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**CHARLES E. COBB**  
**145 Fifth Avenue, North**  
**Nashville, Tennessee**

## **COBB'S SERMONS**

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CHARLES E. COBB  
Nashville, Tenn.

DEDICATION  
to  
My Family  
and to  
The Faithful, Loyal People  
of  
Central Church of Christ  
In Nashville, Tennessee  
Where These Lessons Were Delivered  
and to  
The Faithful Workers Who  
Prepared the  
Manuscripts of These Lessons.  
Also  
To Every Man or Woman  
Who Has Influenced My Life for  
Good  
or  
Who Has Prayed for Me As I  
Have Gone About Endeavoring  
To Preach The Glad Tidings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.  
—The Author



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Charles E. Cobb, the subject of this preface, is in his thirty-sixth year. He was baptized at the age of twelve by C. L. Overturf, during a meeting, in which Jack Meyer was the speaker. He made his first public talk at the age of thirteen. He is five and one-half feet tall and weighs one hundred sixty pounds. He was born and reared in Sheffield, Alabama. He attended David Lipscomb and Freed-Hardeman Colleges. He is a representative Christian in the broadest sense. All who know him believe implicitly in his depth of piety, honesty of purpose, sincerity of convictions, and godliness of life.

As a preacher of the gospel, he is free from sensational methods, low slang, vulgar catch-phrases. He seeks always to maintain Christian dignity and propriety in the pulpit. He never seeks to popularize his sermons by passages of wit and humor; he does not resort to the frivolous, to illustrate an argument or catch the attention of the audience. He evidently believes implicitly the doctrine he preaches, and he delivers it with a solemnity and earnestness which powerfully emphasizes the importance he attaches to it.

He seeks to be exact in the use of the English language, and is thoroughly conversant with the two outstanding versions of the Bible—the King James and the American Standard. Beyond this, his preaching gives no indication at all as to the extent of his attainments in books. No one can hear, or read one of his sermons without being impressed, yea, charmed by the accuracy and nice discrimination he manifests in the use of words, and the simplicity which he endeavors to achieve. In the selection of words, formation of sentences, and distinct enunciation of each word in a sentence every syllable in a word, his delivery has the fascination of music to the attentive listener. Every sermon bears abundant evidence of his familiarity with the Word of God. He has not only read the Bible much, but he has evidently studied it carefully, sentence by sentence. But from his preaching, one would be puzzled to determine whether his education extended beyond this. The fact that he never stumbles into absurd or superficial interpretations in the face of scholarly exegesis, would indicate that he is not ignorant of the trend of modern criticism. and the fact that he never manifests want of information touching the established facts of history and the recognized principles of science, would suggest that he is a man of general reading and liberal education. But these are only inferences. Like Paul, he relies upon the revelation of God, rather than the wisdom of man.

Socially, he is congenial and agreeable. He is a good listener in the social circle. He never compromises his convictions in the social circle. He always states his convictions plainly and courteously at all times and places.

If he ever has an opinion or preference in politics, or on any other subject that absorbs public interest outside the Scripture themes he discusses in his sermons, the world does not hear it from him. In church troubles he seeks to be completely unbiased and impartial, and labors to hold up the truth with no favoritism toward party, or parties. He is a religious man, and pious by years of training. He believes that God is always present with him.

His power in the pulpit consists mainly in the plainness and simplicity with which he expounds his points of discussion and the pathos and persuasiveness with which he appeals to the people. If we add to these two powerful elements of strength as a preacher,

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his splendid ability as a speaker and his general popularity as a man, his natural gifts and almost perfect educational accomplishments in the use of the language, his strong faith, deep piety, experience and observation in the Lord's work, and his ready and accurate judgment of human nature, his sympathy for the human family laboring in the bondage of sin, and his familiarity with the teaching of the Word of God, we have fairly summed up the elements of power in this distinguished gospel preacher.

This writer assumes all responsibility for the name, or title, of the book. Also, for suggesting and insisting on the series of sermons being put in book form. The author felt disinclined to put forth the volume under the name of "COBB'S SERMONS," but it was my preference, and he graciously yielded. We make these explanations cheerfully, because it is due him. I fully endorse the contents of this series of sermons.

C. E. W. DORRIS,  
Nashville, Tennessee  
June 12, 1956

## **"NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN"**

"There came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spoke like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by Night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house." (John 7:45-53)

Friends, these words are words of sadness in reality. Sadness, because they present a fact, which is so commonly seen in every day life, even in our generation. These men had apparently sent the officers to bring Jesus into their presence. The officers, going out with that charge, came to the Lord and heard Him speak, and then returned to those who had sent them out without him. They tried to persuade the officers that what Jesus said was not worthwhile, by asking them this question, "Have any of the rulers believed on him? Have any of the people you know that have power and influence accepted His word?" They might judge that since the rulers did not believe on Jesus, then they should not believe on Jesus either. Thus, they were trying to suggest to these men that because certain "higher-ups," which they knew had not accepted Christ, neither should they accept Christ. There are people today, friends, of the same attitude, and if you please, who have the same motives.

Jesus did not seek to impress men by His fashionable dress. He cared not for the fashion of His time. Nor, did the Lord seek to impress men by being a good actor. The story is told that on one occasion, two men were asked to read the same passage of Scripture at a certain gathering. One was a preacher; the other, an actor. The preacher arose, and in very stiff form, he read the passage of Scripture, and the people gathered, twiddled their thumbs, hung their heads, and acted disinterested. When the actor arose, he read the same passage of Scripture, and men looked at him, listened to him, and tears flowed from their eyes. The preacher then turned to the actor and said, "We both read the same Scripture. I am a preacher, and you are an actor. They paid me no mind, whereas you brought tears to their eyes. Now, how did you do it?" The actor said, "My friend, the difference is this. You read it as if you were higher and mightier than they, and therefore, they did not listen. I read it as if I believed it; therefore, they listened." When Jesus spoke, He did not speak as an actor, but He spoke as one who believed deeply what He said. Yea, He not only believed it. He not only had confidence in it, but HE KNEW IT TO BE THE TRUTH. Therefore, He did not have to act the part, in order for men to understand what He said. But, don't you see, friends, many of us today have an idea that unless we use some uncommon approach, people won't believe the Word of God. The best approach to make to people with the Word of God is the approach that comes through your own faith and conviction, for if you have no faith or conviction in your own heart, then those to whom you speak will have no faith or conviction generated in their heart. Jesus was not noticed by His ability to act, therefore, nor by His fashionable clothes. Men did not pay attention to Him because of any unusual



good looks. From the Prophet Isaiah, we learn that there would be no beauty about Him that we should desire Him. (Isaiah 53) Therefore, He did not attract people by His good looks. Nor did Jesus attract people to Him by parading any earthly sort of wisdom. The men who heard Him on one occasion took note of the fact that He had never learned. How does He know these things, since He has never learned? That is to say He had not spent months and years in the schools as many of them had spent. THEREFORE WE CAN SAY THAT JESUS ATTRACTED PEOPLE TO HIM BY WHAT HE SAID AND HOW HE SAID IT. He was the Master. Therefore, when the officers returned to these Jews, who had sent them out to take Jesus, and bring Him to them, they had to report, "Never man spake like this man."

Now, just how did this man speak, From that which is set forth in the Word of God, we know that Jesus Christ spoke with AUTHORITY. As He came to the close of the Sermon on the Mount the people noticed that there was something unusual about Jesus. The thing, which they noticed as being unusual, is expressed in Matthew 7: 29. "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." This man, Jesus, spoke with authority. He did not speak as the scribes. He was the kind of man that when He said anything, it conveyed to the people the impression that He knew whereof He spoke. He did not have to question what He said. When He condemned sin, or stated a principle of truth it was done with authority. He had authority, but I want you to notice, in particular, this thought. Jesus could not stay with us always. Therefore, somebody following after Jesus had to come along to speak with some authority. Now, were they to speak with authority as an individual, or could they speak with authority because of the truth, which they might have to speak? Well, friends, the answer is simple. Jesus said to His disciples in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself. but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." We also learn from 1 Corinthians 2: 13, that the apostles spoke by the very word chosen by the Spirit of God. Therefore they spoke with authority. Now then, the question is, "What about today?" Well, friends, any time that I, or any other gospel preacher opens the book of God, and a statement is made in this book, and the statement is reflected upon, thought upon, taught, talked about, urged upon the people to believe, it can be done with authority. NOT BECAUSE OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL BUT BECAUSE OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD. I have no authority of my own; no other gospel preacher has any authority of his own, yet we can speak with authority. How? By confining ourselves to the Word of God. In other words, we are not speaking with authority as individuals, but speaking only by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. So then, the Word of God today can be spoken with and by authority. In fact, everything that we do religiously should be done by the authority of Christ. Ere Jesus left this earth, He said to His disciples, "All authority (or power) hath been given unto me, both in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Authority belongs to Christ. He has spoken the word with authority. Therefore, friends, the Word of God contains the authority of Jesus Christ.

Then again, as Jesus spoke, He spoke with SIMPLICITY. Some years ago, I was talking with a good friend of mine, who is a member of another religious body, and he related to me what fine crowds they were having, and how learned his "pastor" was, how

fine an education he had, and he said, "You know, I just love to hear him preach. I can't understand a thing he is talking about, but I just love to hear him preach." Friends, that's "real education," for a man to talk so high over the heads of those who listen that they don't understand what he is talking about, and incidentally this friend of mine was a well educated man, himself. You can therefore, guess what kind of speeches this person may have delivered. That was not the character of Jesus, nor the characteristic of His approach. When Jesus spoke to people, He spoke with authority, but He spoke simply, with words, phrases, and illustrations that the people could understand. What good does it do to try to preach the Word of God unless it is preached simply? What import does it make on the minds of men, if they go away and say, "Well, he made a fine speech." "What was the speech about?" "Well, I don't know." What good does it do? Yet, I am afraid that we may be approaching the time in the Lord's Church, when we have an idea that a man should stand before a congregation of people and parade his educational and literary attainments rather than just preaching the simple, unadulterated truth of God. God help us to never reach that stage, for the day that we come to that place in our service before the Lord, that day, we shall stand condemned. Jesus, in resorting to illustrations, the use of parables, and demonstrations from the very things that men do in life, impressed upon His hearers, those significant principles of truth with something they could not forget. The gospel, therefore, is a simple message, for Paul said in the third chapter of Ephesians, "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." The gospel of Jesus Christ, is therefore, a simple message. When Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthian Church he expressed a fear. I want you to notice what this fear was all about. In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul said, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." "I am afraid that you are going to allow your minds to be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Such ought not ever to be. The gospel is a simple message and the one who died to make valid the gospel of Christ spoke in the simplest of words and terms.

The Word of God reveals to us that Jesus spoke with KINDNESS. on one occasion, He said to the Apostle Peter, as Peter was about to fall by the way, "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat . . ." This is found in Luke 22. What did Jesus say then? Jesus then said, "But I have prayed for you." Friends, let me ask you this. What greater kindness could a man express in words, than the kindness which Jesus expressed to the Apostle Peter? If you were about to go over the brink into such disaster, and somebody grasped you by the hand and said, "I have prayed for you," those words would be some of the kindest words that you would ever hear. Jesus spoke with kindness. on many occasions, when He talked with people who were ensnared in sin, He pointed out to them the sin and transgression of their life, but He also tried to instill within them principles of truth through words of kindness. Sometimes, along the way of life, you meet the kind of people who think that the only way to handle folks is to "skin 'em alive and scatter their hides." Well, friends there is no question that once in a while we need to have a good "skinning." No question about that. But, when the Lord Jesus Christ spoke, He spoke with kindness. Why did He speak with kindness? Because He wanted to save men. Unless we show our



love to man and the soul which he possesses, we shall not do very much good in trying to save him.

On the other hand, as we notice the life of Jesus, we notice that He spoke POINTEDLY. He not only spoke with kindness, but He spoke pointedly. There were occasions which demanded that He speak pointedly. In the twenty-third chapter of the book of Matthew, Jesus talked with those who were perverting the truth and assailing the truth which He was preaching. He spoke pointedly to these people because they were the type and kind of people who should have known better. Listen to just a few of these expressions from Matthew 23. Jesus said to these people, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." Notice again. "Woe unto you, ye blind guides which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?" Plain language, isn't it? Jesus was speaking, friends, to those who were teachers of the law. those who were writers of the law; those who trusted in their own knowledge of the law; those who were proud and arrogant, and He said, "You are blind, you act like fools." But, He said more. In verse twenty-seven, Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." In other words, on the outside, you give a good appearance, but on the inside, you are rotten. Pointed language, but sometimes, it takes this kind of language to awaken a person to his responsibility. Even in the use of these pointed terms, Jesus was making an effort to bring these people out and away from their arrogance and pride, that they might understand the divine principles of truth, and yet, even as Jesus spoke in this way, none of us could accuse Him of speaking harshly, or unkindly, because He was speaking the truth, in a way that these people needed to hear it.

Jesus spoke as He was DIRECTED. In the seventh chapter of the book of John, the sixteenth verse, after the Jews had marveled at the way that Jesus had spoken, Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." John 3: 34, tells us that Jesus had the Spirit without measure. Therefore, when Jesus spoke, He spoke perfectly, that which God would have him to say. Never a mar, never a mistake in His words. If I had the power to convey to you, friends, what those people must have felt, when they returned to the Jews and said, "Never man spake like this man," then our time today would have been well spent, but I do not have that power. I can only ask you to carefully study the Word of God, in order that you might get a glimpse of Jesus as He spoke to one or many. If Jesus had an opportunity to speak the word of truth to one, that is what He did. If he had an opportunity to speak the word to thousands, that is what He did.

In closing, let me remind you that the Word of God says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . ." (Philippians 2: 5) In Romans 8: 9, the latter part of the verse says, ". . . if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Jesus spoke in the ways that we have pointed out to you that He spoke, and if we have within us the mind of Christ, then we shall speak as Jesus spoke. The church of the Lord is composed of members, the membership makes up the body, the body of Christ. There is a solemn responsibility that rests upon those who are members of

"NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN"

the body of Christ, and that is to be the pillar and ground (or support) of the truth. Don't you see, then, that each of us has a responsibility as a Christian to speak as Jesus spoke? Let it not discourage or shame you, then, if one should say, "But, I have never heard this doctrine before. Thus is new and strange," for they said the same thing about the Lord. "But never man spake like this man." Let the world see Christ in you, my friend, in your life, and in your work.

If you are here today and are not a Christian, the Lord also spoke these words, and directed them to all those who stand in need of salvation. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11: 28-30) our Savior also said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Will you accept His invitation, while together we sing?

**DOING OUR BEST WITH WHAT WE HAVE**

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one, he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." (Matthew 25: 14-19)

I would like for us to begin our consideration of these thoughts by calling your attention to this, with which I hope to challenge your attention throughout the length of this lesson. That is, **FEW PEOPLE MAKE THE BEST USE OF WHAT THEY HAVE**. Let this be an investigation of your own personal life, and let this question dwell for a moment in your own heart. "Do I make the best use, the very best use of what I have?" There are many who suggest, "I would be glad to do more, if I had more," or, "I would do more if I had a greater abundance with which to do." But friends the vital question is, "What are you doing with what you have now?" Some time ago, in a church bulletin, or some place, I ran across these few lines, which most of you have seen, perhaps, and yet, how well they illustrate what we are trying to get you to think about at the moment. It goes something like this:

"It's not what you would do with a million  
If that should ere be your lot;  
But what are you doing at present,  
With the dollar and a quarter you've got?"

Not many of us will ever have the million with which to do, but we have something. Therefore, the question is, "What am I doing with what I have now? Am I using it to the very best advantage? Am I doing my best with it?"

It is quite obvious to any Bible student that whatever one has that is good, that thing has come as a blessing from the Lord. Therefore, we might say, in the final analysis, that successful living cannot be measured in the abundance of the things which a man possesses, but rather, it can be measured in what he does with what he has. Jesus says that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he has. Therefore, successful living is the life that is lived the very best, under the circumstances, that it can be lived. The successful life is the life that makes use of what it has with which to do; using to the very best of one's ability, that with which the Lord has blessed one. Since God is pleased when we do our best, it seems that we ought to be awakened consciously, to do the things that are necessary, for us to do the best that we can with what we have. I want to enumerate these things as we go along, in order to create in your mind a picture of these things just as they ought to enter into our minds, into our thoughts, into our very hearts. As number one, I suggest to you that we ought to realize that the first necessity is the denial of self. If we can ever remove self as an obstacle in our way then we shall be more readily willing to accomplish what God has in mind for us to accomplish with what we have. In Matthew 16: 24 Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." The word "deny," I understand, can be translated by other words. one of the translations

that could be given in the place of deny, is "losing sight." Therefore, Jesus is saying to all of us, "If any man will come after me let him lose sight of himself." Now, that is a difficult thing to accomplish. Difficult, because we are dealing with the one thing, which we often honor above all other things—self. But, if we would please God, by doing our best with what we have, we must lose sight of ourselves. We cannot measure the time that we give to the Lord and the church, in the matter of hours. We must deny, or lose sight, of ourselves so effectively, that we are gladly and willingly sacrificing ourselves for the Lord at all times. Then, in the second place, we should realize that a Christian is one that has been transformed, and further, that this transformation is a constant thing, that comes about, according to the teaching of the Bible, by the renewing of the mind. In Romans 12: 2, we find the statement to that effect. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. What does it mean to renew the mind? It means, simply, that we are to keep the mind active. Thinking upon things, upon which the mind ought to think, and always be progressive in our thinking to the extent that we want the Cause of Christ to move forward, honor, and glorify the name of God. Many of us allow our minds to become stagnant, and as they become stagnant they become the breeding places of all kinds of evil thoughts that are consummated by the evil participation of our physical selves. Thus we fail to use one of the great things that God has given us, and allow it to become stagnated and non-progressive, and yet, the Word of God teaches us as firmly about this matter as any other, that our minds are to be renewed, that we are to be transformed. made into better people, if you please, by the renewing of our minds.

I am not surprised that Christians, today, fall into so many things that the world indulges in, which to the child of God is wrong, because so few Christians read the Bible. So few Christians give any time, thought, or consideration to the teaching of the Word of God. once a week, maybe, for forty-five minutes, or an hour, we gather in some auditorium to worship, and that is about the extent of it. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday fly by, and we don't even open our copy of the Bible. We don't search the wonderful thoughts that have come from the infinite wisdom of God, in order to make our lives better lives. Therefore, we do many things that are wrong, because our minds have not been renewed. This is a process that should go on continually. A scientist, who does not study, ceases to be effective in his work. A doctor who does not keep up with modern medicine, soon is classified as 'old-fashioned,' and loses his practice. A preacher, who does not study the Word of God, soon becomes stale and ineffective. A Christian, who does not renew his mind daily, by that which comes from the depths of the Word of God, finds himself ineffective as a Christian. Therefore, if we would please God, by doing our best with what we have let us renew our minds daily. This means that we must, of course, give some time to meditation, and think upon the things that are right. We talked to you last Sunday, about thinking upon these things.

