heaven.
  - a. Glorious appearing of Christ. **Titus 2: 13.**
  - b. Glorious crown of life given. **I Pet. 5: 4.**

III. *The Church — The Salvation of Sinners.*

## A. The church designed to proclaim salvation.

1. Need of the sinner: know the truth (John 8: 32); believe the truth (II Thess. 2: 12); obey the truth (Rom. 2: 8).
2. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth. I Tim. 3: 15.
  - a. The truth of salvation depends on church to proclaim it. Mark 16: 16; I Thess. 1: 8.
  - b. The truth of salvation depends on church to defend it. Phil. 1: 17; Stephen.
  - c. The truth of salvation depends on church to harmonize it. II Tim. 2: 15.
3. Other groups cannot and will not support the truth (denominations, societies, lodges).

## B. The church designed to constitute the saved.

1. The sinner needs salvation. Rom. 3: 23; 6: 23.
2. The church designed to meet this need. We hear it said, "Christ saves and not the church." True, but whom does He save? Only those in the church.
  - a. Christ is the Saviour of the body, the church. Eph. 5: 23; Col. 1: 18.
  - b. The church is the fulness of Christ. Eph. 1: 23. If one person is saved out of the church, the church is not the fulness of Christ.
  - c. The church is God's family. I Tim. 3: 15. Only children of God are saved.
3. All of the saved are in Christ, and all in Christ are in His church.
  - a. Baptized into Christ (Gal. 3: 27) yet baptized into the church (I Cor. 12: 13).
  - b. Sanctified in Christ (I Cor. 1: 2) yet sanctified in church (Eph. 5: 25f).



- C. The church designed to demonstrate salvation.
1. The church created for good works. Eph. 2: 10.
  2. The church to demonstrate acceptable faith. James 2: 14ff.
  3. The church to reflect Christ in their lives. Matt. 5: 14-16.

*Conclusion:*

1. This is the purpose of the church of Christ as stated in God's inspired Word.
2. The highest purposes of heaven found themselves fulfilled in the church; therefore, it is a glorious church.
3. Will you see the Lord's church in all of its beauty and glory and become a member of it by obeying the gospel?

# STRANGE THINGS ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Acts 28: 22

## *Introduction:*

1. The church of Christ is more widely known and discussed today than at any time in its nineteen hundred year history.
  - a. One secular magazine said it is the "fastest growing religious group in the United States. " I do not know if this is true, but I hope it is!
  - b. The fact that we are rousing from our lethargy and moving forward for the Lord is seen in our: advertising (newspaper, magazine, highway); mission programs at home and abroad; radio and television preaching; building programs; etc. May all of this and more continue!
  - c. As people come to hear of the church, they discuss it, and often as they discuss it, because of misunderstanding, they present a weird and distorted picture of the church and what it stands for.
2. There were strange things also said about the church of the first century.
  - a. In Thessalonica it was said that its leaders were "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17: 6).
  - b. In Corinth it was reported that one of its apostles was "persuading men to worship contrary to the law" (Acts 18: 13), and this was strange.
  - c. In Rome the church was regarded as the "sect everywhere spoken against" (Acts 28: 22).
3. Let us study some of these strange things being said about the church today.

*Discussion:*I. *The Church of Christ Disbelieves the Old Testament.*

- A. Many denominational people readily accuse us of not believing the Old Testament; they are amazed when we use an Old Testament text in our preaching; they do not understand our emphasis upon the New Testament.
- B. The truth regarding the Old Testament scriptures.
  1. The Old Testament is inspired. It claims inspiration for itself (cf. "God spake, " "Thus saith the Lord, " etc. ); II Pet. 1: 20f.
  2. The Old Testament is profitable. Its truths and principles are applicable to us. Rom. 15: 4; I Cor. 10: 11.
  3. The Old Testament is not for our observance. The law ended at the cross. Col. 2: 14-16; Heb. 8: 8-11; Matt. 5: 17.
- C. The fallacy of the denominational position regarding the Old Testament.
  1. They say, "We take it all — Old and New. " If by "take it" they mean *practice* it, they refuse to *take*: animal sacrifice; distinction of meats; 30 percent of income; penalty for breaking the Sabbath; etc.
  2. The truth is, they go to the Old Testament for what they want (Sabbath; instrumental music; etc. ) and leave everything they do not want.
  3. God has said this is impossible. Gal. 5: 3. If you go back for one thing (with the Galatians it was circumcision), you are debtor to do the whole law.

II. *The Church of Christ Repudiates Salvation by Grace.*

- A. Salvation by God's grace is plainly taught, and I accept it.

## SERMONS FOR SAINTS AND SINNERS

1. The scriptures teach it. Rom. 3: 24; 4: 41; Eph. 2: 8; et al.
  2. Our songs proclaim it. "Amazing Grace"; "Some Day the Silver Cord Will Break. "
  3. Our prayers acknowledge it. I pray, "Keep me faithful unto the end that by Thy grace I may be saved. " Cf. II Tim. 1: 18.
- B. The meaning of grace is clearly understood.
1. It is unmerited favor. God saved us from sin when we did not deserve it, and He will save us in heaven though we are unprofitable servants.
  2. Grace is love (Rom. 5: 8; John 3: 16; I John 3: 1) and mercy (Titus 3: 5).
- C. Grace does not preclude conditions to be met on the sinner's part.
1. Illustrations: Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6: 8 KJV), then was told to get to work on the ark (6: 14). Ruth obtained her food by grace (Ruth 2: 2 KJV), yet she had to glean it (v. 3).
  2. Salvation is by grace but not by grace alone. Paul was saved by grace (Eph. 2: 8), but he had to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22: 16).
  3. God's grace is extended to all (Titus 2: 11), but it must be accepted by obedience to the gospel.
- III. *The Church of Christ Thinks They are Right and Everybody Else is Wrong.*
- A. Can we know who is right and who is wrong? Though there may be some who would reply, "No, " it is obvious that everyone decides in his own mind that some are right religiously and others are wrong. Illustrations:

1. One man denies the existence of God and the other confesses God. It is not difficult to see and admit that one is right, the other wrong.
  2. One man denies the deity of Jesus and the other believes it. Who is right and who is wrong? Only an agnostic would say he could not tell!
  3. Therefore, when someone says to me, "You ought not to say that you are right and others are wrong, " I reply that there is not a person on earth with any religious convictions at all who does not do this very thing.
- B. Can two people both be right and teach contradictory doctrines? For example:
1. The earth is round and flat; two and two equal four and two and two equal five. It is utterly impossible for two conflicting statements to be true.
  2. One teaches that children are born totally depraved in sin; the other, they are pure. One teaches only the elect are saved; the other, all men are free to choose. One teaches that baptism is essential; the other, it is non-essential. Can both be right? Only the irrational or dishonest would admit it!
- C. How can we tell who is right and who is wrong in religion?
1. Not by human wisdom. I Cor. 1: 21.
  2. Not by the number of people who believe and practice a doctrine. Cf. Hinduism. There are far more Hindus than all professed Christians combined.
  3. It must be by the word of God and it only. II Tim. 3: 16f. Someone says, "You believe that everybody is wrong who disagrees with you. "

No, I believe everybody is wrong who disagrees with the Book!

- D. Does it make any difference if one is wrong in religion?
1. Truth means freedom. John 8: 32. Does freedom matter?
  2. Truth means purity. I Pet. 1: 22. Does purity matter?
  3. Error means condemnation. II Thess. 2: 11f. Does condemnation matter?

*Conclusion:*

1. Peter admonished, "Be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you" (I Pet. 3: 15).
2. The task of every Christian is to study the Bible and be able and willing to correct any wrong idea that may be in people's minds regarding the Cause of Christ.
3. "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again, The eternal years of God are hers, But error wounded writhes in pain, And dies among her worshippers. "

# PAUL'S PLEA TO THE CORINTHIANS

## I Cor. 1: 10-17

### *Introduction:*

1. The Corinthian church has been called "the problem church. " It had many problems and questions regarding: fornication, law suits, marriage, eating idolatrous meat, charismatic gifts, veil, Lord's Supper, resurrection, etc.
2. Paul loved the church (he had established it), and he endeavored to help them solve their problems and answer their questions. A good church might have problems, but it can remain a good church only if it solves them quickly.
3. The lessons of our text are plain, yet they are disregarded by many in the religious world.

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *The Importance of Christian Unity.*

- A. God's word teaches it is sinful to be divided religiously.
  1. Christian unity is clearly taught. John 10: 16; 17: 20f.; Eph. 4: 1-6.
  2. The spirit of strife and division is clearly condemned.
    - a. Those who cause division are to be marked and avoided. Rom. 16: 17.
    - b. Division among God's people is carnal (sensual). I Cor. 3: 3.
    - c. Factions, divisions and parties are works of the flesh. Gal. 5: 20.
  3. The denominational reply is, "We are all **united** in spite of our differences. " Impossible! **One** faith? One fellowship? One spirit? No!

B. God's word teaches the possibility of Christian unity.

1. If Christian unity is impossible, two consequences follow:
  - a. Christ prayed for an impossibility. John 17: 20f.
  - b. The inspired Paul pleaded for an impossibility. I Cor. 1: 10.
2. How can unity in the religious world be achieved?
  - a. Not on the basis of conflicting creeds nor unreliable feelings.
  - b. The only possible basis for unity is the word of God. It furnishes completely unto every good work (II Tim. 3: 16f. ), and it is the rule by which we must walk (cf. Phil. 3: 16).
  - c. Illustrations: Sing (Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16) — God's word says to sing, and this needs nothing to make it complete; can we all walk by this rule? Worship on the first day (Acts 20: 7; I Cor. 16: 2) — God's word says the first day and not the seventh day; can we all walk by this rule?
  - d. The objection is, "We can't see it alike. " The trouble is not in seeing, but simply that we are unwilling to walk by God's rule.

II. *The All-Sufficiency of the Name Christian.*

- A. The Corinthians were divided according to their religious leaders and Wearing their names.
  1. Some were Paulites. He was the great apostle to the Gentiles, and he had established the church at Corinth. To wear his name was a distinct honor!
  2. Some were Apollosites. He is introduced in Acts



18: 24 as an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures. He followed Paul at Corinth. Acts 19: 1; I Cor. 3: 6. They felt proud to be disciples of Apollos!

3. Some were Cephasites. Peter was the great apostle to the circumcision; to him had been given the keys of the kingdom.
  4. Some were Christians. It is said by some scholars that these were wearing the name of Christ in a sectarian spirit, but there is no evidence for this.
- B. The same practice of wearing denominational names is prevalent today.
1. Some wear the names of outstanding religious leaders: John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ; Martin Luther, the champion of the Reformation.
  2. Some wear the names of great doctrines: the presbyterian form of church government; the the second advent of Christ; the holiness of the saints, etc.
  3. These are denominational names that make for division and not unity, and the wearing of them is contrary to the inspired teaching of our text.
- C. The name "Christian" is the only name that disciples of Christ ought to wear.
1. The early disciples wore this name and this name only. Acts 11: 26; 26: 28; I Pet. 4: 16; cf. Acts 4: 12.
  2. The name we wear suggests ownership, discipleship and allegiance, and the wearing of human names robs Christ of the glory He deserves and demands.

3. The name "Christian" is all-sufficient because as a Christian I can believe in every doctrine from which denominational names come if it is in the Bible. For example, Christians accept the presbyterian form of church government (presbyters are elders); we believe in the second advent of the Lord; we live holy lives. The name Christian implies all of this. If it is the name of a doctrine not found in the Bible or the name of a man, why wear it in addition to the glorious name of Christ?

### III. *The Necessity of Baptism.*

- A. The passage teaches that baptism is necessary before one can belong to Christ.
  1. To be "of" Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ means "to belong to" them. Cf. RSV and Williams' translation.
  2. Paul says that two things are necessary before one belongs to him:
    - a. Paul must have been crucified for him. "Was Paul crucified for you?"
    - b. You must have been baptized into his name. "Were ye baptized into the name of Paul?"  
If these two conditions were fulfilled, then they could say truthfully that they belonged to Paul.
  3. What was true of belonging to Paul is also true of belonging to Christ.
    - a. One does not belong to Christ unless Christ has been crucified for him, and until he has been baptized into the name of Christ.
    - b. Also with regard to wearing the name, it is implied that we must wear the name of the one who was crucified for us (Christ), and

into whose name we were baptized (not Luther or John the Baptist's).

- B. The other scriptures are equally clear that baptism is the act of faith that changes our relationship to Christ. Cf. Gal. 3: 26f.; Rom. 6: 17f.
- C. The objection is made that v. 17 states that baptism is not a part of the gospel.
  - 1. This is ridiculous in the light of Mark 16: 15f.
  - 2. Paul thanked God that he had personally baptized so few in Corinth (v. 14). Why? Not because baptism is unimportant, but "lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name" (v. 15).
  - 3. Paul preached the necessity of baptism, yet who administered the baptism was unimportant. Because the factions were being built upon the basis of the teachers actually immersing the Corinthians, Paul was glad that those whom he had baptized were few.
  - 4. His work of preaching the gospel (a part of which was baptism) was more important than immersing those taught; anyone could baptize, but not anyone could teach as Paul. Cf. John 4: If. Jesus baptized, but not personally.

*Conclusion:*

- 1. If the people of the denominational world would believe and accept this great inspired passage, Christ's prayer for unity would be answered.
- 2. To be baptized into Christ; to wear the name "Christian" which honors Christ; and to promote the unity of Christ's people is the responsibility imposed upon us by Christ.

## DID CHRIST DIE IN VAIN?

Gal. 2: 21

### *Introduction:*

1. To die is sad, to die in vain is tragic. Illustrate: Relate the story of the Christian couple who, with one of their children, were killed by a drunken driver. It was so needless.
2. Nineteen hundred thirty years ago Christ died outside the walls of Jerusalem.
  - a. In the Bible are the prophecies and accounts of His death. Isa. 53; Luke 23.
  - b. Christ's death, with His burial and resurrection, is *the* fact of the Christian religion. I Cor. 15: 1-4.
3. Our question is, Did Christ die in vain? The answer is Yes *if* certain doctrines are true and certain conditions exist.

### *Discussion:*

#### *I. If the Law is Still Binding, Christ Died in Vain.*

- A. Many have insisted through the years that Christians are under the law.
  1. Judaizers desired to remain under the law. Gal. 4: 21.
  2. Colossian heretics (Gnostics) were binding the law. Col. 2: 11, 16.
  3. Sabbatarians today insist that the Decalogue is in force on Christians.
- B. The law of Moses was annulled by the death of Christ.
  1. Blotted out, taken out of way and nailed to cross. Col. 2: 14f.
  2. All of the law (judicial, ceremonial and moral)

was abrogated by His death. Two passages make it unmistakably clear that the Ten Commandments were annulled together with the other parts of the law.

a. The law written and engraven on stones passed away. II Cor. 3: 7.

b. We are discharged from the law which said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom. 7: 6f.

C. Truths regarding Christ and the law.

1. Christ came to fulfill it. Matt. 5: 17.

2. Christ came to redeem them that were under it. Gal. 4: 4f.

3. It was but a tutor to bring us unto Christ. Gal. 3: 24.

4. If righteousness is through it, Christ died for nought. Gal. 2: 21.

II. *If the Church is Non-essential, Christ Died in Vain.*

A. Many deny the necessity of the church and ridicule the emphasis that gospel preachers place upon it.

1. They say, "Christ and not the church. " Yes, but *whom* does He save?

2. They say, "We exalt Christ and not the church. " Exalt the King but not His kingdom? Exalt the Husband but not His bride? Impossible!

3. They say, "Not even the New Testament church is necessary. " This statement was made by a denominational scholar of Nashville, Tennessee.

B. The church of Christ owes its very existence to the death of Christ.

1. The church was purchased with His blood. Acts 20: 28.

2. The church was sanctified by His death. Eph. 5: 25-27.

3. The church was redeemed when He gave Himself for us. Titus 2: 14.
  - C. Truths regarding Christ and the church.
    1. Only those in the church have been purchased, sanctified and redeemed.
    2. Since He is the Saviour of the body (Eph. 5: 23), and the body is the church (Col. 1: 18), He does not save those out of the church.
    3. Since Jesus died for the church, if the church is unnecessary, Christ died in vain.
- III. *If Religious Division is Right, Christ Died in Vain.*
- A. The majority claim that denominationalism is good and pleasing to God.
    1. They say, "Lord, we thank Thee for all of the churches, so man can choose the church of his choice and satisfy his own religious convictions. "
    2. They say, "Because of our different tastes and temperaments, we are glad God did not put all into one mold. " One church for the emotional and another for the intellectual, etc.
    3. They say, "After all, we are all in the Lord's big church. "
  - B. Christ died to unite all of the saved in *one* body.
    1. Christ prayed for one body immediately before His death. John 17: 20f.
    2. Christ died to reconcile both Jew and Gentile in one body. Eph. 2: 16.
  - C. Truths regarding the unity of believers.
    1. Paul pleaded for Christian unity at Corinth. I Cor. 1: 10-13.
    2. Paul gave the charter for Christian unity. Eph. 4: 4-6.
    3. If three hundred denominations are right, then

Christ did not reconcile us in one body, and, therefore, He died in vain.

IV. *If There is no Future Resurrection, Christ Died in Vain.*

- A. There have always been some who denied the resurrection.
  - 1. The Sadducees denied it. Matt. 22: 23.
  - 2. Some in the early church denied it. I Cor. 15: 12; II Tim. 2: 17f.
  - 3. Materialists today deny it. They say that man is wholly mortal.
- B. Christ died to guarantee for us a resurrection.
  - 1. Jesus is the resurrection and life. John 11: 25.
  - 2. He is the firstborn (pre-eminent one) from the dead. Col. 1: 18.
  - 3. He is the firstfruits (guarantee) of the dead. I Cor. 15: 20, 23.
- C. Truths regarding the final resurrection.
  - 1. Faith in Christ is the ground of our hope. I Cor. 15: 14.
  - 2. The resurrection is the source of our comfort. I Thess. 4: 18.
  - 3. The resurrection of the righteous is the goal of our striving. Phil. 3: 11.

V. *If I Am Lost, Christ Died in Vain.*

- A. The Bible teaches that some will be eternally lost.
  - 1. To be lost means punishment. Matt. 8: 12; Luke 16: 24.
  - 2. To be lost means eternal punishment. Matt. 25: 46; II Thess. 1: 9.
  - 3. It is not God's will, yet many will be lost. I Tim. 2: 4.
- B. Christ died to save us from eternal punishment.

1. He was lifted up on the cross to draw sinners to Himself. John 12: 32.
  2. He died that we might live. I Pet. 2: 24; Rom. 5: 8f; John 10: 10.
  3. He is the way, the truth and the life. John 14: 6.
- C. Truths regarding the death of Christ and salvation.
1. His death was efficacious for me only if I accept its benefits through obedience.
  2. If I do not submit to His will, and am lost in eternity, *for me* Christ suffered for naught and shed His blood in vain.

*Conclusion:*

1. These are the benefits of the death of Christ. We must accept them as true and appreciate them as the greatest blessings God can bestow.
2. As you and I stand before Christ at judgment, could it be that for *you* or for *me* Christ died in vain? Accept Him and enjoy the blessings of His death.



# FAITH AND WORKS

James 2: 14-26

## *Introduction:*

1. Salvation by faith or works is an old subject. The Roman Catholic Church has been the champion of salvation by works, while Protestant denominationalism continues to preach salvation by faith without works.
2. There are scriptures that teach both faith and works. Cf. Eph. 2: 8, 9 and James 2: 14; also Titus 3: 5 and James 2: 24. These passages are in perfect harmony with one another, and it is the task of every honest Bible student to find that harmony and accept it.
3. The truth is: there is a faith that will save, and there is a faith that will not save; there are **works** that will save, and there are works that will not save.
4. This passage is one of the clearest on the subject.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. A Vivid Description of Faith Without Works.*

- A. It is unprofitable. V. 14.
  1. It is of no value, worthless as clouds with no water and trees with no fruit.
  2. It is in the same class as: circumcision (**Gal.** 5: 6); meats (Heb. 13: 9); benevolence without love (I Cor. 13: 3).
- B. It is a mere saying faith. V. 14.
  1. Profession is insufficient. Cf. Luke 6: 46; Matt. 23: 3; 7: 21f. "To talk is easy, to walk is hard. "
  2. The Lord demands "doing. " Matt. 7: 24; Acts 2: 37; II Pet. 1: 10.
- C. It is not saving faith. V. 14.
  1. The question, "Can faith save him?" implies a

negative answer. Faith saves (Eph. 2: 8), justifies (Rom. 5: 1), purifies (Acts 15: 9).

2. But faith without works condemns. Therefore, is faith only a "most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort"? Certainly not!

D. It is a dead faith. V. 17.

1. As a dead body (cf. v. 26) is inactive, separated, useless, so is faith without works.
2. Faith "alone" or "by itself" is that faith from which the life principle (works) has gone. Works are to faith what life is to the body.

E. It is a faith incapable of demonstration. V. 18.

1. The Lord has shown His love to us. Eph. 2: 7; John 3: 16.
2. He says to us, "Show me your faith. " Cf. Titus 2: 7; Heb. 6: 11.

F. It is the faith of demons. V. 19.

1. Irony is seen in James's reply to one who says he believes that God is one. He replies, "Thou doest well: the demons also believe and shudder. " It takes more than demon faith to justify and save.
2. On more than one occasion demons recognized Jesus, confessed Him to be God's Son and trembled in His presence. Mark 5: 7; Luke 4: 34.

G. It is an imperfect faith. V. 22.

1. In one sense all faith is imperfect and weak. Cf. Luke 17: 5.
2. In this verse "perfect" means "complete, " and a faith without works is an incomplete faith. Can an incomplete faith save? No. Faith must be completed by works.

## II. *Three Illustrations Showing the Relation of Faith and Works.*

### A. The Christian. Vs. 15, 16.

1. The picture is that of a Christian who has the opportunity to help a brother or sister in physical need. He sees the need, speaks words of comfort, but does not act to help.
2. What is the work that should accompany faith? An act of obedience to a divine command: help the needy. Matt. 25: 35; I John 3: 17.
3. Some questions: Was it acceptable faith without the works? Would the work have made void the faith? Would it have been boastful? The answer is "No, " because there is no incompatibility between acceptable faith and obedient works. Obedience by faith to any command of God does not result in boastful, meritorious works. This is true whether the obedience is on the part of the Christian, or on the part of one desiring to become a Christian. (On this point, see below).

### B. Abraham. Vs. 21-23.

1. The offering of Isaac is here called a work, while in Heb. 11: 17 the same offering is said to have been "by faith. " If faith and works are incongruous, how can the same act be both? There is no incongruity!
2. Read the account of the offering (Gen. 22: 1-14) and underline the verbs of action, such as: rose up, saddled, took, clave, went, built, bound, laid, stretched forth. Abraham worked yet his offering was by faith.
3. What kind of works did Abraham do? Human, meritorious works? These cannot justify. The

works of the law of Moses? He died over 500 years before the law was given. The works of obedience? They had to be.

4. When did Abraham believe God? When he obeyed. "By works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God" vs. 22, 23. One does not really believe until he obeys!

C. Rahab. V. 25.

1. Rahab is mentioned in Heb. 11: 31 as a woman of faith, and she is mentioned here as a woman of works. The right faith will result in the right works.
2. Read the account of her hiding the spies (Josh. 2: 1-21) and underline the verbs of action, such as: took, hid, brought, laid, let down, etc. A picture of a woman of faith working.

III. *Three Explanations of the Passage.*

A. Martin Luther's Explanation.

1. He could not reconcile the works of James with the faith of Paul, and he accepted Romans and rejected James. He regarded the Epistle of James as non-canonical, and added the word "alone" in Rom. 3: 28.
2. To add to or take from God's Word places us under the wrath of God. Rev. 22: 18, 19.

B. A Wide-Spread Denominational Explanation.

1. It is stated like this: "The passage is applicable to the Christian, but not to the sinner. Good works are necessary to show one has been saved, but works are wholly unnecessary in order to be saved. " Eph. 2: 10, "created in Christ Jesus for good works, " is often quoted.
2. The explanation is illogical and unscriptural.

- a. It is used in an effort to evade the plain teachings of scripture regarding the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins. Acts 2: 38.
- b. It is not the truth, for if so, there are two kinds of faith — one that saves and the other that keeps us saved. It is a non-working, inactive, wholly trusting faith that saves, but it is a working, active, obedient faith that keeps the Christian saved. The Bible does not teach two kinds of saving faith.
- c. If God could require a live, obedient, working faith for the child of God, why could He not require the same kind of live, obedient, working faith in order to become a child of God? He could and did! We are not saved by a dead faith and kept saved by a live faith.

### C. The True Explanation of Faith and Works.

1. There are two kinds of faith mentioned in the scriptures.
  - a. A narrow faith which involves only the acceptance of testimony. John 12: 42; James 2: 19.
  - b. A comprehensive faith which includes conviction, trust and obedience. John 3: 16; Eph. 2: 8; Rom. 5: 1.
2. There are three kinds of works mentioned in the scriptures.
  - a. Works of the law of Moses. Rom. 3: 28; Gal. 3: 2.
  - b. Works of human merit and glory. Eph. 2: 9; Titus 3: 5.

- c. Works of faith, righteousness, obedience. Acts 10: 35; I Thess. 1: 3.
3. Faith with all of the heart (intellect, emotions and will) involves action, and this action is what James terms "works. " If the word "obedience" is substituted for the word "works" in this passage, the meaning is clear.

*Conclusion:*

1. Salvation by faith is salvation by obedience. John 3: 36; II Thess. 1: 8.
2. Do you have that simple, trusting, obedient faith that will lead you to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins"?