Then, we must, if we would do the best that we can with what we have, remember that within us, there is continually raging, a conflict. Now, some people are disturbed about this matter. Some people have expressed it like this. "I just can't understand why when I want to do good, that I often do that which is bad." Well friends, it is because that this conflict is raging within us constantly, and we give up to the thing that is bad, rather than continuing to hold to the thing that is good. Listen to these words from Gala-

tians 5: 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Then, again, when Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church, he said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Then Paul wrote again, and said, "Those things that I would not, that I do, and those things that I would, that do I not." The conflict that rages within us may lead us astray, unless we put the Spirit before the flesh, and remember that we can only do our best with what we have, when we allow the Spirit to conquer the lusts of the flesh.

Then further, we can only do our best with what we have, when we understand our own inability to fashion and direct our own lives. You know, young people are often heard to say, "Well, I'll be glad when I get such and such an age." What do they mean by that? They simply mean, in most cases, "I'll be glad when I am no longer under parental restraint." Boys say, sometimes, "I'll sure be glad when I am twenty-one." "Well, son, what are you going to do when you are twenty-one?" "I'm going to do what I please." our parents are given to us to train us, teach us, direct us, until we are responsible for our own actions. Let us remember that God is our Father, and God knows the best way for us to live. Therefore, we are unable to direct our own steps. Unless God, therefore, has His way in your life, you will never do your very best with what you have. But, let us now consider these matters. There are a lot of us who would like to do good things, and a lot of us who would like to do our very best, so we think, provided that what we do would be something big. oh, we like to do big things! As a result, we despise the little things that God has given us the ability or the wisdom to do. Let us take a brief look at the parable, a part of which we read a moment ago. When the Master started to go into a far county, He left with the five talent man, the five talents, because he had the ability to use them. The two talent man received two talents, i.e. he had the ability to use two talents. The man who had the ability to use only one talent received only one talent. The man who had five talents took those five talents and made five more. We can see why the Lord allowed him to have five. The man who had two talents took those two and made two more. We can see why the Lord allowed him to have two. But, look at the one talent man. He took the Lord's money and hid it in the earth, and didn't do a thing with it. But the Lord had trusted him with what he had the ability to use, but he didn't use it. When the Lord returned for the reckoning he started making excuses. It is quite obvious that the one talent man was not dishonest. He didn't steal his Lord's money. He did his best to keep it safely. He hid it in the earth, yet, all of the time he knew there would be a reckoning, but he didn't use what the Lord let him have. What did the Lord say to him? "Thou wicked and slothful servant." Now, the Lord is teaching us this lesson. "You use what I have given you the very best that you can, or you become a wicked and slothful servant." The two talent man didn't excuse himself by saying, "Now, the Lord thinks more of that fellow than He does of me, because He gave him five talents." The two talent man didn't decry the state of affairs, but he simply took the two talents which the Lord gave him, and used those talents and made two more. There are lots of men who can preach a better sermon than I will ever preach, but does that excuse me from doing the best that I can? There are lots of people who can

give more money to the church than you can give, but does that excuse you from giving what you can? There are lots of people who can spend more time visiting in hospitals, in the sick room, the aged the infirm, than you can, but does that excuse you from giving all the time you can? only when we keep in mind those things that I suggested to you from the Word of God, such as denying self, and letting God lead in our lives—only then can we realize the real achievement of doing our very best with what we have.

I would like to relate to you an incident as it occurred in the Bible, that may help each of us in doing our best with what we have.... There was a man who fled from Egypt, because he had killed an Egyptian, and the deed became known. He went down into the land of Midian and lived for forty years. During that time, he married, became the father of two children, and as he was keeping the flock of his father-in-law (and I want to impress that upon you just here, he was keeping the flock of his father-in-law) he saw a burning bush, yet it was not consumed, and he said, "I'll turn aside and see this thing." When he came near, Jehovah said, "Put off your shoes for this is holy ground." Jehovah talked with this man, whom you recognize now as Moses, and the Lord said, in effect, "I want you to go down into Egypt, and deliver my people." Moses started making excuses. The first question of Moses was, "Who am I, that I should do this?" "Why, Lord, I am just a man. I am just a poor man, at that. I am even keeping the flock of my father-in-law. I haven't tried to amount to anything. I'm not successful, and who am I, that I should do this?" And his second excuse was, "Well, if I go, whom shall I say has sent me? By what authority could I do it?" And his next thought was, "Well if I go and suggest that I AM hath sent me, they won't believe me." Then, he said, "Lord, I am not eloquent, and I haven't become any more eloquent, since you began talking to me, than I was before." The Lord said, "Who made your mouth?" That's a good question for us, isn't it? Then, Moses just came right out and said, in effect "Lord, why don't you just send somebody else?" Does that sound like anybody you know? When some of the brethren call upon you to serve at the table of the Lord, do you say, "Well, why don't you get someone else?" When someone asks you to hand out bulletins at the door, shake hands with people as they come in and go out, do you say, "Well, I just don't feel qualified to do this, why don't you get someone else?" That was exactly Moses' attitude. But the Lord became angry with Moses, and Moses went, and one of the greatest statements in all of the Word of God is made of Moses forty years later, when God said to Joshua, "Moses, my servant is dead." Here is a man who expressed all of the timidity that is familiar to human beings, and all of the reticence that characterizes so many of us, but God showed him that he could do the best he could with what he had, and then God, of course, would help him. It was a great thing that Moses did.

In the New Testament, we read of a woman by the name of Dorcas. There is no indication that Dorcas was a woman of means but she was very proficient with a needle, and when she died, those who had been assisted by her benevolence showed the coats and the garments which Dorcas had made, and they grieved because she was dead. What made Dorcas an honored woman? She used what she had to the best of her ability. We shouldn't despise the small things that we can do. None of us look with as much favor upon a penny, as we do upon a dollar. All of us admit that we had rather have a dollar than a penny. But stop and think for just



a moment. IT TAKES A LOT OF PENNIES TO MAKE A DOLLAR, AND WERE IT NOT FOR A LOT OF PENNIES, THERE WOULDN'T BE A DOLLAR. The individual who works on the production line in an automobile factory may do nothing more than tighten up screws or bolts in the body of the automobile, and he may say, "Well, what I am doing doesn't amount to much," but they would fire him if he didn't do it. When that automobile rolls out with a price tag on it, marked three thousand dollars, he has done his part. He did what he was employed to do, and if he did it the way he was directed to do it, he did it well. It was a little thing he did that went into the making of a great thing, but he did it. That is the main thing, friends.

I heard the story once, of a little boy, who was walking along one of the dikes in Holland, and he saw the water just barely streaming through one of the dikes. He got down and put his finger in the hole and started yelling, "Help, help," and his finger held the water, until men who were skilled and able came and repaired the dike. They gave this little boy credit for saving the village from destruction, because he noticed the hole, and used a simple instrument, something that he had—his finger, to stop the water. Don't despise the little things that you can do. Do the best that you can with what you have.

Now, what is it that you have? May I suggest to you these three things. First of all, you have life. Use it. Secondly, you have some talent. There isn't a man who doesn't have some little talent. Therefore, whatever talent you have, use it. Then, every man can acquire some knowledge of the Word of God. Whatever knowledge you have of the Word of God, put it to use, because just that little knowledge or great knowledge, that you may have, may be the means whereby somebody else is brought to Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

If you are here today, and you are not a Christian, you are not using, you are not doing your best, with what you have. Why don't you throw off your shackles of sin, be buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of those sins, and then from henceforth and forever do the best you can with what you have. Will you come, today? If so, will you come while we sing.



## THE NEVER FAILING GOD

Our lesson is from Joshua, the first chapter, beginning with the fifth verse.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them."

Did you notice the words of God, "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee"? If there is a subject that might be presented from those words, surely it would be the subject, "The Never Failing God." All of us recognize that the great need of humanity today is a greater faith in the never failing God. The faith that is vital, that is active, that is obedient, that is living, that is moving; not a dead faith, not some sort of weak faith that would cause us to be presumptuous, but the kind of faith that will lead us to be active participants in the service of God by rendering obedience to every divine command that He has given. our faith in the never failing God will then lead, guide, and bless us along the way of life. God has never failed and God never will.

In First Kings, the eighteenth chapter, we read of one of the most interesting contests ever to be conducted before an audience of people. Many times in our day we think of an interesting contest as being one where money is given away and people compete for prizes and things of that nature. But in First Kings, eighteen, we read of a contest between God and Baal, and the prophet of God and the prophets of Baal. Elijah has come to Mt. Carmel, and has called together the people for this contest before the God of heaven and the God of the people, Baal. Elijah made this kind of proposition. "Let us make two altars, let us take two bullocks. You take one as an offering to Baal. I shall take one as an offering to God. You take your bullock and lay it upon the altar which you build and call upon Baal to send fire and devour the offering, and then I shall take the bullock and put it upon the altar that I shall make and I shall call upon the God of heaven to send fire and devour it, that you might believe and know and understand that there is a God in heaven."

The four hundred fifty prophets of Baal should have known better, but they entered into the contest. They built their altar. They took the beast and put it upon the altar. They began to cry unto their God, Baal, to send fire to devour the offering. No fire came. They cried unto their God from early morning until noon and no fire came. Then they cried till mid-afternoon. Still no fire came to devour their offering. Elijah then called for barrels of water, and he poured these barrels of water upon the offering that he was going to call upon the God of heaven to consume, and then he called for more barrels and poured more water upon the offering. He had made a trench about the offering. The Word of God reveals that after the third pouring of water from the barrels upon the altar that the trench was completely filled with water. Then Elijah called upon the God of heaven and fire came from heaven. It licked up the water, the offering the altar, yes, and even the water in the ditch. When the people saw it they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is God. the Lord, He is God." (First Kings 18: 39.) Elijah said unto them, "Take the prophets of Baal: let not one of them escape. And they took them and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slew them there." We have

related this

incident, friends, in order to show you that God does not fail. There is not a single instance that can be called to the attention of the human family today in which God has failed.

God's promises have never failed. Mentioning just a few of them briefly, first of all may we call your attention to the promise that God made concerning the waters of a flood. In the book of Genesis it is recorded that the whole earth was covered with water. Noah and his wife and his sons and his daughters-in-law were borne upon the bosom of the flood safely in the Ark that God had commanded Noah to prepare. After the waters receded, the living God said unto Noah and to his people, "No more will I destroy the family of men from the face of earth as I have done by the waters of a flood." And to establish that covenant, God set the bow in the clouds, and every spring and summer, more especially, after there is a shower and the sun breaks through, you will notice the bow in the clouds, a thing of resplendent beauty, that even the finest artist has never been truly able to paint. God set it there to show us of His covenant with the human family that He would not destroy man any more by the waters of a flood. That is not to say that God will not allow floods to come upon certain areas of the world because in Genesis, chapter nine, you will note that God did not make any such restriction. But God simply said that the water shall no more become a flood to "destroy all flesh."

We notice also the promise of God to make Israel a great nation. Imagine a great nation coming from a man one hundred years old who became at that age the father of a son. His wife was ninety— Abraham and Sarah. To them was a son born whom they named Isaac. Isaac in turn became the father of Jacob, who was later known as Israel. Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs. These twelve patriarchs became the fathers of Israel as a nation. But God said unto Abraham before either of these children were ever born that He would make of him a great nation, that as he could not number the sands of the sea or the stars of the heavens so God said, "I will make of your descendants such a nation, so great that they shall not be numbered, so great that they will become one of the greatest nations of men to dwell upon the earth." God's promise did not fail. When David was the king of Israel, Israel perhaps was the greatest nation, all things considered, upon the footstool of God. When Solomon was the king of Israel, Israel was perhaps the richest nation under the stars of heaven. God fulfilled His promise. He did not fail.

The promise of God to men today will not fail. God has promised you and me that He will keep His covenant if we shall do His will that when this life is over and the time of judgment comes upon us, the dead in Christ shall rise first and those who are living shall together with them be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." Thus, from the lips of our Savior came these words, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7: 21.) Not every man is going to heaven. Not every woman is going to walk the golden street of the eternal city of God, but those who do the will of God shall rest and repose in quietness and tranquillity in that beautiful city of God, for that is God's promise. God's promises have never failed.

We note also in the Bible that God has never failed to provide for the needs of His people.

The Psalmist said centuries ago, "once I was young, but now I am old, and I have never seen the righteous

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forsaken nor his seed begging bread." When Israel was encompassed about in the wilderness, they murmured against Moses and against Aaron for bringing them away from the flesh pots of Egypt. They said, "Why didn't you just leave us there?" They cried out and murmured and complained. Moses took it to God, and God gave unto the people manna each morning and quail each evening.

There is something unusual that I want to call to your attention about God taking care of their needs. This is recorded in Exodus the sixteenth chapter, and you will note in reading the chapter that God made the specific regulation that as the people gathered manna they were to take only what they needed. God did not bless them with such abundance that He wanted them to take more than they needed. In Exodus, the sixteenth chapter beginning with the sixteenth verse, the Bible says, "This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons. take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. they gathered every man according to his eating." Now suppose that a man was greedy. Well, note the next few words, "And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses. but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms and stank: and Moses was wroth with them." Any time that a man violates the will of God, then God's purpose and design in helping that man has been thwarted. God knew the needs of these people. He knew that they needed bread and meat. God furnished the bread in the form of manna. He furnished the meat in the form of quail. He furnished it according to their needs and asked them to take only what they needed and what they required. God fulfilled the needs of these people.

Why should we think it strange that God will also fulfill the needs of His people today? No, God isn't going to bless people today with manna and quail, but God gives men who are able-bodied and strong the privilege and the opportunity of work. In First Thessalonians, chapter four, the inspired writer says, "That ye study to be quiet (that indeed is a wonderful grace, if you think about it), to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." God gives you the ability and the opportunity to work, and God expects you to do that. In the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said, "Give us this day our daily bread," but He did not for one moment mean that men didn't have to work for it. of all the work that men may do, unless God is blessing our efforts, we shall not receive our bread. We have only to think for a moment about the drought that has hit many areas of our country in the last few years to know that without the blessings of God in every way the work of man would be fruitless. Therefore, truly we can pray for God to give us our daily bread, and we should. But, note further that the Apostle Paul said to these same people, "If a man will not work, neither let him eat." Well, friends, that is a command of our Lord. Now what are we going to do about it? If a man will not work, neither should he eat. That is

what the Bible says. If a man is too trifling and lazy to work, we make a mistake when we try to feed him. But, if he wants to work and does not have a job or the ability to work and provide, it becomes our duty to help him. Thus, God's promise does not fail.

Several years ago, it was related that a gospel preacher who believed much in the divine providence of God Almighty, was lying upon the bed of death. He had been sick for some time, unable to work and provide. Only he and his wife were at the moment living in the little shack that they occupied. His wife came to his bedside one day and said, "We have not one crumb of bread in this house." This preacher looked at his wife and without a flicker he said, "Be not afraid. God will provide for our needs." A few hours later some of the neighbors came and discovered the condition, and as the story was related to me, a few hours following that, there was more food and more of the good things of life in their home than there had been in many days. Here was a man who had given his life to the service of God, who knew that God would not fail. God never has and God never will.

God has never failed to take into account our human problems. There is not a single human problem that is common to the human family even today that God cannot solve, and there are many, many human problems. It has always seemed to me to be one of the blessings of life for one to be able, through the knowledge of the Bible and the faith that it produces in God, to help others. It is not always possible to help somebody who has a problem unless we know the basic principles that are set forth in the Bible. Only by the Bible and its divine principles can we ever counsel, help advise, and guide those who are suffering the problems of humanity. But God solves our problems for us. Multitudes of people came to Jesus with problems. Not one of them went away without getting an answer.

It is related that a rich young ruler came running to Jesus (Mark chapter ten, beginning with the seventeenth verse) and knelt down before Jesus and asked Him the question, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." The young man wanted to know which commandments and Jesus then enumerated some of the commandments as stated in the law of Moses in Exodus, chapter twenty, some of the Ten Commandments. The young man said, "All of these I have observed from my youth. (My problem, Lord, is deeper than this. The problem that troubles me goes beyond the keeping of these commandments.) What lack I yet?" And without hesitation, Jesus offered him the answer to his problem. He said, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor and come and follow me." There was the answer, but the Word of God says that the young man turned away sorrowful, because he was one of great possessions. The Lord solved his problem, but he was unwilling to take the solution. Isn't that the trouble with many of us today? By divine principle, God solves the problems, but we are unwilling to accept the solution.

The disciples came to Jesus on one occasion with this question found also in the tenth chapter of the book of Mark, "Who is going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The answer of Jesus solved all of their problems and it solves all of ours concerning true greatness. It ought to keep us from bickering and backbiting and becoming jealous and envious of one another. Elders of the church deacons, preachers, teachers, and all Christians, should take into account that God has solved the problem of true greatness. Well, how did He solve it? Jesus said, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever will be chiefest, shall be servant of all." If you have been contemplating such a problem, there is your

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answer. Do you want to know how to become great? Jesus said, "Become a servant." The man who serves God the most will be the greatest.

Jesus also gave us the solution to human weakness and all of us have our human weaknesses. It matters not how strong a man may be, he has within his make-up somewhere an outstanding human weakness. The Devil came to Jesus and probed every point that he could to find the weakness in the armor of the Son of God, and on every occasion Jesus said, "It is written." The way to solve our human weaknesses therefore is to say, "It is written," and how may we say, "It is written," if we know not what is written? The injunction of the Apostle Peter was this, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." These are just a few examples of the Lord's solutions to human problems. God has never failed.

May we suggest to you that God has never failed to make a human life better, when submitted to Him. Look at the Apostle Peter. Peter must have been a profound user of profanity because when they questioned him prior to the crucifixion of Jesus, "He cursed and swore and said, I know not the man." But look at him a little while later in contemplation of death and fear of the sword and the Roman Government. The apostle said, "We must obey God rather than men." A man who once was gifted in the use of profanity now stands like the Rock of Gibraltar for the divine principles of truth and righteousness to which he had committed himself. A human life is made better when it comes in contact with the teaching of God, and God has never failed when a man wanted to do better, to make him better.

oftentimes we see men who have been addicted to the use of alcohol, and they say, "I just can't quit. It has become a part of my system. There is such a desire that I cannot leave it alone." If this is your attitude, friends, you have never submitted yourself totally to the Lord of heaven. oh, listen to the language of Paul as he writes to the church of God in the city of Corinth. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, (notice that) nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you." What kind of people had some of these Corinthian Christians been in times past? Adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, but what had happened? "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (First Corinthians 6: 9-11) These men had thrown off sin, they had submitted to Christ, they had let the Word of God dwell richly in their hearts, they had let it become a part of their lives. Their lives had been made better. God has never failed where a human being has let Him come in. God has never failed to make the life of that human being better.