# THE UNWRITTEN GOSPEL

Matt. 15: 1-9

## *Introduction:*

1. Meanings of the word "gospel":
  - a. *Euangelion* and *godspell*: literally, "good tidings, news."
  - b. In the New Testament, especially the good news of salvation in Christ.
  - c. The four accounts of the life of Christ are called gospels.
  - d. "That which is propounded or accepted as infallibly true." This is the meaning of the word in this lesson.
2. God has given only one true gospel. Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.
  - a. This gospel was in inspired men (II Cor. 4: 7); now it is written (John 20: 31).
  - b. This written gospel is the good news of salvation and our infallible standard of faith and conduct.
3. Many are unwilling to accept the written gospel, and have substituted their own unwritten gospels as their authority in religion.

## *Discvssion:*

### *I. The Unwritten Gospel of Feelings.*

- A. The authority of human feelings has always been appealed to by many.
  1. Heathen. Canaanites who gave their children to Moloch; Hindus who throw their babies in the Ganges, and feel this is right.
  2. Catholics. Penitentes of New Mexico and the Philippine Islands who torture themselves mercilessly, and feel they are doing God's will.
  3. Protestants. Existentialists and prejudiced re-

ligionists who maintain that if one feels he ought to do this or believe that, he is all right. "I would not give my feelings for a stack of Bibles, " they say.

- B. The unreliability of feelings is taught by many examples in the Bible.
  - 1. The story of Isaac and Jacob. Gen. 27: 18-23.
  - 2. The story of Jacob and Joseph. Gen. 37: 31-35.
  - 3. The story of Saul of Tarsus. Acts 23: 1; 9: Iff.
- C. The unreasonableness of relying on feelings ought to be evident.
  - 1. A fool thinks and feels he is right. Prov. 12: 15.
  - 2. Feelings are not relied upon as authority in any realm except religion. If one feels rich, successful, pardoned (prisoner), does that make it so?
  - 3. It is folly to risk heaven on deceptive feelings.

## II. *The Unwritten Gospel of Tradition.*

- A. The meaning of the word "tradition. "
  - 1. In common usage it has reference to age-old practices and time-proved beliefs.
  - 2. Both the Greek and Latin words literally mean: *to give up or over, to hand down, to transmit.*
  - 3. Therefore, traditions are those beliefs and practices which have been handed down from generation to generation.
- B. The uses of the word "tradition" in the New Testament.
  - 1. Good sense: the inspired truth as taught by the apostles.
    - a. Scriptures: I Cor. 11: 2; II Thess. 2: 15; 3: 6.
    - b. Oral or written truth transmitted to others is tradition. Hence, there is nothing wrong in the word itself.
  - 2. Bad sense: the doctrines **and** precepts of men.



- a. Scriptures: Matt. 15: 2f.; Gal. 1: 14; Col. 2: 8.
  - b. These Jewish traditions were the so-called oral precepts of Moses which illustrated and expanded the written law, and which were handed down from age to age.
  - c. These were regarded as authoritative as the written law, and Jesus was accused time and again of violating the traditions, and He did. He respected the law of God but not the traditions of men.
- C. With the majority of religious people today, tradition is gospel.
1. Catholics: infallibility of pope, bodily assumption of Mary, etc.
  2. Protestants: sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music, etc.
  3. The Bible refutes tradition as authority. Gal. 1: 14ff. These beliefs and practices may be old, but they are not as old as the New Testament; they may be accepted by many people, but they are not accepted by God.

### III. *The Unwritten Gospel of Custom.*

- A. The authority of custom in religion **is** widespread.
1. Definition: "generally accepted conventions. " If a belief or practice is generally accepted by the majority, that makes it right!
  2. "Everybody does this or believes that, " they say. Tradition has to do with the past, while custom has to do with the present.
- B. The power of custom in our lives is very great.
1. In the matter **of** hair styles for women and clothing **for** men, we must conform or be

looked upon as oddities. Illustrate: Einstein, a non-conformist.

2. In the order of our worship services, some congregations are slaves to custom. Illustrate: the elder who asked the song leader for his authority for an opening prayer. They had not done it that way before!
  3. In the denominational world, they say: "Everybody uses instrumental music, observes the holy days (Easter, Christmas, etc. ), knows that baptism is non-essential, " etc.
  4. Morally, "Everybody drinks a little, dances, gambles, " etc.
- C. The Tightness of anything has never been proved by custom — the number of people engaging in it.
1. God has warned His people about following custom. Exod. 23: 2; Matt. 7: 13f.
  2. Jesus was a non-conformist to custom. Regarded as odd but He was right!
  3. Customs vary but God's principles of truth and righteousness do not.

#### IV. *The Unwritten Gospel of Human Opinion.*

- A. The opinions of men are ultimate authority with many.
1. They say, "He is such a good man he could not be wrong. "
  2. They say, "He is such a scholar I will take his word for it. "
- B. The opinions of men are fallible at best.
1. The good and the wise teach differently. Which good man or which wise man is right? Illustrate: One preaches sprinkling, the other immersion.
  2. Scriptures: I Cor. 1: 19; Rom. 3: 4; Gal. 1: 6ff.

*Conclusion:*

1. The advantages of a written gospel:
  - a. We can know the certainty of God's will. Luke 1: 3, 4; I Tim. 3: 14f.
  - b. We can believe with confidence. John 20: 31.
  - c. We can prove what is right and wrong. Matt. 4: 4.
2. The unwritten gospels are not authoritative, powerful, convincing, infallible. The written gospel is.
3. We will be judged by the written gospel at the last day, and thus, we ought to respect it and accept it and prepare for heaven.

# THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER

## Luke 14: 15-24

### *Introduction:*

1. This parable is similar to but different **from** the Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. 22: 1-14).
  - a. They are similar in that in both are: feasts, invitations, rejections, excuses and punishment.
  - b. They are different in: place (house of Pharisee vs. temple); time (early vs. later in Jesus' ministry — hostility in the latter but none in the former, cf. Matt. 22: 15); punishment; and host (man vs. king).
2. The occasion of the parable. Relate briefly Jesus' acceptance of the Pharisee's invitation; the healing of the man with dropsy; lesson to guests on humility; lesson to host on respect of persons; Jesus' mention of reward provoking the statement of v. 15.
3. Jesus teaches in the parable that not all who anticipate the blessings of the kingdom would enjoy them because they would prove themselves unworthy.

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *The Greatness of Salvation.*

- A. Salvation, present and future, is like a feast. This suggests:
  1. The best food. We content ourselves with ordinary food, but a dinner for friends demands the very best. Salvation is the best thing God has provided for man. Cf. Matt. 16: 26; Phil. 1: 23.
  2. Abundant food. We not only want the best, but we want it in abundance. God has provided abundantly. Cf. Eph. 1: 3; James 1: 5; Isa. 55: 7.
  3. Fellowship. Fellowship with friends is better

than food. Fellowship with God and Christ is a wonderful blessing. Cf. I John 1: 7. "What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms. "

4. Happiness and Joy. Now (Acts 8: 8) and in heaven (Matt. 25: 23).
- B. The greatness of salvation is suggested by the fact that this was a great supper.
1. Salvation in Christ is great because: the host is the great God of the universe; the feast was 4, 000 years in preparation; the cost was the Son of God. No other feast can compare with this one!
  2. The blessings of this supper are described in terms of the superlative: *great* salvation (Heb. 2: 2); peace *passeth all understanding* (Phil. 4: 7); joy *unspeakable* (I Pet. 1: 8); life *eternal abundantly* given (John 10: 10).
  3. God has prepared for man blessings beyond his comprehension. Cf. I Cor. 2: 9. Picture this great spiritual feast inside, and the poor, starving sinner outside. He may have all of this by merely opening the door!
- II. *The Appalling Indifference of Those Invited.*
- A. Three truths regarding their reply to the invitation.
    1. They were excuses and not reasons. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse. " Distinguish between an excuse and a reason.
    2. They had nothing sinful in land, oxen or a wife, but the sin was in letting these come first. They loved these more than the great supper!
    8. They did not really want to come badly enough.

Christianity is the religion of desire. Cf. Matt. 16: 24; II Cor. 8: 12.

- B. The excuses may be classified as follows:
1. The excuse of necessary business — I cannot come. V. 18.
    - a. The man who had bought the field pleaded impossibility: "I must needs go out and see it."
    - b. The excuse was absurd because the field would have still been there after the supper, and he could have seen it then.
  2. The excuse of reasonable business — I cannot afford to come. V. 19.
    - a. He did not say, "I must needs go," but, having bought the oxen, he felt it was unreasonable that he should not go to prove them.
    - b. This excuse also was ridiculous because he could have done this later.
  3. The excuse of wilful refusal — I will not come. V. 20.
    - a. He said, "I cannot," but sometimes "cannot" means "will not." In view of his not even saying, "Excuse me," as the other two did, we see gross insolence. Thus, in the three excuses there is a gradation from bad to worse to worst!
    - b. On the excuse of the wife cf. Deut. 24: 5; I Cor. 7: 29-33; Luke 14: 26.
- C. The application of these excuses to the Saviour's invitation.
1. The excuse of impossibility is still offered by many people.
    - a. Impossible to be good enough to be saved. Illustration: the man who said he had com-

- mitted every sin possible and knew there was no hope of his sins being remitted. Reply: the murderers of Jesus; Isa. 1: 18.
- b. Impossible to hold out if I did become a Christian. The reply to such excuse is: Phil. 4: 13; I Cor. 10: 13; Matt. 19: 26.
2. The excuse of unreasonableness is put forth by men and women.
- a. Cannot afford to because it would mean my parents will be lost. Reply: Your salvation will not affect their destiny, and if they lived by the light they had, they would want you to do the same thing.
  - b. Cannot afford to yet because I have plenty of time, and it is only reasonable that I enjoy the pleasure of sin a little while I can. Reply: We don't know how much time we have, and we cannot afford to gamble with our souls. Heb. 3: 7f., 15; II Cor. 6: 2.
  - c. Cannot afford to because I will lose my job. Illustration: the man who worked under denominational people and actually offered this excuse. Reply: Matt. 16: 26; Phil. 3: 7f.
8. The excuse of wilful refusal is really no excuse at all.
- a. Refusal to accept because they are better than some in the church. Reply: Morally, perhaps better, but morality will not save; we come to Christ, not men, and our faith is in God, not men.
  - b. Refusal to accept because they are so prejudiced and stubborn they had rather go to hell than submit to Christ. The only reply is: they will change their mind in hell, but a little too late.

### III. *The Extent of God's Divine Love.*

- A. In the first invitation "he bade many" (v. 16).
1. The Jews were God's chosen people from Abraham. Gen. 12: Iff.
  2. God's plan was to the Jew first. Matt. 10: 5f.; Rom. 1: 16.
- B. In the second invitation he invited the "poor, maimed, blind and lame" (v. 21).
1. These were still within the city, but in its streets and lanes.
  2. When the Jewish leaders rejected Christ, He went to the publicans, sinners and Samaritans. Luke 15: 1; Matt. 9: 10-13.
- C. In the third invitation he invited those of "the highways and hedges" (v. 23).
1. The Gentiles, "those afar off" (Acts 2: 39), may enjoy the blessings of salvation.
  2. The invitation to the Great Supper is extended to all. Isa. 55: 1.
  3. The constraint of v. 23 is moral persuasion and not physical force. Cf. Matt. 14: 22; Gal. 6: 12. The poor would feel unworthy and persuasion would be necessary.

#### *Conclusion:*

1. The song, "All Things Are Ready, " was written from this parable.
2. If a sinner, why not come to the feast? If a Christian, do you really appreciate the feast of good things that is ours?



# THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

I John 3: 1-3

## *Introduction:*

1. The Christian religion is the religion of hope. References to the Christian hope in the New Testament are many. Cf. Eph. 4: 4; Titus 2: 11-13.
2. Hope is defined as "desire with expectation of obtaining what is desired. "
  - a. Desire alone is not hope. Illustrations: a gift of a thousand dollars; good will of everyone; reunion in this life of all friends and loved ones. We may desire these things, but certainly we cannot hope for them.
  - b. Expectation alone is not hope. Illustrations: sickness; taxes; punishing children. We may expect these in life, but we do not desire them; hence, we do not hope for them.
3. But where there is desire and expectation there is hope, and the Christian hope burning brightly within us is necessary to successful Christian living.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Essence of the Christian Hope.*

#### *A. What the Christian hope is not.*

1. It is not the hope that we are Christians. Sometimes when asked, "Are you a Christian?" the reply is, "I hope so. " What is meant, no doubt, is that we desire to be a better Christian and expect to do better, but we can know whether or not we are Christians. Rom. 8: 16.
2. It is not the hope that all will be ultimately saved. Though we may desire the salvation of

all, we cannot expect it. II Thess. 1: 8f.; Rev. 21: 8.

8. It is not the hope of a millennial reign with Christ. Explain briefly what premillennialism is. There is no scriptural basis for either desiring or expecting such a materialistic reign with Christ on earth.
- B. What the Christian hope is. The statement of John that "it does not yet appear what we shall be" (RSV) suggests there are many things regarding the future that are not clear to us now. But these truths regarding our hope are taught:
1. Appearing of the glory of Christ. Titus 2: 13; Acts 1: 11; I Thess. 4: 16.
  2. Raised by the power of Christ. I Thess. 4: 16; John 5: 28f.
  3. United with the person of Christ. I Thess. 4: 17; Phil. 1: 23.
  4. Conformed to the image of Christ. I John 3: 2; I Cor. 15: 49; Phil. 3: 21.
  5. Eternity in the presence of Christ. I Thess. 4: 17; John 14: 3.
- C. Heaven, with all of its joy and bliss, its beauty and grandeur, is the hope of the Christian. We ought to desire it and we ought to expect it!

## II. *The Ground of the Christian Hope.*

- A. The basis of our hope of heaven is that we are "children of God. "
  1. The reason for our being children of God: God's love. I John 3: 1; cf. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 8; I John 4: 10. It was not because of our worth.
  2. The manner of our becoming children of God: the new birth. John 3: 3-5. Cf. Gal. 3: 26f. — children of God by faith when we are baptized.

3. The honor of being children of God: to be a child of the King is the greatest honor that can be bestowed on mortal man. "My Father is rich in houses and lands, He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!"
- B. No one except a child of God can have this hope of heaven.
1. Hope is in Christ (I Cor. 15: 19), and only children of God are in Christ (Gal. 3: 26f. ).
  2. Those who are not children of God are certainly without God, and those without God are without hope (Eph. 2: 12).
  3. Heaven is a prepared place (John 14: 2), and it is prepared only for those who will submit to Christ and become children of God.
- C. Faithfulness and godliness are necessary for the child of God to have the hope of heaven. Titus 2: 11-13; Rev. 2: 10.

### III. *The Result of the Christian Hope.*

- A. Hope Purifies. Text. "Keeps himself pure. "
1. Christians must be pure. Matt. 5: 8; I Tim. 5: 22; Rom. 12: 1f.
  2. The brighter our hope, the purer in heart and life we will be; and the purer in heart and life, the brighter our hope of heaven.
  3. Desiring heaven and expecting heaven makes for purity. Cf. Col. 3: 1-4.
- B. Hope Anchors. Heb. 6: 19.
1. Steadfastness and perseverance are necessary. I Cor. 15: 58; Col. 1: 23.
  2. In the midst of troubles, sorrows, temptations and reverses, hope as an anchor of the **soul** saves us. Rom. 8: 23-25.

3. Hope gives confidence and courage. Cf. **Rom.** 5: 3-5.
- C. Hope Rejoices. Rom. 5: 2.
1. Christians must be joyful. Phil. 4: 4; I Thess. 5: 16; cf. Acts 20: 22-24.
  2. The hope of heaven should cause rejoicing. Rom. 12: 12; Matt. 5: 12.
  3. We are happiest when the hope of heaven burns brightest; therefore, let us rejoice every day in the Christian hope.
- D. Hope Answers. I Pet. 3: 15.
1. Our hope is based upon the deity of Christ. I must be able to defend this truth when one asks me the reason of my hope.
  2. Our hope is based upon the authority of Christ. He has commanded me to believe, repent and be baptized and live faithfully, and I am willing to risk eternity upon my obedience to His commands.
  3. Our hope is based upon the promises of Christ. He has promised me heaven upon His terms, and I can hope for heaven upon the basis of His faithfulness.

*Conclusion:*

1. The strength of hope depends upon:
  - a. The strength of desire. How badly do I want to go to heaven?
  - b. The strength of expectation. This is dependent upon our faith in God who has promised, and upon our own consciousness of the kind of life we live.
2. The Christian hope is worth more than all of the world. Do you have it?

# IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST

## II Cor. 5: 17

### *Introduction:*

1. Everything that really matters depends upon one's being in Christ: happiness in life, hope in death **and** salvation in eternity.
2. There are only two spiritual realms: we are either in Christ or in Satan. Matt. 12: 30. Kingdom of light or kingdom of darkness. No middle ground.
3. The "if" of the protasis of the text suggests **certain** consequences that follow. The lesson is a study of those consequences. If any man be in Christ —

### *Discussion:*

- I. *He Has Access To All Spiritual Blessings.* Eph. 1: 3.
  - A. The nature of these spiritual blessings in Christ.
    1. The initial blessings of: forgiveness (Eph. 1: 7); redemption (Rom. 3: 24); sanctification (I Cor. 1: 2); new creature (II Cor. 5: 17).
    2. The continued blessings of: cleansing blood (I John 1: 7); joy (Phil. 4: 4); consolation (Phil. 2: 1); strength (Phil. 4: 13).
    3. The ultimate blessing of: victory (II Cor. 2: 14); heaven (II Tim. 4: 8).
  - B. The greatness of these spiritual blessings in Christ.
    1. They are as superior to the material blessings of life as: the soul is to the body; eternity is to time; the indestructible is to the destructible.
    2. Their greatness is seen when in contrast we see those who are out of Christ. Cf. Eph. 2: 1, 12. It is the difference between: life and death; riches and poverty; united and separated; **full** and empty; happiness and misery.

II. *He Has Been Baptized Into Christ.* Gal. 3: 27.

- A. Baptism is the act of faith that puts one into Christ.
1. Many teach that faith only puts the sinner into Christ; others, that repentance is the door into Christ; but Paul said we are baptized into Christ.
  2. If faith only or repentance is the act that unites with Christ, why could not the inspired writer have said, "For as many of you as *believed* into Christ, " or, "For as many of you as *repented* into Christ"? What would he have meant if he had said that? The answer is obvious. Likewise, it is clear to the honest person that baptism is the act that puts one into Christ.
  3. An explanation of Gal. 3: 26f. makes clear the relation of faith and baptism.
    - a. Notice that both v. 26 and v. 27 begin with the word "for. " This is the Greek conjunction *gar* which introduces the reason for a previous statement.
    - b. In the preceding verses the argument is made that the law has served its purpose and that we are no longer under it (vs. 23-25). How is it that we are no longer under the law? Why? "For (*gar*) ye are all sons of God (now—EWC), through faith, in Christ Jesus. " The *for* tells why we are no longer under the law.
    - c. Now notice v. 27. How is it that "ye are all sons of God (now) through faith"? Why? "For (*gar*) as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. " Verse 27 explains how it is that we are children of God by faith — by faith we are baptized into

Christ. Baptism is the act of faith that puts one from without Christ to within Christ!

d. In vs. 27 and 29 the order is: baptism, into Christ, Abraham's seed, heirs. The negative is: no baptism, not in Christ, not Abraham's seed, not heirs. And yet it is taught that baptism is non-essential!

4. Other scriptures make it equally clear that baptism is the act of faith that puts one into Jesus Christ. Rom. 6: 3f.; Matt. 28: 18f.

B. The blessings in Christ are not enjoyed until after baptism.

1. Salvation is in Christ, but salvation follows baptism (Mark 16: 16). Therefore, one is not in Christ until he is baptized into Him.

2. Freedom is in Christ, but freedom follows obedience to the form of teaching (Rom. 6: 17f. ). Therefore, one is not in Christ until he obeys Christ.

5. Newness of life is in Christ, but newness follows the burial in baptism (Rom. 6: 4). Therefore, one is not in Christ until he is baptized into Him.

III. *He Has the Responsibility of Abiding in Christ.* John 15: 1-6.

A. The figure of the vine and branches teaches faithfulness.

1. The command is to abide (v. 4). It is absurd to command that which it is impossible to keep from doing. Illustration: When a man is locked in jail, he is not commanded to abide in jail. The command to abide implies the possibility of not abiding. The possibility of apostasy is clearly taught.

2. The reason for abiding: to bear fruit (v. 4).

3. The result if one does not abide: cut off **and** burned (v. 6). Cf. Heb. 6: 4-8.
  - B. Examples of some who do not abide in Christ.
    1. Some fall from grace. Gal. 5: 4.
    2. Some depart from the faith. I Tim. 4: 1.
    3. Some deny the faith (I Tim. 5: 8), and overthrow the faith (II Tim. 2: 18).
  - C. What it means to abide in Christ.
    1. It means to abide in the teaching of Christ. II John 9.
    2. It means to abide in holiness and purity. II Cor. 5: 17.
    3. It means to abide in faithful observance of the commands of Christ. Matt. 28: 19.
- IV. *He Has the Hope of Heaven If He Dies in Christ.*
- A. The death of the righteous is the death of one in Christ.
    1. When life is over we must fall asleep in Christ. I Cor. 15: 18.
    2. The dead in Christ shall rise before the living are changed. I Thess. 4: 16.
    3. Blessed (happy) are the dead who die in the Lord. Rev. 14: 13.
  - B. Faithfulness unto death is necessary for the hope of heaven.
    1. "Be thou faithful unto death" Rev. 2: 10.
    2. Paul could say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" Phil. 1: 21. Why? He had been baptized into Christ (Rom. 6: 3) and he had abode in Christ (II Tim. 4: 8).

*Conclusion:*

1. Blessed is the one who gets into Christ, abides in Christ and dies in Christ.
2. Are you in Christ? Are you abiding in Him?



# IN THAT DAY

II Tim. 1: 18

## *Introduction:*

1. Onesiphorus is mentioned twice in the Bible, both times by Paul. II Tim. 1: 16-18; 4: 19. He was a Christian of Ephesus, and some suggest a business man who travelled (v. 17). He was the only one of Asia (Ephesus, the captitol) with love and courage enough to assist Paul the prisoner.
2. Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus was that he might find mercy in that day.
  - a. There is a play on the word "find. " He found me; may he find mercy!
  - b. It is right and good to pray for the salvation of our family and friends. I appreciate when others pray for my safety in travel and for a long life for me in Christian service, but the best prayer is your prayer that I may find mercy of the Lord in that day. Nothing else matters so much.
3. There have been great days in the past: creation, flood, at Sinai when the law was given, birth of Christ, Pentecost, etc. But "that day" will be the greatest of all.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Identity of That Day.*

- A. The use of the term "that day" clearly suggests the day of judgment. Christ used it (Matt. 7: 22; cf. 24: 36); Paul used it frequently (II Thess. 1: 10; II Tim. 1: 12; 4: 8).
- B. The day of judgment is also designated by Paul by the following terms:
  1. "The day. " I Cor. 3: 13.

2. "The day of the Lord. " I Thess. 5: 2.
  3. "The day of Christ. " Phil. 2: 16.
  4. "The day when God shall judge the secrets of men. " Rom. 2: 16.
  5. "The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. " Rom. 2: 5.
  6. "The day of redemption. " Eph. 4: 30; cf. Rom. 8: 23.
- C. Paul's attitude toward "that day. "
1. It was certain. II Tim. 1: 12, "I know... I am persuaded. " That day was as certain with Paul as God, His power and His promise.
  2. It was near at hand. II Tim. 4: 6; cf. I Pet. 4: 7.
  3. It was desired. II Tim. 4: 8. No fear, but the end of the fight and race.
- II. *The Purpose of That Day.*
- A. It will be a day of reckoning.
1. The judgment as a day of reckoning is clearly taught.
    - a. Elders must give account of their oversight. Heb. 13: 17.
    - b. Preachers must give account of their preaching. James 3: 1.
    - c. All Christians, as stewards, must give account. Matt. 25: 19.
  2. For what must we give account as Christians?
    - a. Deeds (II Cor. 5: 10); words (Matt. 12: 36f. ); thoughts (Eccl. 12: 14).
    - b. Use or misuse of opportunities. Cf. talents; Col. 4: 5.
    - c. Attitude toward duty. Cf. **Eccl. 12: 13; Luke 17: 10.**

- B. It will be a day of rectifying.
1. The day of judgment will be the day when all things will be made right.
    - a. God's justice is difficult to see often in this life. Cf. I Cor. 13: 12.
    - b. Why do sinners prosper and saints suffer? This was the problem of Job.
    - c. At the judgment all inequalities will be adjusted by God.
  2. "What rejoicing in His presence, When are banished grief and pain, When the crooked ways are straightened, And the dark things shall be plain. "
- C. It will be a day of recompense.
1. The wicked will be rewarded according to their works. Rom. 6: 23; 2: 5, 8f.
  2. The righteous will be given the crown of life. II Tim. 4: 8; Matt. 25: 34.

### III. *The Need of That Day: Mercy.*

- A. The mercy of God is needed from birth to eternity.
1. Our very existence depends upon His mercy. Acts 17: 28; James 1: 17.
  2. Our salvation from sin depends upon His mercy. Titus 3: 5; Eph. 2: 8.
  3. Our eternal salvation depends upon His mercy. Text; Jude 21. Some say, "It is mercy in life, but justice in judgment. " The Bible teaches it is mercy in both! God is the Father of mercy, rich in mercy, tender in mercy.
- B. The recipients of God's mercy in "that day. "
1. Those who show mercy to others can expect God's mercy at the judgment,
    - a. Jesus taught the necessity of showing mercy

- to receive mercy. Matt. 5: 7; 9: 13; 18: 23-35 (the unmerciful servant).
- b. Onesiphorus had shown mercy to Paul, so Paul asks that God might show mercy to him. James 2: 13.
  - c. Mercy may be shown in Christian service (Gal. 6: 10); Christian forgiveness (Matt. 6: 14f. ). If I am unwilling to help others or to forgive others, I cannot expect to find mercy of the Lord in that day.
2. Those who realize their need of God's mercy may find mercy in that day.
    - a. The self-righteous who scoff at His mercy are hopeless. Luke 18: 9-12.
    - b. The self-satisfied who feel sufficient without His mercy will not find it. Rev. 3: 17.
    - c. We must realize our nothingness without God's mercy. Luke 18: 13.
  3. Those who appropriate God's mercy now may find it also in that day.
    - a. The rich man neglected God's mercy in life and did not find it in eternity. Luke 16: 24-26.
    - b. Felix spurned God's mercy (Acts 24: 25), and, therefore, can have no hope of receiving it at the judgment.
    - c. We must appreciate and appropriate God's mercy now to receive it then.