Friends, aren't you willing to submit yourself to God who has never failed, to drink deeply of His divine wisdom, to follow carefully and cautiously His divine counsel, keeping in mind that God has offered you the very best of all things? He has offered the best gift in the world, Jesus Christ. He has offered to us the best life in the world, the Christian life. He has offered us the best hope in the world, the hope of Heaven. Are you here then today



who would come believing, repenting of your sins, confessing the name of Christ, being buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of sins? or, are you here as a backslider? You need to come repenting of what you have done, confessing the faults that you have, and pray to God for forgiveness. If you are here, would you come today?



## BY FAITH

Our lesson today comes from Second Corinthians, the fifth chapter and the seventh verse. The writer says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." All of us are assured that faith is the basic principle upon which the Christian life must be built. We are told in Hebrews 11: 6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Without faith we cannot please God, nor live the Christian life. Faith, therefore, is the foundation upon which our lives must be built. You remember that the Apostle Peter, in setting forth those things that are commonly called the "Christian Graces," said in Second Peter one beginning with verse five, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance . . ." and so on down the line, the thought being that you are to build upon the basic fundamental faith that you have in God and His word. To this faith, or in this faith, you are to supply these Christian virtues in your everyday living. Thus, the Word of God presents to us the fact that we walk by faith and not by sight.

There are so many things that are matters of faith with the children of God, and it would not be amiss for us in the very beginning of this discourse to suggest to you the definition of faith as it comes from the Bible. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11: 1) The American Standard Version changes two words in this passage. We would like to call your attention to this change. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." A very simple illustration may serve to clarify this definition. For many years I have heard of the natural beauties of the state of Colorado, but it has never been my privilege to stand on the summit of any of its mountains and drink in the beauty of the hills and the valleys below. However, I believe that Colorado is just as beautiful from the standpoint of its natural elements and resources as if I had seen it. The difference is, of course, that now I believe it, but if it is ever my privilege to visit the state, then I shall know it. It would cease to be a matter of faith. It would become a matter of knowledge.

There is a difference also in faith and opinion. opinion is what an individual, or a group of individuals, may think about some matter whereas faith is that which an individual, or a group of individuals believe. But faith must come as a result of evidence. In Romans 10: 17, the writer says that "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." The faith, therefore, that we need to guide us, to lead us, to uphold us, to convict us, is the faith that comes from the Word of God. The opinions of men will not suffice, the knowledge of man is not enough. The faith that saves is the testimony that we need to hold up our hands, to cheer our hearts, and to make our lives worthwhile.

As we suggested to you a moment ago, there are many things to the child of God that must be accepted as a matter of faith. In the Word of God we read of the creation. The skeptic does not believe the record set forth in Genesis, chapters one and two. The skeptic must accept and assume many things. If we put our FAITH simply on the basis of assumption, we would have to assume only one thing. THAT ONE THING IS GOD. Whereas the skeptic, in his assumption, must assume

the universe, must make some assumption as to how it came to be, must assume many things relative to

the setting up or the creation of man, and all of this mere assumption, separate and apart from the Word of God. Whereas, the Christian, the child of God, the believer in the Bible, must accept the fact that "in the beginning, God created."

Has it ever occurred to you as being strange that the creation set forth in Genesis, chapters one and two, happened just as it did? Notice that the Bible record begins this matter by saying, "In the beginning God created . . ." Then, it goes on to say, "God said Let there be light." The very first thing that God spake into existence from the standpoint of His overall creation was light. He recognized that man cannot live without light. There must be the element called light before there can be the existence of humankind. And then God created the firmament, the dry land the vegetation the sun, the moon, the stars, and set them in their proper places. He created the sea creatures, the fowl, the beasts and cattle, and as the crown of all of God's creation, He created man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. The thing that distinguished man from all of the other creative acts of God was the fact that man was created in God's image. Therefore, we could not believe the Bible record and believe that man came from some primate that gave birth, not just to the human family, but also animalism or some part of the animal existence or the animal family. We must believe just what the Bible teaches In Acts 17: 26, the apostle makes the statement that God "hash made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon the earth." Therefore, we simply go back in faith to Genesis one, and say, "This is our origin. This is how we began."

Moses, the writer of Genesis one, was not a scientist, yet you will note that Moses, in the very first verse, in the very first chapter of the Bible, gives the fundamental bases upon which science must rest its cause; time, mind, matter, force, and space. Look at Genesis one. "In the beginning (time), God (mind) created (force) the heavens (space) and the earth (matter)." There are all of the fundamental elements upon which science must rest its cause. Moses was not a scientist, yet in Genesis one, Moses sets forth the fact that first there was created the mineral kingdom, secondly the vegetable kingdom, and thirdly the animal kingdom, and science agrees that this is the way that it must have been. The Bible is not a book of science, yet there is not a single scientific statement made within it that is not correct. "By faith therefore," as the writer of Hebrews said in chapter eleven and verse three, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Christian people accept the creation and the designation of God in all of His purposes and intents as being final, as they are revealed in the Bible. In Psalms thirty-three and verse six, the Psalmist David said, "By the word of God were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." That, friends, we must by faith accept.

There is revealed to us in the Bible the unusual story of a family and a nation of people. Man, who was prone to enter into the various crimes of transgression, shamed the Lord, and in the course of time, in order to fulfill His infinite purpose, God picked out a man from Or of Chaldees by the name of Abram. He told Abram in Genesis twelve, to get out from his country, from his kindred and from his father's house. The promise of God was, "I will make of thee a great nation." From this man, as we learn from the Bible sprang a nation whose numbers cannot even be suggested, and the

Bible says, "And him as good as dead," meaning simply that he was far past the age in which he would ordinarily have become the father of a child when Isaac, the son of promise, was born.

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From this man there came the nation known as Israel. Isaac, Jacob, and the patriarchs. After a while, seventy-five of these people went into Egypt. They suffered bondage for four hundred years. After four hundred years of servitude, bondage, and slavery, these people came out of the land.

By the divine providence of God Almighty, a very unique thing happened in their deliverance. We are told that they came to the Red Sea, the armies of Pharaoh in hot pursuit. We are told by those who have visited that section of the country that most likely the place where the Israelites came to the Red Sea was a valley. a valley that has a cliff on either side that is almost insurmountable. You can imagine how the people must have felt when they beheld the Red Sea in front of them, the armies of Pharaoh behind them, and insurmountable cliffs on either side of them. It was the command of Moses as he faced this apparent dilemma, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." But God said, "Stretch forth your rod and move forward." There came a strong wind from the east, the waters were divided, and the people of God marched through on dry ground. The armies of Pharaoh, assaying to do likewise, were drowned. Did you know that today the only reasonable account that any historian has ever been able to find of the destruction of the armies of Pharaoh is given in the Bible? By faith, we believe, we accept, we are confident of these things that happened in days of old. out of this nation of Israel that came from Abraham, there arose the "bright and the morning star," Jesus Christ, the Son of God. By faith, we believe, we accept, we are confident of all of these things. We have no reason, no incentive to endeavor to base that which we accept in these matters on anything other than the Word of God, which Word produces such faith in our hearts.

Let me suggest this to you, friends, before we pass to-another thought. The Jew, the Israelite, is one of the greatest living testimonies today of the inspiration, the integrity of the Word of God. If you don't believe it, look into the pages of God's Word. Learn the prophecies that were made concerning this great nation of people. See the guiding, moving hand of God with them down through the centuries, and behold that even today they are in precisely the condition that the Word of God said that they would be. a people actually without a nation, who to many people have become a "hiss and a by-word," whose habitations have been made desolate, and yet without exception, every nation that rises up whose leadership perpetrates a persecution of the Jew, sooner or later that nation is brought to its knees. We have only to look back ten or twelve years ago to understand the truthfulness of that statement. All that God said of ancient Israel, a physical nation, God now says of a spiritual nation, "living stones, holy priesthood, royal house," all of these things and others the Lord says about spiritual Israel.

Out of ancient Israel, there came forth Jesus. We know that Jesus graced the footstool of God because of what the Word of God says about Him. In the Bible it is revealed that Jesus existed with God from eternity as the Word. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." You will recall that in Genesis 1: 26, God did not say, "I will make man,"

but God said, "Let us make man," indicating the existence of the Godhead. As Paul said to the Athenians, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." (Acts 17: 29) The human family is actually the offspring of God, and from God came His Son, Jesus. Jesus came into the world to

redeem us from sin and to give us the hope of Heaven. He existed in the flesh as the Son of man, He existed in the world in the Spirit, which He had without measure, the Son of God. When the Apostle Peter, who was many times presumptuous, answered the question for his brethren that Jesus Christ had asked, he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The answer of our Savior was, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16: 16-17) Jesus is declared to be the Son of God, His divinity is shown, His deity is set forth by the Word of God. The Word of God shows us His miracles. The Word of God gives us His teaching. The Word of God sets before us His life. The Word of God clearly pictures to us His resurrection, all of these things without emotion, but simply as statements of fundamental facts that we can believe. We believe, therefore, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, that He is the Son of God, that as Jesus He now lives, rules, and reigns at the right hand of God as the King of kings, and Lord of lords. By faith we understand it.

God has revealed to us in the Bible a very clear-cut and simple plan by which the souls of men can be saved. We have already called your attention to the fact that Hebrews 11: 6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." A man, in order to be saved must therefore believe in God. But following his faith, or his belief in God, he must repent of his sins. Jesus, in discussing this with His contemporaries, said in Luke 13: 3, "I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." When His apostles went out preaching the Word of God they said, "Repent." (Acts 2: 38) The Apostle Paul in Acts 17: 30 said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

In the plan that God has devised, there is also the matter of confession. This confession is to be made from the heart with the mouth. The confession is "unto" salvation. The confession is that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God." I want to ask you this question; how could a man hope for salvation if he did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? And how could a man demonstrate his faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God by any better means than standing before men and declaring from the depths of his heart, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"? our Savior said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10: 32) In Romans 10: 10, Paul said, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In Acts 8: 37, the Ethiopian eunuch said "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." A nobler confession has never been made. Sweeter words have never fallen from the lips of a human being than the words, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

In God's plan for the salvation of the human family, there is the command following the confession, that a man must be baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. our Savior said in Matthew 28: 19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He said again in Mark 16: 16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Ananias, who was told to go tell Saul of Tarsus what to do, said in Acts 22: 16, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Friends,

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we may not be able to understand all of this. The very simplicity of it may be beyond our conception. It is quite true that God's plan to save us is so simple that the theologians of our day stumble over it, but what does it matter? By faith, we must accept God's plan, God's simple way to save us from sin. There is set before us then the hope of Heaven. Jesus said, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

Over yonder somewhere beyond the cold dark river of death, there is a land that is fairer than day, a land that needs not the sun, for God and His Son are the light of it. a land in which people dwell in perfect peace and perfect harmony, a land in which people will inherit the blessings of God, not for a day, but for eternity; a land where the eyes are never turned away because of shame. a land where the brow is never furrowed because of cares and the anxieties of life; a land where death will never penetrate and where tears will never coast down the cheek. It is Heaven, and by faith we have the hope of Heaven set before us. our Savior in comforting His disciples said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself. that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14: 1-3) And again, the Apostle Peter said, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." In Revelation 2: 10, we read that those who are faithful unto death will be given a crown of life. In Revelation 22: 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And in Second Corinthians 5: 1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we, have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

By faith, we can accept all of these things, by faith we can live, by faith we can move, by faith in God we can have our being, and someday when the glimmer of physical life is past, we may dwell in the presence of God forevermore. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

If you have faith enough in God then to want to go to Heaven, to want to do His will, will you not come down one of these aisles this morning, confess the name of Christ, and be baptized immediately? All things are ready, the clothing is prepared for you, the Lord awaits your coming. The people of God will rejoice as you come. Today, if you are out in the land of sin, lost, dying, unsaved, what better time could you find than now to come to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world? We walk by faith, my friends, not by sight. Will you come?



## A MIGHTY SAVIOR

I would like to call your attention to the reading of verse twenty-one from Matthew the first chapter, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." It is rather strange that we have four books in the Bible that give us to some extent the biography of Jesus Christ, and yet there are people who consider that Jesus Christ was a weak character, unable to stand up to the rigors of the life that ordinary people were called upon to bear. In fact, some have looked upon Jesus as a rather sissified character, some people even as an effeminate character. Men have been prone to ridicule and mock our Savior, yet in these four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the writers have dedicated themselves to showing us that Jesus Christ is a MIGHTY SAVIOR: powerful strong, and able to do all that God would have had Him to do. The greatest consolation of earth, therefore, to a child of God, is to recognize that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is a mighty Savior. He is not weak. He is capable of performing the will of the heavenly Father, and as we oftentimes sing, He is a wonderful Savior, a mighty Savior. In the passage which we read, Matthew points out that Jesus came into the world to save men. May we then investigate those things that cause our Savior to be as mighty as He is, as wonderful, as awesome, as great.

In the Word of God, it is set forth that the scepter of kingship that belongs to Christ cannot be removed. In Genesis, chapter forty-nine, Israel had called his sons to impart unto them promises and blessings, a little while preceding his death. As he came to Judah, he said, "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come. and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." This friends, is a prophecy and a prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is mighty because of His scepter. It cannot be removed. In the second chapter of the book of Acts, the Apostle Peter declared in trumpet voice that this same "Jesus whom ye have crucified, hath been made both Lord and Christ." Thus, the fulfillment of the words of Israel to his son, Judah, centuries before. The Son of God has had delegated unto Him all authority, both in Heaven and in earth. He had this authority delegated unto Him by the Father, and when God delegates authority to anyone, there is no power in earth nor in Hell that can remove that authority. Jesus Christ therefore, is mighty because His scepter cannot be removed.

In First Corinthians, the fifteenth chapter, the Apostle Paul talking about this very subject, said, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign . . ." Notice the conclusiveness of that statement by the inspired Paul, speaking of Christ, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.", God is the only exception, therefore. God, the Father, is the only exception to the rule. The rule is that men must bow the knee to Christ. God, the Father, is the only exception, and when Jesus Christ holds aloft His scepter, the token of His power, the evidence

of His might, no power in earth can withstand the power of the mighty Savior.

Secondly, the Bible teaches us that Jesus is a mighty Savior because His kingdom cannot be shaken. Yesterday, I conversed with a splendid young man about the inspiration of the Bible. Have you stopped to consider, friends, that one of the greatest evidences of the inspiration of the Bible is that the Bible sets forth the fact that the kingdom of God cannot be shaken? Ever since the establishment of the kingdom in A.D. 33, in the city of Jerusalem men have sought to destroy it to move it, to shake it, to ruin it but the kingdom of God is still lifting high its lofty spires, not in this city only, nor in this state only, but throughout the world. The kingdom of God cannot be shaken.

The prophets foretold that this kingdom could not be destroyed. In the second chapter of the book of Daniel, Daniel was called in before King Nebuchadnezzar to reveal unto Nebuchadnezzar the dream that he had and the interpretation thereof. Daniel records the fact that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed this terrible dream, and had forgotten what the dream was about, and it troubled him. When Daniel went before Nebuchadnezzar he said in effect "The thing that you saw was a great and terrible image, whose head was of gold, whose breast and arms were of silver, whose belly and thighs were of brass, whose legs were of iron, and whose feet were part of iron and part of miry clay. And you saw a stone cut out of a mountain, without a hand having been laid upon it, and it came crashing down upon this image. The image became as the dust of the earth." Daniel said, "This image with its four distinct materials is representative of four world empires or kingdoms, and the last one represented by the legs of iron, and feet, part of iron and part of miry clay, is the world empire or kingdom during which the God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." (Daniel 2: 44) In Hebrews 12: 28, the inspired author said, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Daniel said, "God shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed." The Hebrew writer, decades after the first Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus said, ". . . receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." Friends, I ask you today, "How could Jesus be the mighty Savior if His scepter could be removed or if His kingdom could be shaken?" The Word of God says that it cannot be.

Prior to His death, Jesus taught His disciples this truth. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18: 36) The kingdom of God does not depend, therefore, upon commercial enterprise for its advancement. It cannot be shaken commercially. If the United States again dips into the darkness of depression economically, the kingdom of God will still continue, because commercial enterprise and commercialism cannot shake it.

The kingdom of our Savior does not depend on earthly wisdom. If all the colleges in our land should be destroyed, if every man who possesses the higher educational degrees should be stricken down with disease, yet the kingdom of God could not be shaken. It would continue. Men often get it in their minds that the church could not live or exist without them, and nothing could be further from the truth. Great men have come and great men have gone but the kingdom of God continues.





Years ago, a great man stood in this pulpit and preached to great audiences gathered in this auditorium. He averaged baptizing one person a day for two or three years due to the effectiveness of preaching the gospel by radio. I understand that when he was buried it was almost impossible to find a place to park an automobile within six or eight blocks of the place where his body lay. Many of you remember that distinguished and powerful preacher of the Word of God, Hall Calhoun. Perhaps, as many people wept at his grave as any man who has passed from this life who was numbered among the citizenry of Nashville, Tennessee. His loss was great. To lose a man such as he was a great loss, BUT THE CHURCH CONTINUES. Men and their efforts are expendable, but the mighty Savior holds aloft His scepter over a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

H. Leo Boles, perhaps was one of the most renowned teachers of our time. Some suggested that when the hand of the grim reaper fell over Brother Boles, that the church had suffered an irreparable loss. From the standpoint of his ability and character, perhaps that is true. It was as if one of the giant cedars of Lebanon had fallen. Brother Boles is dead, BUT THE CHURCH CONTINUES. The church does not depend, therefore, upon earthly wisdom nor the power of the human frame or the intelligence of man. Jesus Christ is the monarch of His kingdom, holding aloft His scepter of power. He has told us that His kingdom cannot be shaken. It cannot be moved. It cannot be destroyed. He did not say that it could not be retarded in its progress. He did not say that the Devil could not make inroads into the membership, but He did say that it could not be destroyed, it could not be removed, and I believe that, don't you? He is a mighty Savior, or He could not have made such a promise.

The kingdom of God does not depend upon political power. In a few months, people will go to the polls to elect a president again, and perhaps there may be a change. Who knows? There may be a change in the presidency, and there may not be. Consider it if you will. It is a political office. It depends upon the will of the people, the consent of the governed. But the kingdom of God does not depend upon political power or political intrigue or the getting of votes, nor the will of the people. The mighty Savior has told us it cannot be shaken.