*Conclusion:*

1. Many accept God's mercy in the material things of life, but reject it in the spiritual.
2. The call of the gospel is the call to God's infinite mercy, and in order to find it in that day, we must accept it in this day.
3. Will you find mercy of the Lord in that day?

# IS DENOMINATIONALISM NECESSARY?

Eph. 4: 4

## *Introduction:*

1. Modern denominationalism is generally accepted but wholly unjustified. Our study will prove that it is unjustified because it is unnecessary.
2. When we speak out against denominationalism, we have reference to the system (its principles, organization, aims, etc. ), and certainly not to persons who are in it. It must be remembered, though, that if the system is wrong, it is wrong to be a part of it.
3. Much time, money, work and interest are freely spent in denominational efforts. All of these could far better be spent in promoting Christian unity because denominationalism is utterly useless and defenseless.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *7s Denominationalism Necessary for the Existence of Christianity?*
  - A. The possibility of Christianity depends upon the existence of the seed of Christianity, the word of God (Luke 8: 11).
    1. The seed of the kingdom is: the teaching of Christ (II John 9); the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1: 16); the truth of God (John 17: 17).
    2. The existence of the seed of Christianity does not depend upon denominationalism, because it existed before the denominations, and would continue to exist if every denomination ceased to exist. I Pet. 1: 25.
  - B. The actuality of Christianity depends upon the propagation and acceptance of the seed of Christianity.

1. Is the proclamation of the word dependent upon any one denomination? If so, which one? If any one denomination ceased to exist today, would Christianity cease? The answer is obvious: Certainly not!
  2. Multiply this by ten. If ten denominations became extinct tomorrow, would Christianity cease? If so, ten denominations are necessary but not the other 290 (or however many there are). If so, ten denominations proclaim the full gospel of Christ, but the others who differ do not.
  3. If it is maintained that it takes all the denominations to have Christianity, then it must follow that if a new denomination springs up tomorrow, we did not have complete Christianity today. Such is ridiculous!
    - a. If each denomination teaches some truth and all of them together teach all truth, and thereby we have Christianity, it must be obvious that much that is taught by denominations is not the truth, because truth is not contradictory and these doctrines are.
    - b. Is it possible for one to examine various doctrines and to accept the true ones and reject false ones? If one accepted only the truths and rejected the errors that are preached, what denomination would he belong to? None, but he would be a Christian!
- C. Denominationalism, then, is not necessary for the existence of Christianity, because:
1. Christianity existed centuries before the first denomination was started.
    - a. Paul and Peter were Christians, but they were not denominationalists.

- b. If there were Christians 1900 years ago, but no Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, etc., why can't it be true today? It can!
2. Every truth can be preached and all of it practiced if every denomination ceased to exist tomorrow. Preached and practiced by whom? Christians!

## II. *Is Denominationalism Necessary For Any Spiritual Blessing?*

- A. Spiritual blessings are as necessary to the spirit as physical blessings are to the body.
  1. Spiritual blessings — what we receive: forgiveness (Eph. 1: 7); salvation (Eph. 2: 8); Holy Spirit (Acts 5: 32).
  2. Spiritual blessings — what we become: children of God (I John 3: If. ); Christians (I Pet. 4: 16).
  3. Spiritual blessings — where we are: with Christ (Col. 3: 1-3; Eph. 1: 3); in covenant relationship with God (Eph. 2: 16, 19).
- B. Denominationalism is not necessary for the enjoyment of a single spiritual blessing.
  1. When one joins a denomination, does he receive: forgiveness, salvation or the Holy Spirit? does he become a child of God, a Christian? is he united with Christ and put into covenant relationship with God? No one will affirm this.
  2. Are not all of these prerequisites to membership in a denomination? Yes! Then, if one may enjoy all spiritual blessings outside of denominations, the question comes, Why have denominations?

- C. Membership in the Lord's church is necessary for these spiritual blessings.
1. Only those in the Lord's church have been redeemed by blood. Acts 20: 28.
  2. Only those in the Lord's body (cf. Col. 1: 18) are saved (Eph. 5: 23).
  3. Only those in the Lord's church are in God's family. I Tim. 3: 15.
  4. Only those in the Lord's church are in Christ. Cf. I Cor. 12: 13; Gal. 3: 27.
  5. Only those in the Lord's body are reconciled to God. Eph. 2: 16. Were these spiritual blessings enjoyed before the existence of denominationalism? Certainly! Therefore, denominationalism is unnecessary!

### III. Is *Denominationalism Necessary For Christian Work and Worship?*

- A. Christians must work and worship God if they find favor with God. On work, cf. I Cor. 15: 58; I Thess. 1: 2f.; Gal. 6: 10, et al. On worship, cf. John 4: 24; Phil. 3: 3; Rev. 22: 9, et. al.
- B. Denominationalism is not necessary for Christian work and worship.
1. Did Christians work for Christ and worship God before the existence of denominations? Certainly! If they could 1900 years ago, why can't they now? There is no answer to the question except, they can.
  2. Regarding work, is it possible for a saved person who refuses to join a denomination to work for the Lord? Don't say, "If he is saved, he will join a denomination, " because I can show you saved people in the New Testament who did **not**. **What** work does **a** denomination do that



one undenominational Christian or a group of undenominational Christians cannot do? There is no scriptural work that cannot be done by undenominational Christians. If so, name one!

3. Regarding worship, are there true worshippers of God outside of denominations? If you say, "No, " you are making membership in a church necessary to go to heaven, and yet the denominational charge against the church of Christ is, "You preach the church instead of Christ. " Cf. Rom. 2: 1, 21f.
- C. The Lord's church is the place for Christian work for it is His vineyard (I Cor. 3: 9); the Lord's church is the place for Christian worship for it is His temple (Eph. 2: 21). But we can work and worship in the Lord's church without ever belonging to a denominational church — the Christians of the first century did!

*Conclusion:*

1. There is all the difference in the world between denominational Christianity and first-century, undenominational Christianity.
2. The essentiality of membership in the Lord's church is taught throughout the New Testament, while the essentiality of denominational churches cannot be upheld successfully in the light of God's word.
3. It is my prayer that honest people in denominations who have never seen undenominational Christianity practiced may see it, appreciate it and accept it.

# THE TRAGEDY OF BEING LOST

Luke 15

## *Introduction:*

1. The setting for these three parables of grace is stated in verses 1 and 2.
  - a. The enemies of our Lord had murmured from the beginning. They had seen His power to work miracles, but they ascribed it to Beelzebub. They had heard His teaching, but they were offended at it. They had known His claim to be the Son of God, but they would not accept it.
  - b. Now they are murmuring because of Jesus' love for sinners. They are saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. "
2. The purpose of these three parables is to show what God's attitude toward the lost is, and, thus, what man's attitude toward the lost should be. The one point that is common to all three parables is "Rejoice. " When the lost is found there is rejoicing, and these Pharisees and scribes, instead of murmuring, ought to rejoice that Jesus has come "to seek and to save the lost. "
3. It is tragic to be lost. Relate the story of the little boy who wandered from home and became lost. What misery and terror filled his little heart! But it is far worse to be lost in sin. These parables suggest four ways to be lost.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *The Tragedy of Carelessness — The Lost Sheep.*  
Vs. 3-7.
  - A. The figure of the shepherd, sheep and sheepfold is found many times in the scriptures. Isa. 53: 6f.;

John 10: 1ff.; Acts 20: 28, etc.

1. Palestine was a land well suited for the pastoral life.
  2. There are many points of analogy between sheep and men, e. g., proneness to wander, exposure to danger, difficulty of finding the way back, etc.
- B. Many today are lost in sin through the tragedy of carelessness. Implications:
1. Thoughtlessness. Many are lost, not through a deliberate forsaking of the Shepherd, but through an unconscious straying. Another figure which suggests the same thought is that of a ship drifting at sea. Heb. 2: 1. Cf. Matt. 9: 36, a picture of a multitude that had no real purpose in life.
  2. Absorption in other matters.
    - a. A lamb often at the rear of the flock may see a little stretch of green grass, and becoming absorbed with that delicious morsel, it loses consciousness of the fact that the shepherd and the flock move on and he will soon be lost.
    - b. Many are they who are carelessly absorbed in the treasures and pleasures of this life (cf. Luke 8: 14; 12: 16-21), or the complacency of denominational error. They are lost, not because they are mean, but because they are careless.
  3. Lack of knowledge, spiritual interest and diligence.
    - a. Admonitions are many to "give diligence" and "take heed."
    - b. Failure to do this means we are lost. Cf. Hosea 4: 6; Acts 17: 30.
- C. The tragedy of carelessness is seen almost daily

in useless accidents. Illustration: Entire family destroyed at railroad crossing.

II. *The Tragedy of Uselessness — The Lost Coin.* Vs. 8-10.

A. The lost coin was a useless coin. Money is of value only if it is used. This coin was of no value because it was "out of circulation. "

B. The useless church member is a lost church member.

1. Once each member of the Lord's church was useful. If we were genuinely converted, we said, "I am Thine, O Lord, All to Thee I surrender, Take me and use me in Thy service. "

2. Many have changed from useful vessels to useless vessels, from vessels of honor to vessels of dishonor (II Tim. 2: 20).

3. Uselessness means: loss of zeal for the Lord, loss of concern for others, and loss of influence (savor? Matt. 5: 13; radiance, Matt. 5: 14ff. ).

4. The useless member is the one who has quit (Luke 9: 62), fallen (Gal. 5: 4), does not serve the purpose that God has for him (Matt. 25: 24ff. ).

C. What am I worth to the Lord and His church in zeal, faithfulness, loyalty and influence? The tragedy of uselessness will condemn many in the church.

III. *The Tragedy of Wilfulness — The Prodigal Son.* Vs. 11-24.

A. The Prodigal Son was lost wilfully.

1. He wilfully asked for his portion of the substance.

2. He wilfully went into the far country. With his eyes wide open he went into sin.

3. He wilfully wasted his substance with riotous living. He had no one to blame but himself.
- B. There are many lost today for the same reason. This implies:
1. Rebellion and defiance of authority.
    - a. Morally, these people say, "What I do is none of your business. " Illustration: Relate the statement of the worldly group who said, "We know we are going to hell, but we're having a good time doing it. "
    - b. Doctrinally, this kind says, "So what? We can read that baptism is immersion, but sprinkling is just as good. We know the early disciples wore the name Christian and that only, but so what? There is nothing in a name. "
  2. Exaltation of my will and a desecration of God's will. "Not *Thy* will but *mine* be done. "
  3. Prejudice. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed" (Matt. 13: 15).
  4. Greater Damnation. Cf. Luke 12: 47, 48.
- C. Happily though, the Prodigal Son's will was broken, he repented and returned home, and he was graciously received by his father. But wilfulness, unrepented of, will result in certain condemnation.
- IV. *The Tragedy of Bitterness — The Elder Brother. Vs. 25-32.*
- A. This is the type who seldom consider themselves lost.
    1. He had stayed in his father's house.
    2. He had served his father. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee. "

8. He was never guilty of the immoralities of his brother. "I never transgressed a commandment of thine. "
- B. But he was lost because of his wrong attitude toward his brother.
  1. He was angry, jealous and had no sympathy for his brother.
  2. Bitterness toward brethren will cause us to be lost in hell as surely as the immoralities of the flesh. They are in the same class. Gal. 5: 19f.
  3. Love for brethren is abundantly and plainly taught. John 13: 34-35; I Cor. 13: 1-3; I John 2: 9-11, 3: 14f., 4: 20f.
  4. The elder brother represents the Pharisees and scribes who stood condemned because they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought" (Luke 18: 9).

*Conclusion:*

1. These are some of the ways in which you and I can be lost. Let us examine ourselves to see if it is possible we are in one of these four classes.
2. To be lost eternally is by far the most terrible thing that could happen to anyone. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Will you let Him save you now by submitting to His will.

# THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Matt. 13: 451

## *Introduction:*

1. Parables by the seaside. Subject: The gradual growth and certain triumph of the kingdom of God. Sower: unequal growth of seed; Tares: contemporaneous growth of evil with good; Seed and Leaven: extent of growth of kingdom; Net: final separation of good and bad; Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Price: surpassing worth of membership in kingdom.
2. We live in a world of values, prices, profits, losses, stocks, bonds, etc. The question is: What is valuable?
3. All are merchants in the market place looking for something. What are we looking for in life? Are we wise merchants or foolish?