I know that our Jesus is mighty because His form of government is the very best. No man becomes a participant as one of the governed in the kingdom of God unless he volunteers. That makes the government of Jesus Christ the best one that men have ever known. Men submit to the will of God to obey the gospel of our Savior. They then come into submission under law to the great and mighty Savior, Jesus. He is not the usual monarch. our Jesus is sympathetic. He pleads our cause. He considers our weaknesses. He knows our inability. I would like to read to you a few inspired words from the pen of the Apostle Peter, "For even hereunto were ye called. because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Now please take note of these next few words, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." When our Savior was hanging suspended upon the cross of Calvary, we behold His sympathetic

heart as He says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus Christ understood all the afflictions that you and I are called upon to bear. Were it not so, how could one who is a Christian He in such peace and tranquillity through a long, extended illness, and then after many days, weeks, and months of suffering call in the loved ones around the bed and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"?

I knew a man, my friends, who just a few moments before He died regained consciousness. He called in his wife, who had lived with him through many years of hardship and trouble, as well as joy. He told her precisely what he wanted her to do about his business affairs, how that she was to do this and how that she was to manage that, and he said, "Have no fear for me. I am ready. My Lord understands. My Savior knows." Friends, how could our Jesus be the mighty Savior that He is, if He were not sympathetic to our needs. Thus, from the Hebrew letter, we read from chapter two, verses seventeen and eighteen, "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The confidence that we have in our mighty Savior is one thing that can lead us across the cold dark valley of the shadow of death without fear.

Jesus is mighty because He can save us from the fear of men. In the twelfth chapter of the book of Luke, our Savior said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." We need not be afraid of the persecutions that men may bring upon us or attempt to bring upon us because we are Christians. Some of the last words spoken by our Savior were the words spoken to a congregation of His people in the city of Smyrna, Revelation 2: 10, and our Savior in this letter to the church at Smyrna said, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried. and ye shall have tribulation ten days. be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."; We need not fear what men may attempt to do unto us. Again these words from Hebrews, chapter thirteen, verses five and six, "Be ye free from the love of money. content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?"

Jesus is the mighty Savior because He can save us from the drudgery of life. Many of you in this audience have lived long enough to know that life at times seems to be a drudge, but it is a drudge only when you do not hold fast to the hand of the Savior. As people go about the daily walks of life they become concerned because they are going about the same routine day after day, and day after day. The woman, as she labors in the house to sweep and to mop and to wash, thinks that all of this is drudgery at times, yet the Savior has pointed out that she does one of the greatest tasks of all humanity when she washes the clothes, when she mends the torn garments, when she cleans the dirty little faces and washes the soiled hands. She is helping a soul, she is training a mind. The Savior rests upon her the distinguished responsibility of being a



mother, a wife, and a Christian. And if we look upon these things that we do from day to day as serving the Lord and not ourselves, then life loses its drudgery. Whatever we do, therefore, let us do it with our might and do it as unto the Lord, so speaks the Bible, and not as serving man. The man who goes to his office in the city from day to day is concerned with the drudgery, the routine of his life, yet the Savior sets before him the fact that he is providing for his own, he is leading precious souls toward the destiny of eternal life, he is making and building a home that God has authorized to exist, and as we look then to the words of the Savior, it removes the drudgery from our lives.

Jesus is mighty because He will save us from doubt. A few years ago, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt got together on the high seas somewhere, and created a code that they called "The Four Freedoms". freedom from want, freedom from fear, and so on. But one of the greatest freedoms that can bless the mind of an individual today is freedom from doubt. The Lord removed all doubt from our mind, if we believe His Word, when He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Jesus is a mighty Savior. How can we doubt what He said?

Jesus is mighty because He can save us from confusion. Today all around us the minds of men are confused because of the different angles and purposes of religious teachers and religious thought. The creation of new denominational doctrines, new denominational systems, and new sectarian bodies is constantly going on, and men have become confused. They have asked the question over and over again, "How can I be sure that I am right?" The Savior answers that question. To the Apostle Peter He said in Matthew 16: 18, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." To His disciples He said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." If men would do the commands of the Savior and abide in the institution for which He died, there would be no confusion. We would all speak the same thing, walk by the same rule, live under the headship of the same Christ, yes, and enjoy the same great hope of life beyond the grave, which brings us to the last thought.

A mighty Savior is our Jesus because He can actually save us from the fear of death. As you go to your homes after this service many of you will have to journey many miles. Many of you have come from distant places. our prayer to God is that you may journey safely. But, you may be called upon to face death before you shall reach your dwelling place, but a man who faces death with Christ, can face death unafraid and unashamed.

Why win you linger with one, then, who will destroy your soul in hell? The devil has no other purpose for you. Why not take hold of the hand of the mighty Savior, by submitting to His will, by doing what He has commanded that He may lead you safely home after a while?

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## THE VALLEYS OF LIFE

This morning we would like to go back into the history of God's dealing with his people, and call your attention to a very significant promise that God made to ancient Israel. The Lord said through Moses, "I will give unto you a land of hills and valleys." This land, of course, was the land of Canaan, the land of Palestine. And as we think of Israelites dwelling in that land of hills and valleys we are made to think of life itself. Life is a land of hills and valleys. A valley, as all of us know, is a land that is level or low, that lies between mountains, hills, or highlands. There are times in our lives when we are walking through the valleys. There are other times in our lives when we have climbed to the summit of the hills. All of this is contemplated in the Word of God. When we speak of the valleys of life, we mean those places in life out of which we must climb in order to dwell upon the sunlit hills of God. When we speak of the valleys of life we speak of those places into which all of us, sooner or later go, out of which we must come in order to find life to be as bountiful as God has promised that it can be. There are no exceptions to the rule that men must walk through the valleys of life. We are concerning ourselves in the lesson this morning with this idea. We shall endeavor to present to you some thoughts that are significant and that are true concerning the valleys of life through which men must pass.

The first one to which we direct your attention is the VALLEY OF DECISION. Joel said in the third chapter and the fourteenth verse of the book of Joel, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision...." When one becomes accountable in the presence of God, he enters the valley of decision. There are many ways and many things that employ the minds of men in the valley of decision as we go along through life. Every day in the lives of most of us some decisions must be made with reference to our daily living.

Some years ago, a man told me of a visit that he made to New York City. During the time that he spent in New York, he visited one of the most productive enterprises in the whole United States. As he walked through the magnificent building, housing the offices of this wonderful productive enterprise, the guide came to a room where the executive board of that institution had its meetings each morning, and he said, "The board that meets here each day must decide what they are going to do with two million dollars, and that decision must be made, if possible, before nine o'clock each morning." Imagine that; a business institution whose executive board is faced every day with the decision as to how to invest two million dollars. We would say that the decisions made by that executive board are great decisions because they concern multitudes of people. But friends, we walk through the valley of decision with reference to God. Whether we are rich or poor, bond or free male or female, we must walk through the valley of decision. We are deciding, as we walk through the valley, whether or not we shall take our stand on God's side or continue to occupy our time and use our talents for the devil. Yes, all of us, must walk through the valley of decision.

Some of the finest reading with which the world is acquainted are the two final speeches delivered by the leaders of Israel. one was Moses and the other Joshua. We turn to the book of Joshua and we notice that he says in his final exhortation to the people of Israel, "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord. And



if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve. whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24: 14-15) Friends, these words were uttered by a man who had walked through the valley of decision. Now he comes out on the summit of the sunlit hills of God, when he says, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The decision has been made, and the decision has been made aright. "We will serve Jehovah." You are making a decision, you are walking through the valley. If you are not a Christian, you are deciding now whether or not you are going to become a Christian or whether you are going to walk in the pernicious ways of sin. You are walking through the valley.

There is a question in the old Testament that was asked by the prophet of God just preceding the trial on Mt. Carmel. You will remember this Question from the eighteenth chapter of First Kings. The prophet of God said, "How long go ye limping between two sides? If Jehovah be God follow him, but if Baal then follow him." Why are you going to stay between two opinions? Why are you going to try to tarry between two sides. Baal on the one side and God on the other? And after the contest, of course, the people destroyed the prophets of Baal, the altar of Baal, and served the Lord. The decision was made to come out on the Lord's side. They walked through the valley of decision. They made the right decision.

Centuries ago, a man and his uncle became involved in a difficulty. Their herdsmen were more or less at war with one another. The uncle came to this young man, and said, "There should be no strife between us. We are brethren." You know, it's a strange thing that that statement was uttered centuries ago, and yet brethren have not learned the lesson yet. Surely, brethren in the church are going to disagree over some things that may be in the realm of opinion or expediency, but they should still remember that they are brethren. So, the uncle said to his nephew, "We are brethren. There should be no strife. You pick out any direction that you want to go." And the young man lifted up his eyes, and looked across the fertile valleys and the rolling hills, and the Bible says, "He pitched his tent toward Sodom." That was his decision. A few years later, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The wife of this man looked back and turned to a pillar of salt as they fled from the city. A little later the Bible records the fact that Lot, being in a drunken stupor, committed the sin of incest with his own daughters. The nations that came from those daughters were nations that rebelled against God and his people. Look back at his decision. "He pitched his tent toward Sodom." That was his decision. But look at the difficulty that his decision brought about.

Again, in the old Testament we read of that wonderful character by the name of Ruth. Ruth was a daughter of Moab. She married a son of Israel. Ruth lost her husband, and the decision had to be made as to whether or not she would remain in the land or accompany her mother-in-law to the land of Israel. Some of the most beautiful language in all of the Bible is the language spoken by Ruth as she insists, in the presence of her mother-in-law, that she is going with her mother-in-law to the land of Israel. She says, "Entreat me not to leave thee nor to depart from following after thee: for whither thou guest, I will go; and where thou lodges", I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where



thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also if ought but death part thee and me." Look at the decision of Ruth; a Moabite girl going to a foreign land with her mother-in-law in her return, going to a land that she knows little if anything about, to make her abode among strangers, and to worship the God of heaven whom the Moabites did not worship. She becomes the wife of Boaz, and in the course of time, the great-grandmother of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Ruth walked through the valley of decision.

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Luke, about the young man to whom we commonly refer as the prodigal son. He took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living. He went out and hired himself to a man to go into his fields and feed swine. That, in itself, was repulsive to a Jew. There in a place where he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, the Bible says that he came to himself, and he made his decision. He said, "I know what I will do. I will go back to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Take me back as one of thy hired servants." Look at his decision. See its results. The old father welcomed his son back home. "This my son," he said, "was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." A son that was lost from his father was restored to the bounties of his father, and the blessings of his home. Truly his decision was a wise decision. Friends, I have used these examples to call to your attention the fact that all of us, young or old, must at some time or other walk through the valley of decision.

Then, there is the VALLEY OF DEPRESSION. We mean by the use of this term, the valley into which many of us go on different occasions when our spirits are at low ebb. The valley of depression is reached often in moments of sickness. Strong men have been prone to weep in moments of sickness when they had never wept before, because they were walking through the valley of depression. As you enter the hospitals and the sick rooms, you run into different kinds of attitudes, but often the attitude of one who is seriously ill is the attitude of one who walks through the valley of depression. How glorious it is that though one may have to walk through this valley, yet, at the same time, there is consolation that goes with him from the Word of God. We often lift our voices in singing, "Be not dismayed what ere betide, God will take care of you." But do we believe it? Our moments of despondency, even in times of sickness, are often brought about because of our lack of faith. We read such passages in the New Testament as that one in First Peter, five, and verse seven, "Casting all of your care upon him for he careth for you." Jesus taught in Matthew the tenth chapter beginning with the twenty-ninth verse, that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of God, and He says, "You are of much more value than a sparrow." Even the hairs of our head are all numbered. God takes notice of such a little thing as a hair falling from our heads, and yet we walk through the valley of depression because of our lack of faith. But out of sickness, out of the valley of depression, surrounding sickness, has come in the lives of many an amazing spiritual strength. A young man of whom I know at the moment, one time thought that he would never walk again, because of a terrible disease that entered his body. Just a few years ago, that young man who thought he would never walk was the fullback on one of the outstanding football teams of the nation. Another young man, who was afflicted with polio, and



given up while he was a youth to be in such a state of addiction that he would amount to very little in life, if anything, put his mind to work, and set about trying to build up a body that was reasonably strong. Today that young man is one of the outstanding young preachers of the gospel of Christ. out of sickness, there has come in the lives of many people an amazing spiritual strength. Many of us may be called upon to walk through the valley of depression.

There is another angle to the valley of depression that we want to notice, and that is that we some time may walk through the valley in the sense of moral weakness. Pilate was one who walked through this valley. He stood in the presence of those who cried out that Jesus must be crucified, and took a basin of water and washed his hands, and said, "I am free from the blood of this just person." Judas Iscariot walked through the valley of depression and moral weakness, when he stood and bargained with the enemies of Jesus to sell Him into their hands. Those who walk through the valley of moral weakness often experience a lagging of spirit and a troubled mind or heart. 10, how many have been those who have walked through this valley and have made the decision to stay in the valley of depression? How many of those in life have you seen, who would say as they lived in the latter years of their lives, "I would to God that I had the moral strength and the spiritual courage to be something besides what I am"?

Then, there is the valley that we might call the VALLEY OF PERSECUTION. If you are a Christian, you are going to be persecuted. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3: 12) Jesus said, "Marvel not if the world hate you." If you are a Christian, you are going to walk through the valley of persecution. May I impress upon you at the moment friends, this fact. that ANY MAN WHO TAKES A STAND FOR GOD AND HIS WORD AND THE CAUSE OF CHRIST WILL BE PERSECUTED. It does not matter who the man may be. There will be those who will revile you, who will speak evil against you who will mock and ridicule you, simply because you stand in their presence as one of conviction and faith. The lack of persecution experienced in the lives of some may be an indication of their weakness as Christians. The lack of persecution toward the church in some instances, may indicate the weakness of the church, instead of its strength. For all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Stephen walked through the valley of persecution. In the seventh chapter of the book of Acts, we read of this man who was full of faith and of the spirit. They led him out and threw rocks at him in order to kill him, persecuting him and killing him because of his faith in Christ Jesus. But I would have you note, friends what the Bible says about this magnificent and wonderful man. He walked through the length of the valley of persecution, and he came out on the sunlit hill of God over yonder, when he knelt down in the presence of God and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." I know that he came out of the valley of persecution victorious, for he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7: 56) Yes, friends, we shall walk through this valley.

We shall also walk through the VALLEY OF DEATH. The Psalmist David said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." As I look over this great audience

and look into your earnest faces, I know most assuredly there is a truth that I can state of each and every one of you, and that is,

that each and every one is going to walk through the valley of death. David often walked through the valley of the shadow. He walked through this valley as a youth when he met the Philistine in battle. He walked through this valley when Saul pursued him, and when he led his great armies into battle. It is not only a statement of experience, may I remind you, but it is also a statement of inspiration. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

The time is coming when you and I are going to walk through the shadow. And the time is coming when you and I are going to walk through the valley itself. "We are going down the valley one by one," as the poet said, "we are going toward the setting of the sun." Yea, though we may walk through the valley, we should fear no evil as long as we know the Lord is with us.

Friends, there is one other thing that I want you to notice. I grew up in a valley that is known as the Tennessee Valley. It has been called by some of its inhabitants, "The garden spot of the world." It is a beautiful valley. All of these valleys that we have talked about as the valleys of life, are not without their beauty. But, they are certainly lands of difficulty. As you might ride through the Tennessee Valley on a train or a bus, or as you might fly over it, you will notice in the valley the wondrous beauties that are there to behold. Did you know that God has made it possible for us, as we walk through the valleys of life, to behold the greatest of all beauty, the greatest beauty that the world has ever known? In the Song of Solomon, chapter two and verse one a direct reference is made to Jesus Christ the Son of God. You know what it is? "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley." A man may walk through the valley of decision, the valley of persecution, the valley of depression, the valley of death. But, as he walks through the valleys, or either one of these valleys, he can pluck from the fragrant Lily of the valley the strength and fortitude that he needs to carry him through the valley and to bring him out after awhile on the summit of the hills, in the love, the presence, and the forgiveness of God. Jesus our Lord and King will walk with us as we walk through the valley, regardless of what kind of valley it is. He said to his disciples, "I will be with you always even unto the end of the world." He will walk with us provided that we want Him to walk with us.

Friends, can you not see this picture as it is presented in the Word of God? The valleys may seem dark and dreary, and yet there is a way to overcome. There is a way toward prosperity. There is after awhile the glorious life, not down in the dark, deep valley, but on the sunlit hills of God where we can stand forgiven and saved in God's presence. I would to God that I had the ability to convey to your minds what this ought to mean to every individual who is gathered here in the presence of God.

The Apostle Paul, a child of God, a member of the church, a Christian, walked through every valley we have mentioned. He walked through the valley of decision, and his question was, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" He walked through the valley of depression for he said that he suffered many things for the cause of Christ. He was sometimes sick, sometimes naked, sometimes beaten, sometimes in danger among false brethren. All of that is mentioned in his second letter to the church of God in the city of Corinth. Yes, he walked through the valley of persecution. He was left on one occasion for dead, but arose miraculously and began to preach the Word of God once again. He walked through



the valley of death. As he sat in that lonely prison, writing his last letter, he said, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me in that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." Today, we need not guess nor surmise. the Apostle Paul dwells in the sunlight of the love of God. Nevermore will he enter the valley, nevermore will he walk surrounded by darkness in the depths of the valley of persecution or death. He stands redeemed in the presence of God.

Friends, that can be yours to enjoy and mine, provided we submit ourselves to the will of God. If you are not a Christian you are going to decide today before you leave this auditorium. You are in the valley, and you are going to decide in the valley of decision what you are going to do about God. You are going to decide to believe in Him with all of your heart, repent of your sins confess the precious name of Jesus and be baptized into Christ, or you are going to decide to put the Lord off a little longer, wait a little longer, and perhaps remain in the valley forever. But, you are going to make the decision. What is your decision going to be? Are you going to come out of the valley and stand in the sunlight of the love of God? I hope and pray that you will, and that you will come while together we stand and sing.

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## THE WAGES OF SIN

In the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Christians at Rome he makes the following statement, "For the wages of sin is death. but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In this passage is contained a subject which we hope to investigate with you at this hour, and it is a Bible subject. In fact it is an inspired subject. The apostle says by inspiration, "The wages of sin is death." As all of you know, sin was introduced into the garden with the very first people who inhabited the earth. The serpent, the most subtle beast of the field, had the Devil to enter into him, and the serpent, as the agent of the Devil, tempted Mother Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. What that fruit may have been, I am not qualified to say, and I doubt that any other man is, except that it was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Some years ago a Scientific Foundation put out a reward of \$1,000 to any student of science who could find a contradiction between the scientific statements of the Bible, and science of today, not the theoretical, but actual science. Some young lady in California wrote the Scientific Foundation somewhat as follows: "Adam and Eve are reported to have lived in Mesopotamia in the garden that the Bible calls the Garden of Eden. It is also said that Adam and Eve ate an apple but apples do not, have not, and will not grow in Mesopotamia. Therefore, Adam and Eve could not have eaten an apple. At your convenience, you can send me my \$1,000." The Scientific Foundation wrote back somewhat as follows: "We received your letter and note that you are a student of science but very unscientific. It may be that the Garden of Eden was located in Mesopotamia, and it may be that apples do not grow in Mesopotamia, but the Bible does not say that Eve ate an apple." There are members of the church who do not know that. The Bible, nowhere, says that Eve ate an apple, but the Bible does say that SIN was introduced into the human family by the subjection and the submission of the human family to sin in the Garden of Eden, and the sin was the eating of that forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Thus the Apostle Paul writes in First Corinthians, the fifteenth chapter, beginning with the 21st verse, and sets forth the fact that sin came upon the human family through the representative of the human race who was known as Adam. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Inasmuch therefore, as man sinned and fell from his lofty estate, God, in His goodness, mercy, wisdom, and judgment, must provide a way for man to find his way back to God, and that we are going to discuss in the closing moments of our lesson.

Adam fell by transgression, and Eve sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. Since that time, we have repeated warnings in the Word of God concerning this matter of sin. Numerous people talk about sin without realizing that God has spent so much time in the volume called the "Bible" exposing sin and warning us about sin. one of the most frequently quoted passages, perhaps, and maybe one of the most misunderstood, is in Ezekiel, the eighteenth chapter verses four and twenty and there is a line in each verse, "... the soul that sinneth, it shall die." The soul that sinneth shall be severed from God. The soul that sinneth shall be cut off from Jehovah. The soul that sinneth shall be separated from God Almighty. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The word, death, means separation therefore, the soul that sinneth shall be separated from God.

But again, in Proverbs, chapter fourteen, verse thirty-four, we have this line, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." The force of that statement is simply that sin is a reproach to anybody, anywhere, anytime, it matters not. Whereas righteousness exalteth a nation, sin is a reproach to anybody, any people, any nation. It has been said that if the United States should ever be overcome and conquered by an enemy, that the power to overcome and conquer will not be generated outside of the United States, but the power to overcome and to conquer will be generated within. Follow it, if you will, through the centuries of history, and you note the fact that nations have risen and fallen, they have risen somewhat in righteousness, they have fallen because of sin. "Righteousness exalteth a nation. but sin is a reproach to any people." Furthermore, the Bible says in the language of our Savior, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." A man who commits sin is a servant of that which he commits. That is a fact that cannot be contradicted. A man who falls to the level of the sinner, a promiscuous sinner, a habitual sinner, is a servant of the sin, or sins, which he may commit.

In Hebrews, the third chapter, verse thirteen, the inspired writer says, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today. lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Now, there are people today who attempt to overcome the ravages of sin, who never realize that sin has a hardening agent within it. A man is deceived oftentimes into thinking he can sin and then quit anytime he gets ready. But the Bible says, "Exhort one another daily while it is called Today. lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sin is deceitful! There are multitudes of people who are being deceived by sin. God has warned us about "the deceitfulness of sin," and He has told us to exhort one another— Today. Tomorrow may be too late to exhort a man to quit his sins. Today is the day to tell a man and exhort him to quit his sinning lest he be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

In Isaiah, chapter fifty-nine, the prophet says in the first two verses, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save. neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Therefore, the thing that has separated man from God, as we suggested a moment ago, is SIN. Then in admonishing the Christians at Rome, in the sixth chapter of the Roman letter to which we referred a moment ago, the apostle says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." What does it mean for sin to reign in the mortal body? It means for sin to have the upper hand of the human body. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." All of these warnings, and MANY MORE have been given in the Word of God concerning this matter of sin. God has warned us so prominently about sin, but the question arises, has God told us what it is? Why, of course, He has. God never warns the human family about anything without letting the human family know what it is, and in the matter of sin, we have it defined in the Word of God, and the definition is clear cut and simple. Let us notice, in First John, chapter three and verse four, John says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." The American Standard Version says, "Sin is lawlessness." Sin is the transgression of whose law? Well, it is obvious, friends, that the Lord means for us to understand that sin is a transgression of God's law, therefore, sin is defined.

But again, lest we misunderstand, the Lord says also in First



John, chapter five, and verse seventeen, "All unrighteousness is sin." Now, what is it to be unrighteous? In the old Testament, the Psalmist wrote and said, "All thy commandments are righteousness." All unrighteousness, therefore, must simply be ALL THINGS that are not in accord and harmony with the will of God. All unrighteousness, all things that are not pleasing to our Heavenly Father, those things are sin. In Romans, chapter fourteen, verse twenty-three, the writer says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans chapter ten, verse seventeen says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Therefore, whatsoever is not authorized by the Word of God in principle is sin. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." That is the strongest argument, friends, against some of the pernicious religious practices of today. Many say, "I have a right to do thus and so." But where does the Bible teach it? "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." In James, chapter four, verse seventeen, James says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Thus, we have God's definition of what sin is. Sin is lawlessness, transgression, unrighteousness, whatsoever is not of faith, and the man that knows to do good, and does it not, has committed sin.

We see the results of sin in the lives of the human family. on every hand we see the bodies that have been wrecked, the minds that have been destroyed, the spirits that have been broken by sin but, perhaps, the best examples to which we could direct your attention today, are found in the Bible. In the old Testament, we read in First Samuel, the fifteenth chapter, where Samuel, the Judge, came to Saul, the King, and said, "God has commanded that you go down and utterly destroy the people in the land of Amalek." Why does God want this done? Because the people of Amalek were guilty of treating the people of God in an ill fashion, when the people of God, many years before, had endeavored to go through the land. God says, "Now Saul, you go down and utterly destroy these people." Well, you remember the Bible story. Saul goes down into the land of Amalek, but he spares the best of the flocks and herds, he brings back the King, Agag. When Samuel learns of his transgression, he weeps all the night long.

May I pause long enough to say this. Whenever sin is recognized by a person who is endeavoring to live righteously, it is a matter that will cause that individual to weep. How many people do you know in this present hour, in this modern day, who weep because of the sins of others, or even their own? Samuel wept all night long. He went out to meet King Saul, and he said, "Saul, what have you done?" Saul said, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord." Samuel said, "What does the bleating of the sheep mean and the lowing of the oxen, if you have done what the Lord said, what does this mean?" Saul said, "I have brought them back to offer as a sacrifice to your God." Samuel, grieving at heart, said "Hash the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." In a little while Samuel turned away. Saul laid hold on the skirt of his mantle and it rent. Samuel turned and looked upon this proud king of Israel and he said, "God has taken from you the kingdom and has given it to a neighbor of shine who is better than thou. "Saul, what have you done?" Saul cried out, "I have SINNED." The price that Saul paid for his sin was a terrible price. He became insane, and insanely jealous. He lost his kingdom and died a suicide.

The man who was chosen to take Saul's place. was a man, ruddy



of countenance, and strong of arm. Just a youth growing into maturity and experience. He wrote and said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." This man, David, became the King of Israel instead of Saul. As the time came that the kings were to go out to battle, David sent the captain of his host, who was Joab, while he, David, stayed at home. Rather than go out- to battle, David decided to stay at home and have a vacation, and in his idleness, he took a walk upon the roof of the king's house, and across the way he saw Bathsheba washing herself. David looked upon this beautiful woman, lusted after her, and sent an inquiry as to who she might be and they came back and said, "She is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Well, that should have been enough said, but David sent for her. She came into his house. He committed adultery, sent her home, and later a message came to David. Bathsheba had written the message, and she said, "I am with child." David immediately dispatched a messenger to Joab and said, "Send Uriah the Hittite home." You see how it is working out? Now David has become afraid that his sin is going to find him out and he calls Uriah in and he wines and dines him, so to speak, and he says, "Now Uriah go home, enjoy the comforts and the pleasures of home." But Uriah would not do it, he remembered that his brethren were on the front line of battle and his captain, Joab was in danger of his life and so he went out and slept among the servants. David found this out and he called Uriah the next day and fed him sumptuously and made him drunk and said, "Uriah go home." David was trying to clear himself of his guilt but Uriah, even though he was drunk, still had a conscience; he would not go home and enjoy the pleasures and comforts and the privileges and the love of home when his brethren were out on the field of battle. David had only one recourse. He was trying to hide his sin. He sent a message to Joab and sent Uriah back to the battle and he said to Joab, "Put Uriah right in the forefront, put him right in the most dangerous section." Joab later sent a message back to David, saying, "Uriah the Hittite is dead."

A little later, Nathan, the prophet, came to David and said, "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had flocks and herds and plenty of everything. The poor man had just one little ewe lamb. Why, David, that little ewe lamb had eaten at this man's table, had lain in his bosom. This little lamb, David, had been unto this man as a daughter, and the rich man decided to make a feast for some of his friends, and instead of going to his own flocks, he sent over to this poor man's house, took this one little ewe lamb and made his feast." David became so incensed he said, "Let the man who has done this thing die." And Nathan said, "David, thou art the man." David said, "I have sinned." Adultery, murder—and I would like to read to you what David said as Nathan, the prophet, pronounced that terrible thing upon him,

"Have mercy upon me, o God, according to thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sins for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me."

A little later David said,

"Create in me a clean heart, o God; and renew a right spirit within me."

God has clearly shown us the results of sin. David's sin was forgiven, but God said, "The sword shall not depart from thy

house." A few years later David, not the young man, but the aged David, was made to cry out from the bitterness of his heart and the grief of his soul and say words that all of us would tremble with fear and dread to have to say, "oh, Absalom, my son Absalom my son, my son." Absalom, whom he loved had sinned by rebellion.

In the fourteenth chapter of Matthew, we read of an old despot by the name of Herod. Herod had a young woman, the daughter of his unlawful wife, to come in and do a sensuous dance in his presence and in the presence of his friends. You can almost picture in your minds this fat, repulsive man, sitting and lustfully looking upon the gyrations of this young woman, and he became so enamored by that which he saw that he said, "Ask anything that you will I will give it to you, even to the half of my kingdom." The woman, because of her youth and the contrivings of her mother, asked for the head of John the Baptist, a man who had been put in prison because he had told Herod that it was not lawful for him to have this woman as his wife. Herod didn't much want to do this, but because of his oath, he could not retract what he said, and so the Bible reveals to us that John the Baptist, the man who came to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight, the man who had fulfilled and accomplished his purpose in serving God, that good man and great man, had his head severed from his body and carried into the presence of Herodias upon a platter. That was the result of sin. We could go on through the Bible, calling your attention to numerous instances of sin and its results, but these are sufficient to cause any of you, who have not turned away from sin to turn away today. You must be enlightened by the testimony of the will of God. You must submit in obedience unto His divine plan, for the forgiveness of your sins, and for the salvation of your souls.

Before any man can commit sin, there must be evident the factors of enticement, the creation of desire, the submission of the will and then the accomplishment or the consummation of the sin. All of us have experienced these things, for the Bible says in Romans, chapter three and verse twenty-three, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We also learn from First John, chapter one and verse eight, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." A man who says, "I have never sinned," has deceived nobody but himself, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But it is quite amazing the attitude that people today have about, and towards sin. In Proverbs, chapter fourteen and verse nine, we read, "Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour." The Bible says furthermore that some are hardened by its deceitfulness, (Hebrews 2: 13) as we read a moment ago. There are others who will say, "I will go on living in sin until I get ready to settle down and then I will quit." The Bible teaches that sin eats away at the soul as the cancer eats away at the vital parts and elements of the body. The longer you allow a cancer to grow and thrive within your body, the less chance for recovery that you have, even at the hands of the most skilled and able surgeons. Sin is like a cancer, it eats away at the soul. We recognize from the teaching of the Bible, and from evidence on every hand, however, that there are some people whose attitude is that in all solemnity and humility and sorrow for what they have done, they will turn their back upon sin and in submission and reverence, and the love of God, they will come to Him that their sins may be blotted out, that they might stand pure and clean in the presence of Him who made us all.

Is it possible today for a man to be forgiven of his sins? Yea, since the blood of Jesus Christ has made it possible, but sins are forgiven only upon the conditions made by the living God. When those people who had-crucified the Son of God, were pricked in their hearts by the truth which was spoken by Peter and the apostles, they were made to cry out, "Brethren, what shad we do?" There, without any hesitation, without any shame, the Apostle Peter, by inspiration, said, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The man, Saul, who was guilty of holding the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, as he was on his way to Damascus, saw Q great light and fell to the earth and heard the Lord speak to him. The Lord said, "Go into the city (that is, into Damascus) and it shall be told thee what thou must do." When Ananias came in to tell Saul what he must do, Saul was praying and fasting and he was blind and Ananias said, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord," Acts 22: 16. A little later this same apostle wrote to a congregation to which he aspired to go that he might preach to them and impart to them some spiritual gift. This same man, who was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins, wrote the statement that we read to you now in Romans, chapter six, verses seventeen and eighteen, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

Would you today be made free from sin, would you let the blood of Jesus Christ prevail in your lives and upon your soul, would you let the blood that flowed from Calvary cleanse you from every sin. Then come to Jesus, He will save you. Come, submitting to His plan. Come, accepting His scheme of redemption. Come, doing His will, that you may be cleansed by His blood. Live faithfully in His service and go home to heaven after a while, to the paradise of God, unstained and unmarred by the ravages and the tragedies of sin. Will you come while we sing?

## THE ATTITUDES OF MEN TOWARD THE GOSPEL

"Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5: 24-29)

This passage very distinctly shows us at least one of the attitudes that has been exhibited, concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is quite interesting to look upon the men who inhabit the earth today, and behold the various attitudes that are expressed by them toward the gospel of the Son of God. But, it is also interesting to look within the pages of the Bible, itself, and there see revealed the attitudes of men toward the gospel, approximately two thousand years ago, and see that those attitudes two thousand years ago, are the same attitudes that are expressed by men today. We hope, in our lesson, to accomplish this purpose. The purpose of setting before you these attitudes, is that you may be able, with the help of God, and with an understanding of His Word, to overcome them. or, if you know of people who have expressed such attitudes toward the gospel, that you will have the knowledge to go to them and talk to them about these matters and these attitudes that are wrong, and show to them what the Word of God teaches along that line. It is imperative, as all of us recognize, that the gospel be preached.

In our singing today, we have taken note that we are to go into all the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is necessary that the gospel of our Saviour be taught in its purity, in order that men may hear it, obey it, and thus, be saved from the ravages of sin. But, in spite of the attitudes of men toward it, the gospel in its purity must be preached. All men are not going to believe it. all men are not going to accept it. all men are not going to love it, as you may have loved and accepted it. Some men will hate the gospel, but like Noah of old, we should stand boldly in the presence of men. We should proclaim the glad tidings of Christ to all who will hear. In spite of all the opposition that may be raised against preaching the Word in its purity, like Noah, we should continue to preach what God has placed upon us the responsibility to preach. Thus, as Paul wrote to Timothy, so we preface this lesson today, "Preach the Word." There is nothing else that can save the souls of men.

We then call your attention to some of the attitudes that the Bible sets before us that have been engendered in the hearts of men toward the gospel. Please keep in mind that the men who preached the gospel in the first century were chosen of the Lord, i.e., the apostles, and there were certain men who were inspired by the Spirit of God, along with the apostles to preach the gospel in its purity. Paul, you remember, said in 1 Corinthians, chapter two,

verse thirteen, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The Holy Spirit even placed the words in the mouth of the inspired teacher, in order that he might accomplish the teaching of the gospel without mistake, and without error. Yet, in spite of that, there were certain attitudes developed in the hearts of men that were wrong. Now, if certain attitudes developed in the days of the apostles, then I know that certain attitudes are going to be developed today. I know that we are going to have some of the same motives, some of the same misunderstandings, some of the same MISCONCEPTIONS, and some of the same kinds of unbelief that characterized the reception of the gospel in the days of the apostles, then I know that certain attitudes are going to be developed today. I know that we are going to have some of the same motives, some of the same misunderstandings, some of the same MISCONCEPTIONS, and some of the same kinds of unbelief that characterized the reception of the gospel in the days of the apostles when it is preached in our day.

The first one, then to which I call your attention, is a notable one, found in Acts lit, beginning with verse eleven. The Apostle Paul had gone into the city of Berea, along with some of his fellow workers, to preach the gospel of God. Their reception was a good one. The Bereans received the gospel with all readiness of mind and then searched the Scriptures to see whether or not these things were so. If today, every person who hears the gospel of God would search the Scriptures to see whether or not it is so, we would have more noble souls in existence today, just as the people in Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica. What a wonderful thing it must have been, for Paul and his companions to have gone from a city where the acceptance of the gospel was very limited, to a city where the people very open-mindedly received the teaching of God, and then searched the Scriptures to see whether or not it was so. The Scriptures referred to here, of course, are the Scriptures of the old Testament, inasmuch as the New Testament had not yet been written. As they searched the pages of the old Testament, concerning the resurrection of Christ, and the establishment of the church, and Christian living, under Jesus Christ, the Son of God they saw that these things were so. Thus, the gospel in Berea had a wonderful reception. God has placed upon us the responsibility of searching and proving that which we hear. Jesus one time said, "Take heed what you hear." Another time, the Saviour said, "Take heed how ye hear." God has given us a mind which we must exercise to detect erroneous teachings by the divine standard, which is the Word of God. Thus, we have such admonitions in the New Testament as these. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." If you cannot prove it, you'd better leave it. Then, again, "Try the spirits, whether they are of God, for many false prophets are gone out into the world." All the false prophets that have gone out into the world are not dead; there are some of them who are still living. Not only living, but encouraging others to follow the false pattern of teaching which they have established. It is a dangerous course when an individual hears anything religiously, and then doesn't try by the Word of God, to see if it is so. The Apostle John warned us of this attitude, and said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God." (2 John 9)

Another attitude that was expressed is found in Acts, chapter seven. You will recall that Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to minister unto the needs of those people who had been neglected. Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Spirit. He

was a man of God. a man dedicated to God's service. He stood before this group of people assembled who opposed the gospel of Christ, and with boldness, set before them the fact, that God had promised that all nations of the earth should be blessed through the seed of Abraham. Then he pointed out that Jesus Christ was the accomplishment of that divine promise of Almighty God. When he uttered words to this effect, it so aroused the anger of the people on that occasion that they gnashed on Stephen with their teeth. They dragged him out of the city and threw rocks at him until he died. There is something that demonstrates the real spirit of Christianity in the death of Stephen. Listen to these words. "They cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul, and they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit, and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, and when he had said this, he fell asleep." There were people, friends, whose attitude was consummated in murder. their attitude toward the pure, unadulterated gospel of the Son of God. They killed a man who preached it.