## *Discussion:*

### I. *The Precious Pearl.*

#### A. Identity of the Pearl.

1. The world's conception of the most valuable things in life.
  - a. Financial security. Cf. Rich Fool (Luke 12: 16-21).
  - b. Sinful pleasures. Cf. Epicureans (Acts 17: 18; I Cor. 15: 32).
  - c. Worldly power. Cf. Alexander the Great. Matt. 20: 25ff.
  - d. Wisdom and education. Cf. Greeks (I Cor. 1: 22ff. ).
  - e. With others it is prestige and prominence, physical health or a good family. Some of these are good, but they are not the pearl

of great price — there is something more valuable and precious than these.

2. God in His Word tells us that the pearl of great price is Jesus Christ — His truth, His kingdom, His salvation. All other things fade into relative insignificance when compared to Christ. Cf. Phil. 1: 21; 4: 18f.

B. Value of the Pearl. Its possession means:

1. True treasures for the poor. II Cor. 8: 9; Matt. 6: 19.
2. True sustenance for the famished. Isa. 55: 1; Luke 14: 17.
3. True security for the troubled. Psalm 46: 1-3.

C. Reasons for Its Value.

1. To possess it means the greatest satisfaction: forgiveness, happiness, peace, hope, etc. In life, these are worth more than all the world.
2. Its value will increase with the passing of time. The greatest wisdom of buying the pearl of great price will be seen at death, the judgment and in eternity. It is the only possession we can take with us at death.
3. God, who knows values and sets values, has determined the value of this pearl. I am willing to take His valuation of it and not man's.

II. *The Seeking Merchant.*

A. He was desirous of the better things of life.

1. He wanted pearls, good pearls, the best pearl. Cf. Rich Young Ruler (Matt. 19: 16); Mary (Luke 10: 42).
2. The desire for the better things is important and necessary.
  - a. In the realm of morals, if the drinker, gam-



bler or immoral person never desires a higher and better life, he will never attain it.

- b. In the realm of faith, if those in denominational error are satisfied and never desire to know the truth, they will never find it.
3. Christianity is the religion of desire (John 7: 17), and before one can find Christ and appropriate Him, he must desire Him.

B. He was able to discern values.

1. He could discriminate between the good, better and best. He looked for good pearls, but when he found *the* pearl of great price, he knew it.
2. A discerning mind (an honest and good heart) is necessary. Illustrate:
  - a. Bereans (Acts 17: 11). They desired the truth, and when Paul and Silas presented it to them, their honesty caused them to discern it. They searched the scriptures *to see*, and they saw!
  - b. Two couples who were reading themselves out of denominationalism heard a broadcast, invited me to teach them the truth further, and after listening for three hours they exclaimed, "This is what we have been looking for. " They were baptized about midnight the same day. They desired the truth and they discerned it when presented to them.

C. He was determined to get the pearl of great price.

1. Real desire and proper discernment will lead to determination to lay hold of the pearl. He had sought to find the good pearl; now he seeks to get the best. Cf. Matt. 7: 71; Isa. 55: 6.
2. The Ethiopian eunuch is another example of the seeking merchant. He desired the truth; when

Christ was preached to him, he could discern Him as the Suffering Servant; and he was determined to obey Him in baptism.

3. Those who are lost in eternity will be **lost either** because they did not desire, did not discern or did not determine to get the pearl of great price.

### III. *The Costly Purchase.*

#### A. Characteristics of the Purchase.

1. It was immediate. "Having found it, he went ... " Indicative of real desire, discernment and determination. Cf. Pentecostians and Jailer.
2. It was joyful. Cf. Hidden Treasure (Matt. 13: 44). The value of the pearl makes the purchase a joy. Acts 8: 8, 39.
3. It was costly. "All that he had. " The price was not cheap.

#### B. Cost of the Purchase. "All. "

1. Not in terms of dollars and cents. Isa. 55: 1; Rom. 6: 23.
2. But in terms of sacrifice and self-denial. It means the giving up of every prejudice, every person and every pleasure of sin. Matt. 16: 24; Luke 14: 26; Heb. 11: 24-26.
3. Illustration: Paul. Phil. 3: 5-8. He thought he was rich as a Pharisee, but one day he found Christ, the pearl of great price, and he sold all that he had and bought Him.

#### C. Consequences of the Purchase. Having in our possession the pearl of great price means more than all of the treasures and pleasures of the world. Everything else is relatively unimportant. Jesus, His truth, His kingdom and His salvation, is the key to success in life and triumph in death.

*Conclusion:*

1. This purchase of the pearl of great price can truly be called "The Great Transaction. "
2. "Jesus is all the world to me, My life, my joy, my all. " If you have never found Him and laid hold upon Him, accept Him now by believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized into Him.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

II Tim. 4: 1-5

## *Introduction:*

1. Christianity is the religion of preaching. Mark 16: 16. It is an important part of Christian worship. Acts 20: 7.
2. Some say, "The days of preaching are past. " No! There are people today who do not appreciate public preaching, but there are also many who do not appreciate private teaching. Some will not come to a gospel meeting, but some consider a visit to their homes an infringement on their time. Personal teaching has its advantages, and public preaching still can get results.
3. The glory of gospel preaching needs re-emphasizing to young and old alike.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *The Urgency of Preaching.* V. 1.
  - A. It is the subject of a charge.
    1. Charges customary at death. Cf. I Kings 2: Iff. Paul is near the end.
    2. A charge is not a mere desire nor request, but a solemn supplication. Illustrate: A judge's charge to a jury in whose hands is a man's life.
    3. Much dependent upon this charge: spiritual, not physical, life.
  - B. The solemnity of the charge is suggested by:
    1. Recognition of God's presence. Cf. I Tim. 5: 21.
    2. Recognition of the final judgment. II Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 20: 12.

3. Recognition of the second coming of Christ and the everlasting kingdom.

## II. *The Content of Preaching.* V. 2.

- A. The *word* marks the content and extent of our preaching.
  1. The word is the gospel. Mark **16: 16**; Rom. 1: 16.
  2. The word is Jesus Christ. Acts 8: 5; Matt. 1: 21.
  3. The word is the truth. John 17: 17; John 8: 32.
- B. We must preach the word as opposed to:
  1. Worldly wisdom and human philosophy. I Cor. 1: 21ff.; Col. 2: 8.
  2. A different or perverted gospel. Gal. 1: 6; cf. II Pet. 3: 16.
  3. Self. II Cor. 4: 5. Why preach self when we can preach Christ?
- C. Gospel preaching is biblical preaching: text, illustrations, exposition. Only the word preached **can** save!

## III. *The Manner of Preaching.* V. 2.

- A. Readiness. "Be urgent in season, out of season. "
  1. Paul taught the necessity of seizing opportunities. Col. 4: 5.
  2. Paul practiced what he preached: readiness. Rom. 1: 14f.
  3. He was ready to preach to anyone and everyone: men-women; high-low; good-bad.
- B. Adaptable to the needs of his hearers.
  1. Reprove. "To correct by word; convict. "
    - a. It is translated: *show (tell) fault*, Matt. 18: 15; *convince (convict)*, Tit. 1: 9; *expose*, Eph. 5: 11 RSV.

- b. The meaning is "an effective rebuke."
  - 2. Rebuke. "To charge on pain of. "
    - a. The thought of sharpness and severity is in the word. Translated by von Soden: *threaten*. Cf. the warnings of Jesus in Matt. 23.
    - b. This, too, is a part of preaching. The impenitent need it.
  - 3. Exhort. Literally, "to call upon; admonish. "
    - a. Barnabas (son of exhortation); cf. Acts 2: 40; Heb. 3: 13.
    - b. Tischendorf puts the order of the three: convict, exhort, warn. Show a man his error, exhort him to leave it and warn him if he does not.
- C. Patience and Longsuffering.
- 1. Necessary in preaching. Do not get weary nor angry at others' obstinacy.
  - 2. Our work is difficult and often unappreciated. Cf. Acts 20: 26f.

#### IV. *The Necessity of Preaching.* Vs. 3, 4.

- A. The necessity of sound (healthful) teaching.
- 1. Truth is to the spirit what good food is to the body.
  - 2. Teaching often likened to food. I Pet. 2: 2; Heb. 5: 12; John 4: 34.
  - 3. Preachers are dispensers of spiritual food, either good or bad.
- B. The aversion to sound teaching.
- 1. They will not endure (bear with, listen to) it.
    - a. Jesus Himself encountered this type. Matt. 13: 15.
    - b. Everyone does not want the truth. John 7: 17; cf. Luke 8: 15.

2. They will accumulate teachers to suit their fancy.
  - a. They have itching ears — ears to be tickled, not taught; to be gratified, not edified. Cf. Isa. 30: 10; I Kings 22: 18.
  - b. They heap (invite en masse) their own preachers who will preach to them what they want, but not what they need, to hear.
3. They will turn aside from the truth to fables.
  - a. The fables could be either Jewish or gnostic: traditions, allegorical interpretations, false doctrines generally.
  - b. These will damn instead of save, and they are part of the punishment to those who believe not the truth. II Thess. 2: 11f.

*Conclusion:*

1. The Christian attitude toward preaching.
  - a. Realize its importance. Rom. 10: 14.
  - b. Appreciate those who are engaged in it. Rom. 10: 15.
  - c. Accept the truth as it is preached and apply it to ourselves.
2. The hope of the church is upon preaching and preachers. May God give us more men who will truly "preach the word. "

## EXCEPT YE REPENT

Luke 13: 1-5

### *Introduction:*

1. There is no mention of the two incidents of the text anywhere else. The common conception was that there was an exact correlation between sin and suffering (cf. John 9: 2f. ). Jesus refers to the belief, but denies it and calls upon his hearers to repent.
2. The command to repent may be called the hardest command. Jesus gave some hard teaching (cf. John 6: 60; Matt. 19: 23), and many today find it hard to believe, to be baptized, to love one another, etc. Yet to genuinely repent of sins is difficult for every sinner.
3. Although repentance is mentioned so often in the Bible, there are many misunderstandings regarding it.

### *Discussion:*

#### *I. The Importance of Repentance.*

- A. Its importance is seen in preaching. Repentance has always been God's message.
  1. Jonah and Nineveh. Jonah 3: 4; Matt. 12: 41.
  2. John the Baptist. Matt. 3: 1f., 11; Mark 1: 4. John's baptism was one *of* (growing out of) repentance and *unto* (binding to a life of) repentance.
  3. Jesus. Matt. 9: 13; 11: 20ff.
  4. Peter. Acts 2: 38; 3: 19; II Pet. 3: 9.
  5. Paul. Acts 17: 30.
- B. Its importance is seen in the promises of God.
  1. Repentance is necessary for the remission of sins. Luke 24: 47; Acts 2: 38.



2. Repentance is necessary for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2: 38. (cf. Rev. 3: 19f. ).
  3. Repentance is necessary for the blessings of heaven. Luke 13: 3, 5.
- C. Its importance is seen in the picture of sin: its nature, its awefulness, its universality and its punishment.

## II. *The Definition of Repentance.*

### A. What repentance is NOT.

1. Fear. Some preachers delight in death-bed tales to induce repentance (through the hospital, morgue and cemetery). Pharaoh and Felix scared, but did not repent.
2. Prayer. This is no guarantee of repentance. Prov. 28: 9.
3. Penance. Definition: "A sacrament consisting of contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution. " This is not scriptural repentance.

### B. Genuine repentance is more than regret.

1. The repentance of God. Gen. 6: 6. RSV: "And the Lord *was sorry* that he had made man on the earth. " Jer. 4: 28. RSV: "I *have* not repented... "
2. The repentance of Judas Iscariot. Matt. 27: 3. There are two Greek words for repentance in the New Testament. Here the word is *metamelomai*, literally meaning "after-care, " and denoting a change of care. The thought of remorse or regret is the thought of this word. Judas regretted his sin, but he did not genuinely repent.
3. The repentance of Paul. II Cor. 7: 8-10. Both Greek words for repentance are used here, and *metamelomai* is rendered in ASV "regret. " Paul

no longer regrets that he wrote the first letter because it resulted in their repentance.

- C. Full and genuine repentance is the word *metanoeo*, literally meaning "after-knowledge," and denoting a change of mind. This change of mind includes:
1. Regret. This is the godly sorrow of II Cor. 7: 10. The sinner must feel regret because he knows his sins have offended God and he is under His wrath.
  2. Resolve. Change of will. This was expressed by the prodigal son when he said, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15: 18). Cf. Matt. 21: 29.
  3. Reform. This is the fruits of repentance (Matt. 3: 8). Illustrate: Thessalonians turned from idols (I Thess. 1: 9); Ephesians burned books (Acts 19: 19).
  4. Restore. If stolen, return. This is often difficult and sometimes impossible (the one I have wronged may be dead), but the desire and effort are necessary.