The people became angry at Jesus. We, oftentimes, hear people say, "Well, I believe a preacher ought to preach like Jesus." so Do I! If I could ever approximate the grand and glorious presentation of the Word, as Jesus delivered it, friends, I can confess to you now, that it would be one of the happiest moments of my life. If I could ever just touch the hem of the garment, as far as the presentation of the Word of God is concerned, like Jesus presented it, then I would have accomplished a great thing for the Master. Jesus was the Master Teacher. Yet, I can turn to the book .of Luke, and read from the fourth chapter, where they took Jesus out to the brow of a hill, and were going to cast him down, head long, because they did not like what He said. This does not mean, either, that Jesus taught without love and grace in his heart toward his hearers. All of us know that He did. It was simply the attitude of the people toward that which they heard.

Then again, we read in the Word of God concerning the attitude of some very learned men. You know, friends, it really doesn't matter from whom we hear the gospel, just as long as it is the gospel. on this occasion, Paul stood at Areopagus, or Mars' Hill, and proclaimed Christ and him crucified. In the seventeenth chapter of the book of Acts, it is recorded that these men, who composed Paul's audience, were largely made up of men who were classified as philosophers. Some of them asked the question, when Paul stood to make his presentation of Christ, "What will this babbler say?" Now imagine, men who are intelligent enough to be called philosophers, yet, they look upon this man, who has come to preach Christ and say, "What will this babbler say?" And others said, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." Why such remarks? Because, he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. After the presentation of the truth, some of these philosophers openly mocked and ridiculed what Paul had said, just as there are philosophers today, who will mock and ridicule what any gospel preacher has to say. And others did not believe, and others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter." Some of them, no doubt, said this out of curiosity. A few of them may have said it out of a real desire to hear about Christ, and his resurrection.

There is something that I want you to see just here. When Paul recognized the hardness of the hearts of these men, who had devoted





their lives to the attaining of worldly wisdom he left the city of Athens, and went elsewhere to preach the gospel of Christ. Paul did not tarry long with people that he knew were too hard hearted, and too prejudiced by their philosophical mockery to hear the gospel of the Son of God. Jesus had commanded his disciples to act in such a way. He said, "If you go into such a city, and they will not receive you, shake off the dust of your feet, because it will bear witness against that city, and go elsewhere to preach the gospel."

Then, there were some, who composed a portion of the citizenry of Antioch in Pisidia, of whom we read in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts, who heard Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel of God, and because of that, they were filled with envy. These people were Jews; they hated what Paul and Barnabas had to say about Christ, and the resurrection. And, as they were filled with envy they spoke against the truth, which Paul and Barnabas were presenting. I would like for you to note the statement made by the apostles to these people, in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts, verses forty-five and forty-six. It is one that should ring down through the centuries of time, and have great effect upon the minds of people today. Notice it carefully, as we read it to you. Let it find its way into your heart. "But when the Jews saw the multitudes they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." (You know friends, that's not anything new, when it's done today then, is it? They heard the gospel, but they contradicted and blasphemed. The same thing may happen today, and does.) "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, 10, we turn to the Gentiles." What were these men doing when they turned aside from the truth? Paul said, "Because you are rejecting the Word of God, the gospel of Christ, you are judging yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." That isn't hard to understand, then, is it? We may then, suggest to you today, friends, that those who reject the gospel of Christ, through envy or any other reason, or excuse, are judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

Then, there is the man by the name of Felix, of whom we read in Acts 24. Felix is a ruler of the people. He wants to hear the defense that Paul is making; his defense for preaching Christ, and him crucified. When Paul preached to Felix, instead of approaching Felix as a great dignitary, who had never committed any sin, the apostle went directly, and immediately to the very heart of all of his trouble. He reasoned with Felix, concerning matters of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. When Felix heard Paul's reasoning on these matters, he was terrified. He was afraid, because he was guilty, and he said, "I will hear you later." He put off until tomorrow, what he should have done today. There has never been a time, perhaps, when a gospel preacher has stood before an audience of this size, that he did not look over somebody in that audience, who is putting off his obedience to the gospel of Christ, until a more convenient season. That is what Felix did. He said, "When I have a more convenient season, I will call for you." As far as we know, Felix never did obey the gospel. His attitude was that of fear and procrastination. He may have been afraid, because of his associates. He may have been afraid, because the gospel would have condemned his marriage. He may have been afraid because of his political setup. We may guess at many things, but the Bible says that he was terrified, when Paul reasoned with him of these things.

Briefly, we have given you several attitudes that have existed toward the gospel. Eagerness to accept it; anger and rebellion manifested toward it. the mockery of the philosopher, the envy of the Jews; the procrastination of the ruler of the people. Jesus saw all of these attitudes, during his personal ministry. Jesus, for instance, saw a rich, young ruler turn and go away sorrowful, because he was one of great possession, and would not do the bidding of the Lord. Jesus heard many accusations hurled at him by those who rejected his counsel. There were those who said about Jesus "How knoweth this man these things, seeing he has never learned?" There were others who said, "This man is a gluttonous man, and a winebibber." There were others who asked such questions as, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yet, the Son of God stood stalwart, bold, and strong, and with love in his heart for God, and the masses of humanity encompassed in sin, He poured out the soul-saving principles that would govern Christianity, and then, invited men to, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your soul, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Regardless of what your attitude may have been in life toward the gospel, the Son of God still stands, as it were, at the threshold of heaven, holding out hands that were pierced with nails; holding out those hands to you, that you might come in humble, submissive obedience to his gospel; be embraced in the arms of his magnificent love, and saved from all of the sins of the past. We pray to God that your attitude today may be one of acceptance. that you, like the Bereans of old, may hear the word with gladness, and search the Scriptures daily. Would you, then, come to Christ? Would you throw off the weight of sin, and the burden of transgression, and accept his invitation? Would you be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins? If so, win you come now, while together we sing?

## WHY DENOMINATIONALISM IS WRONG

This morning I want to talk to you in the time that we have, concerning a matter that is very close to the hearts of men in these days in which we live. You will recall that the Ephesian letter was written to the church of the Lord in the city of Ephesus, and among other things that are mentioned in the Ephesian letter, we find these words in the fourth chapter beginning with the first verse:

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith be are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as he are called in one hope of your calling. one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and one Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Friends, if this passage teaches any one thing, it teaches that the people of God are to stand together in unity. Many hearts today are sorely grieved because of the sadly divided condition of the religious world in which you and I are living. It is a frequent question in the hearts and on the lips of those who observe this division "Why is it so?" "Why is it necessary to have so many denominational bodies in the world?" is a question frequently heard. Why is it necessary to have so many divisions religiously speaking? Certainly it is a matter easily understood, in view of the teaching of the Bible, that we do not need all of these religious bodies, these denominational institutions. The question confronting us then, since they all exist, is actually the question, "What is wrong with it?"

We are aware of the fact that in the United States there are approximately three hundred different kinds of religious bodies. Since most people will admit that they are not needed, then surely we could ask the question, "Well, what is wrong with it?" Denominationalism is here; men have embraced it. Is it wrong or is it right? Does the Bible answer these questions? If so, friends, we want to investigate what the Bible teaches and get at the core, the heart, the center of these things, because our Savior said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." May we kindly call your attention to the fact that we are not interested in the quibbles of men, but in the doctrine of Christ, as we set about to answer the question as to whether or not denominationalism, as such, is right or wrong.

In the first place, then, we call your attention to the fact that as far as the Bible is concerned, it is as silent as the tomb about denominationalism. There are those who would contend, therefore, that we ought not to say anything about it, that denominationalism is not in the Bible, therefore, we should not mention it. But, friends, by the same logic, it would have been an impossibility for me to have presented the lesson last Lord's day about the Christian Home. You can search the New Testament from beginning to end, and you will not find in it the expression "Christian home." Is it better, then simply because the New Testament does not mention the Christian home to say nothing about the Christian home? Why, of course not. We understand that we need teaching about the Christian home because there is such a thing as the Christian home and men need to know what it is. The same thing is true of denominationalism. The word itself is not in the Bible, but we need to call to the attention of men the things that may be wrong with it, inasmuch as so many people have embraced it. I know that men are interested in these things because men have talked to me about these matters.

Since denominationalism exists in the world, and the Bible says nothing about it, then be assured of the fact that it exists without authority. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The contention of men is this. that all of these religious institutions make up the grand and glorious universal church of our Lord. But, do they? If so, here is the picture that we can actually see; that upon the vine, Jesus Christ, we have all kinds of fruits growing in the religious world of today. Many of you would pay quite a good price to see a vine that is producing grapes, gourds, watermelons, squash, etc., all on the same vine. I would. You would pay a pretty good price to see such a "natural phenomenon." We do not see it because it is not according to God's law. Is not the same thing true religiously? Men today who contend that denominationalism is simply a mixture of fruit, all growing upon the same vine, present to our minds a thing that could not happen in the natural world, and therefore could not happen spiritually because it would be a violation of the law of God. Denominationalism then, exists without authority. When Jesus said, "All authority (or power) hath been given unto me," He conveyed to our minds the fact that He had delegated unto Him authority from Almighty God; authority both in heaven and in earth. We cannot find, therefore, anywhere in the New Testament where by this authority our Savior authorized the existence of denominational systems, doctrines, and tenets of faith.

Have you ever studied the motive of Jesus Christ in establishing the church? In the New Testament, Jesus said, "I will build my church," not churches, not a multiplicity of religious divisions, but "upon this rock I will build my church." His motive was surely the motive of impartiality. If Jesus Christ allowed men today to erect churches to the honor of men, to the glory of their theology, then there would be just about as many churches as there are men. But, when the Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," He used a singular word to describe and define the singularity of that glorious institution. Therefore, denominationalism, as such, exists in the world today without the authority of Jesus Christ.

In the next place, it presents to men the idea of a house divided. Many people think that Abraham Lincoln was the author of the expression, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." He used that expression in one of his great speeches, but Jesus Christ is the author of that statement, and we find it recorded in Matthew, the twelfth chapter and verse twenty-five. Jesus said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We see that on every hand. When a husband and wife, for instance, are having great difficulty, and their concern ceases to be for one another, and they become selfish; they can see only their own rights and privileges, and in spite of the teaching of the Word of God, they intend to hold up for their "rights" as they conceive of them, even if it means the tearing up and the breaking down of the home. A house divided cannot stand. The same thing is true in religion.

Great inroads are being made by Satan today because of the division that he, himself, has fostered. All religious people will agree that if we could stand together it would be better, safer, surer, more wholesome, and make for a better spirit in the world. Well, friends, if we can understand from merely the standpoint of logic that this is true, surely we can understand it in view of the fact that Jesus said, "A house divided cannot stand." Several years ago, when the United States entered into the throes of World War II, Mr. Roosevelt, who was then President, made the plea to the nation known as the United States, to stand together. Let all differences be absolved,

removed, pushed aside that we might stand together in unanimity to hold up the banner of our nation, and to help us to win the war. Men all over the country were heard to remark concerning the outstanding statements that he made concerning unity. If it works with a nation, it can work with the people of God. If it must work within us as a nation, it must work within us as followers of Jesus Christ, for "a house divided cannot stand."

In the seventeenth chapter of the book of John, our Savior lifted up his eyes and prayed to God in heaven for his blessings to reside upon his apostles whom He had chosen, upon their preaching, upon their efforts to convert the world, and then our Savior prayed for those of us who live today. This is what He said, "Neither pray I for these alone (that is, my apostles and disciples whom I have chosen) but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, (that's talking about you and me) that they all may be one. as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Jesus Christ here opens the door of our understanding as to why many people do not believe . . . because of the sad situation brought on by religious division. He prayed that we all might be one, that we might stand together in unity, that the world might believe that God sent Him.

Again, our Savior said, "If ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed." (John 8: 31.) Now, friends, put two and two together. Jesus prayed for those that believe on Him to be one. Jesus stated that a man is truly his disciple when he follows in the Word of the Lord, when he abides by the teaching of the Christ. Therefore, our Savior taught unity. The religious theologians of our day teach division. our Savior prayed for unity. Many religious leaders pray, thanking God for division. As our Savior said, "A man is truly my disciple if he continues in my word," not in the word of some man, not in the word of some doctor of divinity, not in the word of some outstanding scholar; "A man is truly my disciple if he continues in my word," and the word of Christ is the word for unity, not division. Therefore, denominationalism stands condemned because they break the principle of unity rather than adhere to it.

The story is told that a certain man had seven stalwart sons. one day the man was in the field with his sons, and he called them all around him and gave each of them a rather good sized stick, and said, "Now, boys, I want you to show me how strong you are. I want you to break the stick that I have given you." Well, very promptly from the youngest to the eldest, all of these strong stalwart boys snapped the sticks. Then the father took seven sticks of approximately the same size, and bound them together. He said to his boys, "I want each of you to try to break these seven sticks." Well from the youngest to the eldest they tried, but in vain. There was unanimity and strength in the bundle of sticks. Separately they could be broken, together they could not be broken. The father taught his sons a lesson that there is strength in sticking together, in working together, in holding together. The same thing the Lord teaches us with reference to the church. There is strength in unity.

Those who cry out against Christ and Christianity, cry long, loud and forcefully about the religious division that exists in the world today. Do they have a right to so cry? Three hundred different religious bodies, all claiming to be following the same Christ, serving the same God, headed in the same direction, when our Savior prayed that we all might be one, and that we are indeed his disciples

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if we conscientiously follow the teaching of his will. Friends, it just doesn't add up, does it?

But, then again, the Bible says that we are to "speak the same thing." Denominationalism exists today because those who claim to follow Christ do not speak the same thing. In First Corinthians, chapter one, we learn of a division that had gotten under way in the church in Corinth. This division was somewhat similar to the divisions that we have in the religious world of today. Paul illustrated it, at least, by suggesting that some were followers of Paul and some of Cephas, and some of Apollos and some of Christ. Thus, they were divided. Today, men are followers of Wesley, Zwingli, Knox, Smythe, and others. Therefore, we have an adequate comparison between what is happening in modern times and what happened in the church in the city of Corinth. Now then, Paul said, in verse ten of First Corinthians one, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Those who are today dedicated to honoring and glorifying the memory of some man, are laboring to do that which the men themselves would condemn if they stood in our presence at this very moment. The great reformers of old and those who attempted to restore Christianity, of all things did not want men to wear their names religiously speaking, nor to follow anything that they might have presented that was untrue. They wanted men to search the Scripture, to learn from the Word of God those things that God would have us to do and to be. May I add that regardless of how great these men who have made up much of the religious history may have been, not a single one of them was crucified for us. Paul asked this question in the First Corinthian letter, chapter one, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" The thought here presented is that Paul was not crucified for you but Christ was, therefore, you are not to be a follower of Paul, a "Paulite". you are to be a follower of Christ. That's the idea, To wear the name of the men who labored to restore Christianity, does not honor them as the servants of God. on the other hand it dishonors God. Let me give you an illustration with which many people are acquainted.

There are people today who speak of members of the church of Christ as "Campbellites." Members of the church of Christ do not approve that name. Therefore, people are not acting kindly toward us when they use that name with reference to us. But suppose for a moment that we granted that "Campbellite" is a good name. It's as good as any other man-made name could be. In using that in reference to ourselves, we would not be honoring Alexander Campbell, for Campbell pled with people for a restoration of Christianity, not the creation of another sect. Therefore, we would be dishonoring the man, we would be dishonoring God. It would be a reflection on the man who sought to restore Christianity to its ancient purity, rather than an honor and a glory to his name. The Bible says then, that we are to speak the same thing. We are not to be divided over the doctrines and concepts of men. We are to hold fast to the truth of God, with "one mind and one mouth" we are to glorify our Maker, so we are told in Romans 15:6; that is, we are to stand together.

Religious division today, therefore stands before us as a tragedy not a blessing. It is viewed from the standpoint of the Bible as a thing that creates trouble instead of bringing peace. one of Paul's final exhortations to the church of God in the city of Corinth was that they should all be of one mind (2 Corinthians 13: 11). God's

people are to walk by the same rule. What is that rule, The Word of God. They are to mind the same things (Philippians 3: 16). There is to be no division among them. Friends, let us believe what the Bible teaches.

Among all this religious division that we see in the world of today, the Lord's church stands forth. It stands forth as the church that Jesus built, recognizing Christ and his Word as its only creed, believing that whatever the Lord commanded of us to do, we must do in order to be saved, for the Bible says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city." Whereas sectarianism makes a mockery of the prayer of Jesus Christ, true Christianity makes it a blessing to the human family. There is one body, so teaches the Word of God. There are many members but one body, so says the Bible. We do not argue about there being more than one God, more than one Lord, more than one Holy Spirit. In the same passage where it is said that there is one God, Father of all, one Lord one Spirit, IN THE SAME PASSAGE (and we read it as our texts, it also says "there is one body." That one body, according to Paul's statement in Ephesians one and the last two verses is the church. Therefore, friends, without fear I suggest to you that the Bible teaches the existence of one church, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would be unfair, unkind, and ungodly, if I did not declare unto you this part of the counsel of God Almighty. Therefore, if we stand condemned today because of our religious division, it's not because of what some man may have thought that he ought to preach about it, rather it is what the Word of God says about it, for the Word of God is the only thing that could possibly condemn our activities without question. The perpetration of division has brought about sadness, it has brought about trouble, and we see it today when we look about us.

We behold that religious division, first of all, is wasteful. Think of the many fine church buildings, exquisite architecture that has gone into cathedrals, tabernacles and so on in which men have attempted to honor God, and yet have preached doctrines which the Word of God does not authorize. Think of all of the money that has been poured into brick and mortar to honor some doctrine about which the Bible is absolutely silent, except to condemn it. If all of that money had been turned toward preaching the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, then truly even in our day, the kingdom of God might cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

We also see the tragedy of religious division when we see homes divided and souls lost. Mothers and fathers and precious little children go their various and sundry ways in attempting to worship God. Father goes in one direction, mother in another because of the religious division that has been perpetrated by men. How beautiful it would be to see father and mother together with their precious little children clustered around them, working in the faith, following the rule of the Word of God, worshiping in spirit and in truth, with no heaviness upon their hearts, because their hope is not divided, but together.

The Bible, the Word of God, the Truth, is that to which you and I must hold if we expect to go to heaven when we die. If you are here then today, and not a Christian, the Word of God teaches you that you must believe in God with all of your heart, repent of every sin, confess the name of Christ before men, and then be buried with Christ in baptism in order that your sins may be forgiven. This is what the Word of God teaches. This is what it teaches you in order

WHY DENOMINATIONALISM IS WRONG



that you might become a Christian. Do you have the faith, then, the courage, the conviction to walk down one of these aisles this morning? Give me your hand, let your heart belong to God, submit to God's will, be buried with the Lord in baptism, and then in all kindness you may say to anybody, anywhere, when they ask you the question concerning your religious status, "I am a Christian, a Christian as the Word of God teaches me to be a Christian." Would you come today in obedience then to the gospel, while together we stand and sing?