### III. *God and Repentance.*

- A. God demands repentance. This is obvious when we see His: nature (holy), commands, purpose for man.
- B. God desires repentance. Our God of love wants the sinner saved. II Pet. 3: 9; I Tim. 2: 4.
- C. God rejoices in repentance. Sin grieves heaven (Eph. 4: 30); repentance rejoices heaven (Luke 15: 7, 10).
- D. God gives repentance. Acts 5: 31. How? Not by miracle (cf. Luke 16: 30). God is no respecter of persons. But in three ways God gives repentance:

1. He gives the ability to repent.
  - a. All who want to repent can repent and come to God. Matt. 11: 28; II Pet. 3: 9. It is possible to lose the desire (cf. Heb. 6: 6).
  - b. Explain Heb. 12: 17. In the KJV it seems that Esau wanted to repent but could not. The ASV makes it clear: "... for he found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears. "
2. He gives the time and opportunity to repent. II Pet. 3: 9; Luke 13: 6-9. Each day brings with it an opportunity to repent.
3. He gives the incentives to repent.
  - a. The goodness of God. Rom. 2: 4; James 1: 17. Both the material and spiritual blessings from God ought to cause us to repent. The impenitent is the most ungrateful.
  - b. The severity of God. Rom. 2: 2, 3, 5. The fear of punishment often breaks the stubborn will. Cf. Matt. 11: 21ff., Acts 17: 30f, Jonah. Sinner: Think of your bad conscience, terror in death, eternity in hell.

*Conclusion:*

1. God cannot force the sinner to repent, He can only appeal. The choice is yours — repent or perish, turn or be lost.
2. The Christian life is one of continual repentance (Acts 8: 22; Rev. 2: 5).

# UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?

Acts 8: 30

## *Introduction:*

1. The Ethiopian eunuch is portrayed in Acts 8: 26-39 as an honorable man in difficulty, a worshipper of God, one who had traveled far to worship, and interested enough in things divine to read the scriptures as he traveled.
2. It is a wonderful privilege to have at our access to read the holy scriptures.
  - a. It is God's will that we read His Word. Rev. 1: 3; Deut. 31: 10-13.
  - b. Paul realized the value of reading the Word. I Tim. 4: 13; Col. 4: 16.
3. To read the Bible is important; to understand what we read is more important. The words "understand" and "understanding" are found 304 times in the Bible, yet there is more misunderstanding on the Bible than any other subject.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Importance of Understanding the Scriptures.*

- A. There are great blessings in understanding the Bible.
  1. Happiness. Psalm 1: 2. An understanding of the Bible means an understanding of the Saviour, salvation, self, service, and knowing the meaning of these means true happiness.
  2. Strength. Prov. 24: 5. The knowledge and application of the scriptures is a source of strength in: temptation, fear, doubt and sorrow.
  3. Approval. II Tim. 2: 15. We can never meet

God's approval without understanding and applying His Word, and to seek His approval is life's task.

- B. There are great dangers that result from misunderstanding the Bible.
  - 1. Tragedy is often the consequence of misunderstanding. Illustrations: the pharmacist who misunderstands the prescription; the injection of live polio viruses caused the disease in many people.
  - 2. It is a far greater tragedy to misunderstand that which pertains to our immortal souls. Matt. 13: 19; II Pet. 3: 16.
  - 3. In view of the dangers of misunderstanding, we ought to give diligence, take heed, beware, and our prayer to God ought to be, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. "

## II. *The Possibility of Understanding the Scriptures.*

- A. God in His mercy has made the scriptures understandable.
  - 1. God commands that we understand His Word. Matt. 15: 10; Eph. 5: 17.
  - 2. His Word has been understood in the past. Neh. 8: 8, 12; Luke 24: 45; Acts 8: 35f.
  - 3. It is a reflection on God if the Bible is not understandable. It reflects on His power if He would but could not make it understandable; it reflects on His goodness if He could but would not make it so.
- B. The Bible is a unique book with regard to our study and understanding of it.
  - 1. Parts are impossible to understand. Deut. 29: 29. The hows and whys.

2. Parts are difficult to understand. II Pet. 3: 16. Illustrations: the blasphemy of the Holy-Spirit; the priesthood of Melchizedek.
  3. Parts necessary to salvation are easier to understand. There are truths on the surface, deeper truths and unfathomable truths.
- C. Is it possible for people to understand the scriptures differently?
1. It is often said, "You understand the Bible one way, and I understand it another way. " Such is utterly impossible! To the extent that we understand it differently, somebody misunderstands it.
  2. To illustrate this obvious truth, if the eunuch understood the suffering servant of Isaiah to be the prophet himself, and Philip understood him to be Jesus of Nazareth, one of them had to be wrong.

### III. *The Necessities for Understanding the Scriptures.*

- A. Faith in and reverence for the Bible as the Word of God.
1. Curiosity on the one hand or the desire to be critical on the other may start one reading the Bible, but he who knows it best is the one who accepts it as the infallible truth of God.
  2. There is every reason for us to believe the Bible to be inspired. Cf. II Pet. 1: 20f.; II Tim. 3: 16f.
- B. An honest and sincere desire to know and do the truth.
1. The scriptures teach that honest hearts are necessary. Luke 8: 15; John 7: 17.
  2. Honesty toward the truth is opposed to: indifference (Matt. 13: 19; the "So what?" atti-

- tude) and prejudice (Matt. 13: 15; John 8: 43).
3. We should ask ourselves as to why we read the Bible — to find proof-texts or to find the truth? The eunuch was an honest searcher!
- C. A determined effort to find and understand the truth.
1. The desire for the truth must result in a search for it. Cf. John 5: 39; Matt. 7: 7f.
  2. An investigating spirit is essential to finding the truth.
    - a. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and heard his word. Luke 10: 39.
    - b. The Bereans examined the scriptures daily. Acts 17: 11.
    - c. The eunuch was investigating the scriptures as he traveled.
  3. The answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" can be found by searching the scriptures. The Word of God must be read, reflected upon and rightly divided in order to be understood.

*Conclusion:*

1. The forgiveness of sins is dependent upon one's understanding the gospel of Christ: its facts, commands and promises.
2. The ultimate salvation of our souls is dependent upon our understanding what it means to live the Christian life: faithfulness and holiness to the end.
3. To have the Bible that we can understand and obey is a wonderful privilege, but its possession is also a fearful responsibility. May all who hear this day come to an understanding of the will of God.

# VOICES OF THE DEAD

Heb. 11: 4

## *Introduction:*

1. The subject of death is fraught with much interest for everyone is affected by it, and yet it is fraught with mystery for we know so little about it.
2. Some questions that we often think about regarding the dead are:
  - a. Where are the dead? In the intermediate state or the final abode?
  - b. Are the dead conscious of us? Cf. Luke 16: 28; Heb. 12: 1.
  - c. What would the dead say if they could speak to us? Wicked? Righteous?
3. Though communication with the dead is impossible, in the Bible we have some messages from the dead to the living. These messages are most important.

## *Discussion:*

- I. *The Voice of Samuel.* I Sam. 28: 15-19.
  - A. The occasion of Saul's visit to the necromancer of En-dor.
    1. The Philistines were gathered for war against Israel, and Saul feared. Vs. 4f.
    2. God would not talk to Saul, so he resorted to a woman with a familiar spirit. Vs. 6-14.
  - B. The explanation of the incident. Though our lesson is not primarily concerned with what happened and how, there are three common explanations:
    1. Luther, Calvin, et al. maintained the woman only thought it was Samuel.
    2. Others say it was by the power of Satan. Cf. the plagues in Egypt.



3. Some insist it was a miracle by God. Cf. Ezek. 14: 4-8.

C. The message of Samuel to Saul is a message to the living today.

1. The certainty of death. "Thou and thy sons shall be with me" (v. 19).
  - a. Samuel was in Sheol (Hades), and the statement clearly meant that Saul was going to die. Cf. I Kings 2: 2; Heb. 9: 27.
  - b. Everyone needs to be reminded of the certainty of death. Many refuse to think about it, but we can best prepare for it when we are conscious of it. To consider the end is good.
2. The proximity of death. "Tomorrow" (v. 19).
  - a. At best everyone is near to death. Cf. I Pet. 1: 24; Job 14: 1; James 4: 14.
  - b. No one knows just how near death we are. Disease (cancer, heart attacks, etc. ) can take us so suddenly, and accidents are so common. Illustrate: the young woman who had minor surgery, was recovering, but died suddenly of a blood clot.
  - c. If we live a week, a year or fifty years, it still will be only "tomorrow" (a short time) till we die. For Saul, the next day brought him no tomorrow!

II. *The Voice of the Rich Man. Luke 16: 23-28.*

- A. Introductory remarks regarding the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus.
1. The occasion is found in vs. 11-14. Pharisees were lovers of money.
  2. The question of whether it is a parable or not. It does not matter.

3. Contrast the rich man and Lazarus in: life, death and eternity.
  - B. The message of the rich man is a message concerning life after death.
    1. The certainty of life after death — immortality. "In Hades he lifted up his eyes. "
      - a. There is a conscious existence after the death of the body, and he answers most affirmatively the question of Job 14: 14.
      - b. In answer to the materialist or annihilat- ionist (distinguish the two) who deny im- mortality, the rich man says, "Don't you be- lieve that death ends it all. "
    2. The horribleness of the punishment of the wicked. "Being in torments. "
      - a. There is the most severe suffering await- ing the disobedient in eternity. Its: nature, fire; opposite, comfort; duration, forever. Cf. Matt. 8: 12; Mark 9: 48; II Thess. 1: 9.
      - b. In answer to those who say that God is too good to let His creatures suffer eternally, the rich man says, "Don't believe it. "
    3. The warning to all to avoid hell. "Lest they also come into this place of torment. "
      - a. The Bible is filled with such warnings. Matt. 7: 13f.; Ezek. 18: 30-32; Amos 4: 12.
      - b. To those who are headed for the same place, the rich man says, "Don't come here what- ever you do!"
- III. *The Voice of Abel. Heb. 11: 4.*
- A. Relate briefly the story of Cain and Abel. Gen. 4: 1-8.
    1. Contrast the two brothers: occupations, offer- ings, results.

2. The way of Cain represents the way of: human opinion, substitution and disobedience.
- B. The message of righteous Abel is the necessity of preparation for death.
  1. The necessity of faith. "By faith. "
    - a. Faith is necessary. Heb. 11: 1, 6; John 8: 24; Acts 16: 31; II Cor. 5: 7.
    - b. Abel says to the living, "The life of faith is the only life to live. "
  2. The meaning of faith. "By faith Abel offered. "
    - a. Acceptable faith is obedient faith. Cf. Noah (prepared an ark); Abraham (obeyed; offered). Heb. 11: 7f., 17.
    - b. Abel says, "Put your faith into action and obey God. " James 2: 24.
  3. The reward of faith. "Witness borne to him that he was righteous. "
    - a. An obedient faith is reckoned for righteousness. James 2: 23.
    - b. An obedient faith unites with Christ (Gal. 3: 26f. ), and a life of faith will lead to heaven (Rev. 2: 10).
    - c. Abel says, "Faith has its rewards; trust and obey God and see. "

*Conclusion:*

1. Everyone should be willing to listen to and respect these voices from the dead, for they speak the truth with all honesty and sincerity.
2. Hear the voice of Samuel: the certainty of death. Believe the voice of the rich man: the certainty of life after death. Heed the voice of Abel: the necessity of preparation for death.

## WHAT SHALL THE END BE?

I Pet. 4: 17

### *Introduction:*

1. This is the most important question for all of us, for upon its answer depends eternal salvation in heaven or eternal condemnation in hell.
2. To reflect upon the end often serves as a preventive to wrongdoing. Illustrate:
  - a. When tempted with the first drink of liquor, if one would ask himself, "What will the end of this be?" he might refrain. The end might be the gutter of drunkenness and alcoholism, a broken home, etc.
  - b. When tempted with embezzlement the banker ought to ask himself, "What shall the end of this be?" Embarrassment to his family, prison, disgrace.
3. To reflect upon the end often serves as an incentive to right-doing. Illustrate:
  - a. The runner in the race looks to the end and the prize, and puts forth his very best.
  - b. The student in school looks to the end of the term with its exams and grades, and studies harder.

### *Discussion:*

#### I. *The Certainty of the End.*

- A. The Bible plainly speaks of an ultimate end.
  1. It is sometimes called merely the end. I Cor. 15: 22-24.
  2. It is referred to as the end of the world. Matt. 24: 3; cf. II Pet. 3: 10.
  3. It is also spoken of as the end of time. Rev. 10: 6. "When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more. "

4. It is called the end of all things. I Pet. 4: 7.
- B. For every person it will be the end of something.
  1. For the faithful Christian.
    - a. The end of his conflict with the flesh. I Cor. 9: 27; II Tim. 4: 8.
    - b. The end of his sufferings and trials. II Cor. 4: 17. "Glory For Me. "
  2. For the unfaithful Christian.
    - a. The end of God's patience. Rom. 10: 21. The day of grace has ended.
    - b. The end of God's exhortations. Cf. Rom. 12: 1f.; Eph. 4: 1, et al.
  3. For the unbeliever and disobedient.
    - a. The end of opportunity to be saved. Cf. Rev. 3: 20. One day Christ will cease His knocking, and you would give the world for just one more knock. But no, the end has come!
    - b. The end of rejection and rebellion. Phil. 2: 10. You will bow and confess, but too late.