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## I BELIEVE IN BAPTISM

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11: 6)

Perhaps, if I should tell you the subject that I have in mind to discuss with you this morning, you would be somewhat surprised that I have read this particular passage as the text. May I call your attention to the closing words of this verse again, ". . . he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Surely, friends, if one believes something, or somebody, there must be some reason for it. If I believe of a certain individual, that he is a Christian, or that he lives a good moral life, or that he is a reprobate, there is a reason why I believe such of him. The evidence of his life would convey to me that he is a Christian, or a good moral man, or a reprobate. Therefore, I would believe it of the individual, because of the evidence. This is true of whatever God has set forth that men must obey. We are convinced of the truth, because of the evidence. We believe, because of the evidence presented. As stated in Hebrews 11: 1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." With this as a preface, I want to study with you a very simple lesson, a very simple subject, a very simple act, in which I believe, because of the evidence. I believe in baptism.

There are people, of course, who do not believe in baptism. They may think that they have their reasons. I will, in a moment, friends, with the help of God, convey to you the reasons why I believe in baptism. I suggest to you here and now, that unless there is evidence in the Word of God that can be presented, then none of us should believe in it. If the evidence that we find in the Word of God is sufficient, then all of us should believe in it. It is just that simple. If there is enough evidence in the Word of God to cause us to believe it, then let us all believe it. If there is not enough evidence in the Word to effect belief on our part, then let none of us believe it, for we shall be saved upon the basis of the truth that we believe.

There are men who object to baptism as an act, fact, practice, or doctrine, and in order to get before us the evidence that we need, in order to convince fully, we want to notice some of these objections in the light of the Word of God. One objects to baptism, because he says that baptism does not and cannot wash away sins. But we turn to the Word of God, and we find the following statement. In Acts 22: 16, Ananias told Saul, of Tarsus, as repeated or quoted by Saul, who became Paul, the Apostle, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Now, friends, in all seriousness, I want to ask you if you have any right to doubt that statement? Ananias was the teacher, sent to Saul of Tarsus, by the Lord, to tell Saul of Tarsus what he must do. Now, this is what he told him. ". . . arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Now, if I should suggest to you at the moment, "I want to add this OPINION to what Saul of Tarsus said," then you might say, "Well, that preacher has gone haywire and is going to say something now, that is not even in the Bible." But, friends, if we leave it just as it is, may I ask you then, "Who said it?" Why, the servant of the Lord, who was sent to Saul of Tarsus to tell him what to do to be saved. Note again in 1 Peter 3: 21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism cloth also now save us...." Now, do you have any right to doubt what the Apostle Peter, inspired of the Spirit of God, had to say about it? Therefore, friends, the man who says, "I object

to baptism because it does not and cannot wash away sins," is objecting to that which is set forth in the Word of God. But one says "There is no such thing as virtue in the water to wash away sins." I don't know that anybody claims that there is any such virtue in the water. But I do claim, friends, and I claim as fully convicted as I know how to be convicted, that the Word of God says that baptism washes away sins, and that it saves us. Not baptism only, mind you, but baptism, as an act of obedience to the will of God, is a part of that which enters into our salvation.

Another objects on the ground that baptism has nothing to do with our ultimate salvation. But, in giving the Great Commission, Jesus said in Mark 16: 16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Now, I have no right or reason to doubt that. When the Apostle Peter tells us, as we noticed a moment ago that "... baptism cloth also now save us," I have no right to doubt that. Friends, that is a part of the Word of God. Now, if we believe the Word of God, we must also believe that because it is a part of God's Word. Now, let's go back to our text for a moment. "... he that cometh to God . . .," what about him? "... he that cometh to God must believe that he is..." Now that surely carries more weight than just the mental consent to the fact that God exists. "... he that cometh to God must believe that he is . . ." Note further. "... and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Now, how does a man believe that God is, and diligently seek God? He believes that by complying with whatever God has said about these matters. Therefore, I am suggesting to you as earnestly as I know how, that no man can truly believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, until he is ready to do what God in His Word has commanded him to do. Let us go a step further. When the objection is raised that baptism has nothing to do with our ultimate salvation, and somebody proposes that the Bible teaches that it does have something to do with it, then this question is raised, "Suppose a man wants to be saved and there is no water anywhere near?" Well, friends, that is a little bit ridiculous. In view, first of all, that man cannot long exist without water, he would have to be near water to live, and secondly, we are overlooking the fact that in the first chapter of the book of John, it is stated that the Lord gives the power to become sons of God to those who believe on Him. God gives man the right or power to become a son of God, when he believes on Him. Therefore, if the man truly believes on the Lord, who is going to take away his power, or his right to become the son of God before it is accomplished? I readily admit that a man could lose his life before he got to the water of baptism, if he was not convinced and convicted, but if a man is convinced and convicted he ought to obey God in baptism, because this is what God has commanded him to do, then I submit to you that the Scripture teaches to such God has given the power to become a son of God, and nobody can take that right, or power away. That statement is found in John 1: 12. But let us do like Jesus did on many occasions. When a man says, "Suppose there is no water near, what would a man do then?" Let us ask a question in answer to that question. SUPPOSE THAT NO GOSPEL SHOULD BE PREACHED TO THE MAN, what about it then? The Word of God says, "The gospel is the power of God to save." (Romans 1: 16) Suppose the man didn't hear the gospel? Well, the answer is that he wouldn't be saved. Then suppose he didn't get to the water? Water is the element that God has commanded. I cannot stand in this pulpit and suggest to you, therefore,

that man can obviate one of God's plain, simple commandments, and still be well pleasing to the God of heaven. Therefore, in all kindness, we can answer one question by asking another. If the gospel is not preached, which is the power to save, then a man cannot be saved. If man does not obey the commandments of God, then how can he be saved in disobedience?

Then, again, there are those who suggest that baptism is a work and that any man who is baptized, is attempting to work his way into heaven, and that is an impossibility. Friends, it is an impossibility for a man to work his way into heaven, as they tried to do centuries ago, when they sought to erect a tower into which they could climb and look into the very presence of God in heaven. Those were the works of men in the flesh. But when we do that work which God has commanded of us to do, no man can rightfully say that it is a work of man or work of merit. Now, let us see why. Because in the sixth chapter of the book of John, we learn that faith is a work of God in the sense that the man who believes is doing what God requires of him to do. Well, baptism is also a work of God in the sense that God has specifically stated that men must obey it. Revelation 22: 14, says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Baptism is one of God's commandments. Therefore, an individual must comply with that commandment as a work of God, and not as a work of man. Let me ask you this simple question. Who, among men, would ever have thought of immersing the body in water as a commandment of God? If God had not brought that to pass, who, among men, might ever have thought of it? Just a simple thing like immersion of the body in water as a commandment of God? Why, don't you see, friends, it must have come from the Lord. The people who cry most desperately against the idea of being baptized in order to be saved, are often the very people who will tell you, most explicitly, that you cannot get into the church without it. What is the action of baptism, then, as far as they are concerned? It is an action of getting them into what they call the "visible church." They say it is not an act that has anything to do with our salvation. So, in the final analysis, what does that mean? It simply means this. Those who tell you that baptism has no merit, as far as our salvation is concerned, are suggesting that it is easier for us to go to heaven, than it is for us to get into the church of which they may be members. Why? Because they will not let you into that religious institution, until you go through some "form" of baptism, but they suggest to you that you can go to heaven without it. Therefore, it is easier, according to that idea, for an individual to go to heaven, than it is to get into some of the religious institutions of our day.

Then, some people object to baptism, because they say, "The mode of immersion is objectionable to me." Why? The Word of God says that the Lord Jesus Christ "came up straightway out of the water." (Mark 1: 9, 10) If the Lord Jesus Christ was immersed in obedience to the will of God, and that was baptism, then I know, assuredly, friends, that an individual, today, must be immersed in water in order to comply with the commandment of God to be baptized. If it were required of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God, in order to fulfill all righteousness, then surely it is required of men today, who stand convicted of sin in the presence of God, and it is little wonder then, that Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Now, then, what is the evidence? Well, we have studied some

of it, but here is a little more. In the commission that Jesus gave, He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved " (Mark 16: 15, 16) In the closing verses of the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, 10, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "Lord, what do you want done?" "First, I want men to be taught, then after they are taught, I want them to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Then, when they are baptized into the name of these three, I want them to be taught, further. I want them to be taught to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded." Then, we note that the apostles began this practice on the first Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus, and by inspiration, the Apostle Peter in answer to the question, "Brethren, what shall we do?" said "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It has always been a matter of great concern to me that people can read that passage of Scripture, and not see its import. There were thousands of people who heard what Peter said. If there had been an easier, simpler way to have done the thing, I know that the Holy Spirit would have instructed the Apostle Peter, to have stated it to the people. There were thousands of people concerned in this matter, but in spite of that, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you." Then, as the apostles preached and practiced the things that Jesus had commanded in the early church, we notice, without exception, in every clear-cut case of conversion in the New Testament, that people were baptized. In the eighth chapter of the book of Acts, verse five, Philip went down into Samaria to preach Christ unto them. Verse twelve states, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, . . ." In the same eighth chapter of Acts, the eunuch was baptized by Philip, the evangelist, as he went on his way toward home. Now, we can understand those simple things. In the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts the Philippian jailor, ". . . took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." When Peter went down to preach at the house of Cornelius, as he came to the close of his discourse, he said, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we, and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Friends, let us make these three observations. When the church had its beginning, as far as the Bible record is concerned, THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL ADDED TO THE CHURCH BY THE LORD WHO WAS NOT BAPTIZED. Therefore, I believe in baptism because the Lord doesn't add people to the church who have not been baptized. In the second place, it was of such great importance, that they gave it immediate attention. Did you notice what we read to you from the Word of God about the Philippian jailor? ". . . he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately." I once heard of a lady who came forward and made the confession of faith that she believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and then when asked when she wanted to be baptized, she said, "I haven't made up my mind yet, whether or not I want to be."

Time went on, and time passed, and she never was baptized. Now when an individual believes in God enough to confess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, he should then be as immediate as possible about his baptism, because it is important, and in a moment we are going to see more about why. Further, we make the observation that God did not require a perfect knowledge of all of the truth at the moment these people were baptized into Christ. I have known of people who have said, "I do not know enough about the Bible to be baptized, therefore, I am going to wait until I know it, and then I am going to do it." Do you realize, friends, that the Bible teaches that a person who is baptized into Christ is a babe? He is not expected to know as much as a man whose hair is gray, whose shoulders are stooped, who is bending toward the grave, who has been a member of the body of Christ for forty or fifty years. No, a person who is baptized into Christ, is a baby in a spiritual sense. Therefore, he is not supposed to know, under most circumstances, as much as a man who has been a member of the Lord's church for many years.

Now, let's consider baptism's relationship to our salvation very quickly. The Word of God, as we have already pointed out to you, says that it cleanses us from our sins. In 1 Corinthians the sixth chapter, the Apostle Paul noted some of the things of which the Corinthians had been guilty. Quickly, let me suggest a few of them to you. adultery, thievery, drunkenness, effeminate, and so on down the line. Now, what had happened to these people. Verse eleven, says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." So, then, we see that baptism cleanses us from our past sins. Galatians 3: 27 teaches us that baptism puts one into Christ. But 2 Timothy 2: 1d says, that "... salvation is in Christ." Therefore, baptism is the consummating act in primary obedience that brings about our salvation by putting us into Christ Jesus. 1 Corinthians 12: 13 says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." What is the thought? Why, simply this. By the direction of the Word of God, given by God's Spirit, are you baptized into one body. What is that one body? It is the church. Therefore, when you are baptized into Christ, you automatically come into the Lord's church. He adds you to the church as a newborn child of God, and that act cleanses you from your sins. It is the consummating act of the new birth, for IN CHRIST, we are new creatures. (2 Corinthians 5: 17) If we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, how do we get into Christ? The Word of God says that we are "baptized into Christ." Therefore, baptism is the consummating act of obedience required in the new birth of which Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." (John 3: 7) Now, friends, we can understand that.

Please observe that God has never allowed man to trifle with his commandments. This is a simple thing that God has asked men to do. He has given abundant evidence of its necessity in the Word of God. THEREFORE, I BELIEVE IN BAPTISM, BECAUSE OF THE EVIDENCE IN THE WORD OF GOD. God will not allow you or me to trifle with one of His commandments regardless of how simple it is. In the old Testament, we read of that good and faithful man by the name of Moses, who led the people through their wanderings in the wilderness. During the time of their wanderings, they ran out of water, and they began to complain. Moses took their plight before Jehovah, and God said

to Moses, "I want you to go to a certain rock and speak to it." But Moses became angry because of the murmurings of the people, and instead of speaking to the rock, Moses smote the rock, and God said, "Because of this, you will not enter into the promised land." Simple thing God told him to do, wasn't it? "Speak to the rock." Moses, in a moment of anger, smote it! God told him to speak to it, but because of his disobedience, because he trifled with a commandment of God, God said, "You cannot enter into the promised land." Friend, don't trifle with God's commandments. Remember that ". . . he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This surely carries with it the idea that a man must accept God's Word if he expects to be saved, and the Word of God says that one must be baptized. Therefore, I am suggesting to you that I believe in baptism because the Word of God teaches it.

I hope there are those here today, who, if not already Christians, will believe in him enough to come forward and obey the Lord in the act of baptism that you might become a child of God. If so, will you come while together we sing?

## THE NEED OF FORGIVENESS

"And where they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots." (Luke 23: 33, 34)

I have read these words in your hearing to call your attention specifically to the discussion of a matter that we might call, "The Need of Forgiveness." Let these words sink into your consciousness. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." These words could often be applied to the misdemeanors of men. Man is so constituted that because of his environment and the teaching to which he has yielded, he will often do things that are wrong, when it would be cheaper, easier, and certainly have a greater and more lasting influence for good, if he would do that which is right.

Many of the things that we do that are wrong, are done because we know not what we do. Yet, God has not seen any reason, in His infinite goodness and mercy, to justify man, because of man's ignorance. The Apostle Paul declared in the city of Athens, "And the times of this ignorance, God winked at, but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Therefore, God doesn't forgive an individual of sin, simply because the individual is ignorant. God wants men to become conscious of their sins, and not only conscious of their sins, but conscious of their need of forgiveness. And until this kind of consciousness has smitten the soul of man, he cannot be justified in the presence of God. May we then suggest to you that, in spite of man's sinfulness, God still loves him. When Jesus piteously cried on the cross of Calvary, "Forgive them, . . ." He was looking forward, in a sense, to the day when the Spirit would descend upon the apostles, and give them the tongue of counsel and wisdom, whereby they might declare the whole counsel of God to men who were lost in sin. When those men accepted God's wisdom, God's counsel, and God's way, Jesus' prayer on Calvary's cross was answered. The prayer, in which He said, "Forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The idea of forgiveness certainly implies the existence of sin. Were there no sin, there would be no reason for forgiveness. The Word of God says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3: 23) The Apostle John said, "If we say we have no sin; we deceive ourselves." We are deceiving no one, but ourselves when we say we have no sin. He says, furthermore, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." The sense of this passage, it seems to me, is just this. If you say you have not sinned, then you are trying to accomplish something that you know is impossible, and that is to make God a liar. Therefore, if you say that you have not sinned, you make Him a liar. That is the attempt that you are making. But He says that His Word is not in us, when we have such an evil intention. Therefore, friends, God says that all men have sinned. All men have come short of the glory of God. That is why men need forgiveness. Sin is that factor, after all, that has separated man from God. The prophet said, "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your sins have separated between you and your God." (Isaiah 59: 1, 2) Sin has brought about the separation that is now in existence between God and man. God does not imply, in any sense



of the word, that He has withdrawn himself from man. But God says that man has withdrawn himself from God. Inasmuch, as sin exists in the lives of men, since man broke his holy relationship with God, because of sin, man needs a way back. The way back, that God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy has provided, is through forgiveness.

I want to ask you just here, what do you think forgiveness is? When we talk about forgiveness, what is the conception that you have in your heart? In order that we might clearly understand what the Word of God means when it talks about forgiveness let us be reminded that all sins are transgressions of God's law. It is true that an men have not committed, and are not guilty of the same sin. But all men have sinned, and therefore, are guilty of transgressions. Sins may be classified in these ways. There are some sins that are called "sins of the flesh." In Galatians 5: 19, the Apostle Paul mentions some of these. He said, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. Adultery, lasciviousness, Idolatry, . . ." In verse twenty-one, tie apostle declares that, ". . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These are sins of the flesh. We may say, also, that men are guilty of the sins of "disposition." In the fifteenth chapter of the book of Luke, we read that thrilling story of the Prodigal Son. We learn from the lips of Jesus, the attitude of his older brother. When the father had a feast for his son, who had returned to his home and found his place once again, the older brother sinned against his younger brother, because of his disposition. He said, "Why do you make all of this preparation for a boy who has gone away from home, wasted all of his money in riotous living, spent it on harlots, drink, and pleasure?" The kind, considerate father said, "This, my son, was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." But just as surely as I stand on this rostrum at this moment, just that surely the older brother sinned against his younger brother, because of his disposition. Then, we have also, sins that may be called "social sins." Into such a bracket might fall the sin of murder, theft, and the like. These social sins are against our fellow men. They are transgressions of God's law, yes, but relative to our conduct toward our fellow men. Then, there are sins that may be classified as religious sins. These sins are made up of such practices as idolatry which is also a sin or a wickedness of the flesh—false teaching which is the sin of many people, who are religious at heart. This sin may also be constituted in neglect. And remember, Jesus said that on a certain occasion, a man went on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves. They stripped him, beat him, robbed him, and left him half dead, and after awhile a priest came walking down the road, and he saw this man, wounded and left lying by the side of the road, and he passed by on the other side. Like many of us today the priest may have thought, "Well, I don't have time to fool with you, and if I take you in, it may cost me a little money; and if I assist you, it may cause some of my friends to wonder why I associate with such a fellow." Then, a Levite, a servant of God, who assisted the priests, came by and he, too, passed by on the other side. You know, it's a lot easier to pass people by on the other side, when they need help, than it is to stop and help them with what they need. As we pass by, it isn't hard to find an excuse to give to the person who may ask as to why we didn't help the individual. Both of these men who were supposed to be men of God passed by on the other side. Then came a lowly Samaritan, i.e., lowly in the eyes of the Jew. He saw this man, wounded, lying by the side of the road;

he was not in too big a hurry; he stopped and poured oil and wine into the man's wounds, and then placed him upon his own beast, and led the beast with its burden to the inn, and said to the man at the inn, "Now you take care of him, and here is so much money, and if that is not enough, when I return, I will pay the rest of it." The "men of God" committed the sin of neglect. It was a religious sin. There are others who commit the religious sin of putting other things first. Like on Sunday night, when the people of God are supposed to meet together to worship, as the Word of God teaches and certainly implies that Christians ought to do on the first day of the week, there are so many other things that we put first. Certain television programs that we just can't miss. Certain relatives who always come over to play checkers on Sunday night. Such frivolous and ridiculous things stand in our way. There were some who came to Jesus. one of them said, "Lord, I will follow you wherever you go, but permit me first to go and bury my father." Do you know what Jesus said? Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead. Come follow me." Does this mean that Jesus wanted to wean the man away from any feelings that he might have toward his parents or his relatives? Never! It simply meant that if we are going to follow Christ, we have to put Christ first. Another said, "Lord, I will follow you, but first let me go and bid my friends goodbye." But Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." This is found in the ninth chapter of the book of Luke. You will remember also, in the Sermon on the Mount, that our Savior said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Therefore, when we think about forgiveness, we may think about the kind of sins that men have committed against God, but remember always that these sins are nothing more, or nothing less than transgressions of God's law. "All unrighteousness is sin." Regardless of what men do that is not right, it is a sin, and therefore, man stands in need of forgiveness.