## II. *The Time of the End.*

- A. God has revealed the certainty of the end, but not the time of the end.
  1. The future is uncertain. Illustrate: weather, stock market, etc.
  2. Death is unpredictable. Prov. 27: 1; James 4: 13f.
  3. Christ's return is unknowable. Matt. 24: 36.
- B. Our attitude toward the end.
  1. We must not deny there will be an end. Cf. II Pet. 3: 3f.
  2. We must not delay the end in our thinking. Matt. 24: 48-51.
  3. We must recognize the end as a definite appointment. Heb. 9: 27.

4. We must realize the end is nearer than it has been. Cf. Rom. 13: 11. The road sign says, "Jesus is soon coming." True! It may be a day or a thousand years, but it is sooner than it has been.

### III. *The Importance of Considering the End.*

- A. It is important because the end will be the beginning.
  1. Though death ends some things, it only really marks a transition.
    - a. Time will end (Rev. 10: 6), but eternity will begin.
    - b. Physical existence will end, but a new spiritual existence will begin. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5: 1.
    - c. Earth will end, but heaven or hell will begin. Matt. 25: 46.
  2. For the saved it will be the beginning of:
    - a. A new life with Christ. Phil. 1: 23; I Thess. 4: 17.
    - b. A new life of supernal joy. Matt. 25: 21; cf. Rev. 21: 4.
  3. For the lost it will be the beginning of:
    - a. An eternity of death (separation). Rom. 6: 23; cf. Luke 16: 23.
    - b. An eternity of horrible punishment. II Thess. 1: 9; Matt. 8: 12.
- B. It is important because considering the end will prepare us for it.
  1. Those who have lived successful lives have considered the end.
    - a. Noah looked to the end (flood) and obeyed God. Heb. **11: 7**.

- b. Paul looked to the end (goal) and pressed on. Phil. 3: 13f.
  - c. Jesus looked to the end (glory) and endured the cross. Heb. 12: 1f.
2. Considering the end will result in:
- a. Patience in trials. Matt. 5: 11f. The end: reward. Cf. Phil. 4: 4f.
  - b. Zeal in endeavors. John 9: 4. The end: night. Cf. I Cor. 15: 58.
- C. It is important because the end justifies the means.
- 1. The ultimate end of every person is either hell with its horrors, or heaven with its beauties.
  - 2. The means that God has designed whereby we may avoid hell and gain heaven are:
    - a. Obedience to the gospel: Faith, repentance, confession, baptism.
    - b. A life of sacrificial service. Matt. 16: 24.
  - 3. Heaven will be worth every effort and sacrifice we are called upon to make.

*Conclusion:*

- 1. Compare Eccl. 7: 8, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof, " and II Pet. 2: 20, "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning. "
- 2. Whether the end is better or worse than the beginning depends on the answer to the question, What shall the end be? Consider the end and prepare for it.

# WHO IS A WISE MAN?

James 3: 13

## *Introduction:*

1. The value of wisdom has always been recognized.
  - a. The world has always had its wise men: magicians of Egypt; philosophers of Greece; Magi of Babylon and Persia.
  - b. Old Testament exalts wisdom: more valuable than rubies (Job 28: 18); better than strength (Eccl. 9: 16); brings happiness (Prov. 3: 13).
  - c. New Testament praises wisdom: qualification of deacons (Acts 6: 3); Paul prayed that Christians might possess it (Eph. 1: 17; Col. 1: 9); we are to teach and admonish with wisdom (Col. 3: 16).
2. Wisdom should be the goal of every Christian.
  - a. God is wise (Rom. 16: 27); Christ is wise (Col. 2: 3).
  - b. We are commanded to be wise (Matt. 10: 16); pray for wisdom (James 1: 5).
  - c. Two kinds of wisdom. James 3: 15-17; I Cor. 1: 21.

## *Discussion:*

### *I. The Wise Man Respects Jehovah God.*

- A. He acknowledges God. Cf. Psalm 14: 1.
  1. Denial of God predicted. II Pet. 2: 1.
  2. Denial of God popular in many places. Illustrate: Khrushchev; Ph. D. preacher.
  3. Denial of God foolish and damnable. Cf. Matt. 10: 33; II Pet. 2: 1.
- B. He fears God. Prov. 9: 10; Eccl. 12: 13.
  1. Respects His wisdom. Jer. 10: 23; cf. Gentiles, Rom. 1: 22f.



2. Respects His power. Omnipotent. Cf. Eph. 3: 20f.; I Cor. 1: 25.
  3. Respects His goodness. James 1: 17.
- C. He walks with God. Prov. 13: 20. In life (Psalm 128: 1); in death (Psalm 23: 4); in eternity (Rev. 3: 4).

## II. *The Wise Man Obeys Christ.*

- A. Submissive attitude toward authority reflects wisdom.
1. To respect authority is right and wise. Children and parents (Eph. 6: 1); Christians and civil authority (Rom. 13: 1).
  2. Christ and His Word are our authority. Heb. 1: 1f.; Matt. 17: 5; John 12: 48.
  3. Wise man hears and obeys. Matt. 7: 24f.
- B. Implicit obedience to Christ is evidence of true wisdom.
1. To hear and believe is not enough. Matt. 7: 26f; James 1: 22; 2: 20.
  2. Christ's goal must be obeyed. Rom. 6: 16-18; II Thess. 1: 9.
  3. An obedient Christian life must be lived.
    - a. We must continue to abide in Christ. John 15: 4.
    - b. We must continue faithful to the end. Rev. 2: 10.
- C. The wisdom of obeying Christ is realized in life (happiness, contentment, etc. ), in death (peace, hope, etc. ), and in judgment (crown of life).

## III. *The Wise Man Wins Others.*

- A. This fact is clearly stated throughout the scriptures.

1. Solomon realized the wisdom of winning souls. Prov. 11: 30. "
2. Daniel, another wise man, stated the same truth. Dan. 12: 3.
3. Paul, the wise master-builder, laid the foundation of Christ. I Cor. 3: 10.

B. The wisdom of saving lost souls is evident.

1. It is the wisdom of saving a precious possession: the soul. Matt. 16: 26. Illustrate: Refugees fleeing with but one prized object in their possession.
2. It is the wisdom of exalting Jesus Christ. The best way to lift Him up is to bring a lost soul to Him.
3. It is the wisdom of defeating Satan. Eph. 6: 12.
4. It is the wisdom of saving our own souls. Ezek. 3: 18f.

C. The wisdom of evangelism can be seen now and in eternity.

1. The greatest joy and satisfaction in this life for a Christian is to know that he has saved a soul from death. Cf. James 5: 19f.
2. This joy and satisfaction will be multiplied a thousand times in heaven. I Thess. 2: 19.

IV. *The Wise Man Prepares for the Future.*

A. The wisdom of preparing for the future of this life is acknowledged by most people.

1. The lowly ants prepare for the future. Prov. 30: 25.
2. It is tragic to see elderly people who did not prepare financially for their last years. Illustrate: the Christian couple who had no social security, no retirement insurance, and were wholly dependent upon the church.

3. This, of course, is not contradictory to Matt. 6: 25. Explain.
- B. Jesus taught the wisdom of preparing for eternity.
  1. Parable of the Rich Fool. Luke 12: 13-21.
  2. Parable of the Virgins. Matt. 25: 1-13.
  3. Parable of the Unjust Steward. Luke 16: 1-8.
- C. The wisdom of preparing for the future will be most clearly seen in the future. Cf. I Cor. 15: 32. We prepare by faith.

*Conclusion:*

1. It is wise to become a Christian and to live the Christian life, and it is most foolish not to do it. The world looks upon it as foolish (cf. I Cor. 4: 10), but God looks upon it as wise.
2. Who is a wise man ? One that fears God, obeys Christ, wins others, and in doing these, prepares for heaven.
3. "This is the time, 0 then be wise, 0 why not tonight?"

# THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS

Rev. 22: 13-20

## *Introduction:*

1. Usually the last words of a person are regarded as important and dear. For example, the last words of: Joshua (Josh. 24: 15); David (I Kings 2: 1-3); Paul (II Tim. 4: 6-8).
2. The words of the text are the last words of the Lord in His inspired revelation. God had spoken to man from the very beginning (Heb. 1: 1f. ), and even though there may be a sense in which we might say He speaks to us now in chastenings (Heb. 6: 6), these are the last recorded words of Jesus.
3. These last words impress us with four great truths.

## *Discussion:*

### I. *The Divinity of Jesus.* Verses 13, 16.

#### A. The divinity (or deity) of Jesus is the theme of God's Word.

1. He was not a mere wonder worker, friend of man, philosopher nor teacher. He was **all** of these *and more!*
2. The Scriptures emphasize His divinity. Matt. 16: 16; 17: 5; John 1: 1-3; Phil. 2: 5ff. Our salvation depends upon His divinity.
3. Jesus claimed divinity and He proved it by His: teachings (Matt. 7: 29); perfect life (John 8: 46); works (John 5: 36).

#### B. The description of His divinity in this last chapter of the Bible.

1. The Alpha and the Omega. (Rev. 22: 13; also **1: 8; 21: 6**).
  - a. **These are the first and last letters of the**

Greek alphabet, corresponding to our A and Z.

- b. It denotes His eternity — He was at the beginning and will be at the end of all things. Cf. Col. 1: 17a; I Cor. 15: 24.
  - c. It denotes His power — He began all things and will end all things. Cf. Col. 1: 16; John 1: 3.
2. The Root and the Offspring of David (Rev. 22: 16).
    - a. The picture of a tree cut down, from the root of which has sprung the Royal Prince, the King of kings, the Messiah.
    - b. Discuss the matter as to whether this refers to His humanity (cf. Rom. 1: 3) or divinity.
  3. The Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22: 16). A reference to Venus, the harbinger of day, beautiful and brilliant. So Jesus is the Holy One.

## II. *The Authority of Jesus.* Verses 18f.

- A. The authority of the scriptures is the authority of our Lord.
  1. The scriptures are inspired of God. II Tim. 3: 16f.; II Pet. 1: 20f.
  2. The scriptures are the infallible rule of faith and practice. Psalm 119: 105.
  3. The scriptures will judge us at the last day. John 12: 48; Rev. 20: 12.
- B. The two negative admonitions regarding the scriptures.
  1. Do not add to the words of the book.
    - a. What? Opinions, theories, interpretations, etc. Illustrations: Luther (added *alone* in Rom. 3: 28); Judaizers (added circumcision); Catholics (add traditions of church).

- b. Why? The plagues (judgments upon persecutors) will be added to you.
    - 2. Do not take from the words of the book.
      - a. How? Illustrations: Water from new birth; church from Christ; necessity of faithfulness from Christian life.
      - b. Why? The blessings of the tree of life and holy city will be taken from you.
  - C. The application of the admonition.
    - 1. Primarily to the book of Revelation. There is the danger of adding our explanations and deleting what we cannot understand.
    - 2. The principle, though, applies to all of the scriptures. We must respect the word of God in its entirety.
    - 3. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" John 2: 5.
- III. *The Second Coming of Jesus.* Verse 20.
- A. The "coming" of Jesus in the context was His coming in relief of the saints.
    - 1. The coming of the Son was the coming of the kingdom. Matt. 16: 28.
    - 2. The coming of the Son was the destruction of Jerusalem. Matt. 24: 30.
    - 3. The coming of the Son is the second coming of Christ. Matt. 25: 31.
    - 4. The coming of Christ might refer to an extraordinary event in the life of God's people. Cf. Rev. 1: 1, 3.
  - B. As we apply the lesson to us, we look for the second coming of Christ.
    - 1. It was promised by: Jesus (John 14: 3); Angels (Acts 1: 11); Paul (I Thess. 4: 15f. ); Peter (I Pet. 5: 4; cf. II Pet. 3: 10).

2. Our purpose in life is to prepare for it. Matt. 25; I Thess. 5: 6.
- C. The attitude of John toward the coming of the Lord. "Amen: come, Lord Jesus. " The "amen" suggests submission — so be it. The "come" suggests desire. Cf. II Tim. 4: 8; I Thess. 4: 18.

#### IV. *The Invitation of Jesus.* Verse 17.

- A. God has always invited sinners to come to Him for salvation.
  1. The hungry and thirsty invited. Isa. 55: 1.
  2. The burdened and oppressed invited. Matt. 11: 28-30.
  3. The thirsty and weary invited. Rev. 22: 17.
- B. It is fitting that the last words of Jesus are the offer of salvation.
  1. Man is separated from God by sin. Isa. 59: 1f.
  2. God took the initiative (John 3: 16); now, man must respond by coming.
  3. Salvation is coming to Christ, staying with Christ and dying in Christ.

#### *Conclusion:*

1. The last words of Jesus are beautiful and important. They show us His concern for our eternal salvation.
2. Will you not hear these words of the Lord and heed them?