God has offered forgiveness to men, provided that men will meet the conditions that God has made. on the first Pentecost, after the resurrection of Jesus, these people who had been disposed a few days prior to that time to cry out in loud voices, "Crucify him," stood and had their hearts shattered by the Word of God, which condemned the action which they had taken against the Christ. Their hearts were penetrated to such an extent that they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Without hesitation, the Spirit of God spoke by the mouth of the Apostle Peter, and said, "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "We have sinned. what shall we do?" Here are the conditions. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." Repent and be baptized every one of you, by the authority of the Christ, whom you have crucified, and when you do this, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. There were many, who did that on that day, because Acts 2: 41, says, "And there were added unto them that day, about three thousand souls." These are the conditions of forgiveness. But someone may inquire, "What about the child of God who sins? Is there any forgiveness for the child of God who sins?" The Bible says there is, and as I look over this vast audience, I am reminded of the fact that a child of God, who has been a child of God very long, stands also in need of forgiveness, because a child of God does sin. When Simon, the Sorcerer, obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then beheld the mighty works that were done by the apostles, he desired to give them money

that he might also have this power. that on whomsoever he laid his hands, they would receive the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness and pray God, if, perhaps, the thought of shine heart may be forgiven thee." And Simon said "Pray ye to the Lord for me." To this, the Apostle John adds, in 1 John, chapter one, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And to this James adds, in the closing chapter of his epistle "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that you may be healed." The soul that is in sin, is a soul that is sick. That, friends, is why the Word of God uses such terminology, as being "healed" when we confess our faults and pray for the forgiveness of God. Now these are the conditions. To the alien or one who has never become a Christian, the Word of God says, "repent and be baptized." To the erring child of God, the Bible teaches, repent of your sins, confess your faults, and pray unto God for forgiveness.

We then want to notice the nature of the forgiveness God has provided. When God forgives an individual, He cancels the debt completely. In the Prophet Jeremiah, the Lord God said that the day would come when He would send out, or issue a New Covenant. The Hebrew writer refers to this prophecy from Jeremiah, and among other things, he makes mention of this fact, which would distinguish the New Covenant. "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more." God is unlike the father, who chastises his son for something he may have done that is wrong. The father chastises the son, punishes the boy for wrongdoing, and then he brings it up again, again, and again. This is Not true with God. When God forgives God forgets. He remembers our sins no more. They are blotted out of the book, when God has forgiven. Isn't that wonderful? That means that every child of God has the possibility of going to bed at night, and to sleep, without a single sin upon his soul, if he has asked the forgiveness of God. oftentimes, brethren, in trying to face an issue that exists among brethren in the church, will do those things that are wrong, and they often say, "Well, I will forgive Brother so and so, but I never will forget it." This is not forgiveness! In fact, when brethren make such statements, in reality they do not intend to forgive. Forgiveness carries with it, the idea of canceling the debt, removing it completely, and doing away with whatever it is that has caused the trouble. This is the kind of forgiveness that God extends to man.

The nature of this forgiveness should also be considered in this light. That even though God will forgive our sin, it does not erase the fact that we have committed the sin. Several years ago, I heard this story. A young woman; very lovely, very bright, and very beautiful, was encouraged by some of her companions to enter a contest. She did, and she won. As a result of her winning this contest, she was given a contract to appear in a picture in Hollywood. She did, and then decided to stay on in Hollywood. She decided to try to make pictures, but she found that she was not the artist. Beautiful, indeed, but she did not have the ability to act. As time went on, her circumstances grew worse. She fell into the ways of the world. Because of her beauty, she was tempted on every side to do that which was wrong. She took up many of the habits that reduce men and women to naught, and as a result, she became a victim of the disease, tuberculosis. As she came

nearer the time of her death, she said, "This is one last request, that I would make. I want you to take me back to my home, to my mother, to the house where I once lived, because it is there that I want to die." They carried this young woman back to her home, back to her mother, and back to the house in which she had once lived as a girl. Her mother could have said, "I will not have her in my house. She has lived a sinful, rebellious life." But she didn't say that. When they brought her daughter, she willingly made everything ready for her comfort, and for the demands and necessities, which she would have, until death would overtake her, and in talking with her precious daughter, she said, "You have done those things that are wrong, but I love you; I am your mother, I forgive you." This is somewhat like the attitude of God. God says, "I am your Father. Come home and I will forgive you, because I love you." But it does not erase the fact that we have sinned.

God's forgiveness does not blot out the memory of the sin in the heart of the sinner. David cried, "My sin is ever before me." God forgives us, but it does not blot out the memory. Nor, does God's forgiveness imply that we shall be immediately released, as far as this earth is concerned, from all of the CONSEQUENCES of sin. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Look, for a moment, at this example. A man, who has several children, decides that he wants to live in another part of the world, and get away from it all, so he just walks out on his wife, children, and home. He just leaves them to shift for themselves. Many years go by. Nobody hears from him. The children do not even know where their daddy is, but in the course of time he comes in contact with the gospel of Christ. He obeys the gospel, he becomes a Christian. He goes back and tries to learn something about his family. They are all scattered now; they are grown now. They grew up without the knowledge of their father, who had deserted them. He is a Christian. Through the goodness, mercy, and redeeming grace of God, he may be able to go to heaven, but he will never, as long as he lives, be able to erase from his memory, the sin that he has committed.

Thus, sin is a terrible thing. That is why all of us stand in need of the forgiveness of God. When the forgiveness of God is extended to man, it produces joy. Joy in heaven among the angels of God. Joy on earth in the heart of the sinner, and in the hearts of those who love the sinner. The Ethiopian Eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." The Word of God says, "Happy is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Therefore, when God extends His forgiveness, He cancels the debt, and it brings great joy in heaven and in earth. May I then remind those of you, who are in this audience today, who ought to obey the gospel and become Christians, or who ought to return to the church, the fold of God from which you have gone away, that you have within your power, the ability to create and make joy on earth, and to cause the existence of joy in heaven. Are you conscious of your sins? Do you realize your need of God? Don't you understand that you cannot be saved without obeying the gospel of Christ? Don't you know that God stands ready now to forgive you? The invitation of Christ to sinful men, is, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You need God's forgiveness. Will you come and obey the Lord, while we sing?

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A LIFE FOR TRUTH

"Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lag up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you. (Another version says, "For your souls.") though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Corinthians 12: 14, 15)

You recognize this, of course, as coming from the pen of the Apostle Paul. The apostle is setting before our minds something of exceeding importance. It is conveyed to us in the words, "I will gladly spend and be spent for you . . ." He impresses upon us that we should judge that which is properly valuable. Men are prone to judge the value of persons, places, or things, by their relationships to us, their position in the world, their ability, or their work. The Apostle Paul is attempting to convey to us the impression that the Truth of God is valuable. It is so valuable that it is more valuable than life. Therefore, "I will gladly spend and be spent for you . . ."

Many things that are important to human beings, however, are overlooked. often, it becomes habitual with human beings to overlook the things that are most valuable and important, and accept those things which are less valuable and least important. The story is told that a man was walking down a pathway in South Africa some years ago, and he saw a stone in his path. He used the toe of his shoe to kick the stone aside, so that it would not impede his progress. The second man came along the path, and saw the stone lying alongside of the path, and he stooped and picked it up. The story goes that he thus became the discoverer of a very large diamond. The stone, which one kicked aside, the other found to be exceedingly valuable. Without taking time to investigate the importance of it, the first man simply kicked it aside. But the second man, thinking that it might be important in one way or another had time to stoop, pick it up, and take a look. Friends, I use that illustration to impress upon your minds the value of truth. Truth is important enough to stop and listen. Truth is valuable enough for an individual to take enough time to duly consider it. That brings us now to the real core, heart, and center of the lesson that we have in mind to present to you. Perhaps, if we could name it, we would have to name it, "A Life for Truth."

Have you ever stopped to realize how important the truth is? It is so important, and has been so important with God, that it often has required the lives of those who believed it. Therefore, "A Life for Truth." In defining truth, Jesus said in His prayer to God, "Sanctify them in thy truth. Thy word is truth." Truth is a thing that is of intrinsic and transcendent value.

There are many reasons why truth is so valuable and important. one reason is that it lifts man from the state of the beasts of the field, and puts him up on a high plane where he recognizes the value of a better life, and the value of the soul. Man, separated from the Truth of God, often lives like the beast. But if the Truth of God, even in a measure, finds its way into a man's heart he is lifted above the life of the beast of the field. The truth is also valuable, because the Word of God tells us that it purifies our soul. The Apostle Peter, by inspiration of the Spirit of God says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth . . ." (1 Peter 1: 22) Men purify their souls when they yield themselves to the truth. Therefore, the truth is valuable. The truth makes men free from

the weight of sin. Do you remember what Jesus said in John 8: 32? "Ye shad know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The ideas of men do not lift others higher than the beast, except when the ideas are based on truth. The ideas of men cannot purify the soul. The ideas of men cannot make us free from the weight of sin. We must, therefore, be constrained to yield only to the truth. There are several observations that the Apostle Peter makes in 1 Peter, chapter one, concerning the truth. one of which we have already noticed, that truth purifies the soul. In verse twenty-three, he tells us that the Truth, the Word of God, is incorruptible. I know, friends, just as surely as I stand in your presence at this moment, that one of these days, my body win be placed in the heart of the earth to decompose and decay, and go back into the elements. I know that! The body, which I now have with which I am clothed upon, will rot, decay, and become as nothing. I know that. I know that everything with which I have to do in this world is going the same way, except the Truth of God, and my soul, as it leans upon God's Truth. Peter says that the Truth of God is incorruptible. Therefore, the Truth of God will live on and on long after my body has been placed in the grave. The Apostle Peter observes again that the Word of God endures forever. All flesh is as grass, and all glory of man is as the flower of the grass, but the Word of God, the Truth, endures forever. Therefore, friends, may I suggest to you that truth is of such great value, that when it is believed, accepted, and obeyed in the lives of men, those lives then based on truth, are better lives, and they produce better homes, better parents, better children, better citizens, better government, better everything with which we have to do.

Then, I would also notice that truth is of such great value to the souls of men that God has protected it. Do you remember that Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit? That it would be the province of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth? Listen to these words from the fourteenth chapter of the book of John, verse twenty-six. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." In the sixteenth chapter of the book of John, the thirteenth verse, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he win guide you into all truth. for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." The God of Heaven would not depend upon the memory of men to convey the real truth of God to those to whom they preached. They were to be inspired guided, and directed, in their preaching by the Holy Spirit, and thus, the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2: 13, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Therefore, I know assuredly that every time I pick up a faithful translation of the Word of God, I have the Truth of God that will purify my soul, because it was originally protected by the Spirit of God, himself. Every word that was placed upon the manuscript by the apostles and disciples, who were inspired by the Spirit of God, was a word that the Spirit, himself, directed them to use. Truth, therefore, is of great value.

As we mentioned a moment ago, truth does something for men. I would like to mention that truth radically changes men. Not just sometimes, but many times. You remember that Peter, or Cephas was a bold, brazen, presumptuous, and sometimes profane fisherman. Jesus called Cephas to become one of His apostles. A man, who on

some occasions, when tempted sorely, could use profanity without hesitation. A man who was ready to speak immediately, whether he understood what he was speaking about or not. This was the kind of man he was once. But I hear him as he wrote to the brethren scattered abroad, in 2 Peter, chapter one, verse fourteen, and tells these brethren, whom he loves so much, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." In other words, "I know that soon, I am going to die for Christ." one time, he stood, cursed, swore, and said, "I know not the man." Years passed. The truth has been indelibly printed upon his heart. It has become the guide and mainstay of his life. It holds for him the very kernel of hope to which he aspires. Now, he says, "I am ready to die for the Lord."

In the eighth chapter of the book of Acts we behold Simon the Sorcerer. Simon was a magician. He fooled the people by his magic stunts. When he came in contact with the truth, the Word of God says that he believed it and was baptized. Seeing the Apostle Peter and John able to bestow gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me, also, this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the gift of the Spirit." The Apostle Peter, said, "Thy money perish with thee." You know, people haven't learned that lesson yet. "Thy money perish with thee." Then, he added, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter. Thy heart is not right in the sight of God." This, to Simon, was a direct thrust of the truth into his very soul and he said to Peter, "Pray for me." The truth so penetrated his soul that he was afraid to stand in the presence of God without forgiveness. Therefore, he cried, "Pray for me."

Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus, so that if he found any of the way, he might bring them bound back to Jerusalem. The same Saul of Tarsus, who had stood and held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen until he died. As he journeyed, a great light shone round about him, and he fell to the earth and the Lord spoke to him and told him to go into the city, and it would be told him what he must do. Ananias, a disciple, came and told him what to do. He said, "Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22: 16) When Saul of Tarsus did this, he immediately began to preach Christ, whom he once had persecuted. Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians. Saul left Damascus as a Christian. Truth produces radical changes.

In the eighteenth chapter of the book of Acts, it says, ". . . and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." What kind of people were these Corinthians before they were baptized? We read the description of these people in the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Beginning with verse nine, the apostle says in his first epistle, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. (Notice the next line.) And such were some of you . . ." Some of you were adulterers, some of you were thieves, some of you were drunkards, some of you were revilers, some of you were this or that, but what has happened? "And such were some of you: but ye are washed but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Truth has done this for you. Maybe once you were a drunkard, but truth has found its way into

your heart. You have become obedient to the truth. Your soul has been purified. Yes, you have been baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins. That's the idea. Truth produces radical changes, because it leads a man to quit the walks of sin.

Friends, truth has not been without its tremendous costs. In John 1: 17, the Word of God says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." A little while preceding His death, Jesus said, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And a little while after Jesus uttered that statement, He went up to the Cross of Calvary. He died to establish the truth. In Philippians 2: 8, the apostle writes of this matter. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." As I look into your earnest faces at this moment, I would to God that I had the words to convey to you the reality of this situation as it existed. Jesus died for the truth! In addition to Jesus Christ, the men whom He selected as His apostles, with perhaps one exception, were all martyrs for the cause of truth. Stephen was led outside the city and stoned until dead because he preached the truth. Some of the apostles had their heads cut off. Some of them were crucified. Some of them were burned at the stake. They died for the truth! And I wonder by what means or method, we today, could ever satisfy ourselves in the least sense of the word as being worthy of the great sacrifices of these great men of God for the existence of the truth. Let us compare ourselves with these men who were chosen from the various walks of life who willingly died, in order that we might have the truth. When we compare, we behold ourselves in a very pale light, because many of us are not interested enough in the truth to attend with regularity the worship of God. Many of us are not interested enough in the truth to attend a meeting on Wednesday night, where the truth is taught. Many of us are not interested in the truth enough to open the family Bible and read from it with any consistency. And yet as we look back down through the centuries of time, we see the great men of God, like Peter, Paul, James, Philip? Thomas, and Matthew—men who died that we today, might pick up a bound copy of the Word of God, open it, read it, understand it, and be saved by it, because it is the truth.

What is the obligation of men toward the truth? The obligation is twofold. In 2 Timothy 2: 15, the inspired writer says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Another version says, "Handling aright the word of truth." That is man's obligation. The second obligation of man is to obey the truth. When you hear it, when you understand it, if you want to be saved, it is your obligation to obey it. Paul asked the Galatian Christians this question. "Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?" We might ask you that question. If you are not obeying the truth of God, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? The truth is the only thing that will purify your soul. It has cost a tremendous price. It is of transcendent value. It will endure forever, and when we stand before the judgment seat of God, we shall be judged by the truth. I am glad it's that way, aren't you? We'll not be judged by what some man or woman may have thought about us in this world; we'll be judged by the way we have conformed to the truth.

Are you here today, who would appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus, His apostles, and disciples? Do you believe the truth of God will



purify your soul? Remember that you must obey the truth in order for your soul to be purified. Why, therefore, will you continue to jeopardize your soul, when the truth of God stands before you, and it is so easy to obey it? Nobody will molest you, nobody will threaten you. The people of God will rejoice, if you will obey the truth. The angels in heaven will rejoice about the throne of God if you will obey the truth, and if it is possible for those who have gone before us, to know what transpires on earth today, then we could say that Peter, Paul, James, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, and all of the others, will rejoice if you will obey the truth, because they will know that their labor has not been in vain. They will know also, that they did not die in vain. Are you willing to obey the truth? If so, remember that the truth will make you free. Will you come, while we sing?

## THINGS SPOKEN AGAINST THE CHURCH

"And it came to pass, that after three dings Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together he said unto them, Men arid brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our. fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with agog: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thickest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against." (Acts 28: 17-22)

You will immediately recognize that this passage is taken from the time that Paul was a prisoner in the city of Rome, because of his faithful preaching of the gospel of Christ. The circumstances involved may be briefly stated. Paul was a prisoner for preaching the truth, and these men whom Paul invited to come into his place of abode to reason with him, concerning these things said, "There is one thing that we know about the people which you represent. We know that everywhere, they are spoken against." The Jews even referred to the church of the Lord, for whom Paul spoke, as being a "sect." It might be worthwhile to suggest to you this morning that the church of the Lord is never called a "sect" in the New Testament, except by its enemies. The church of the Lord is not a religious sect. It is not a division, therefore, it cannot be denominated. It is the church of the Lord, and when we thus speak it can be proven by the Word of God to be so. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell, shall not prevail against."

We have called this to your attention to impress upon you that the church has always had opposition. Do you not recall from the time of Jesus' birth, until the time that He was crucified, there were those who opposed Him? From the time the church was established in Jerusalem, even unto this day, there have been those who have opposed it. They have railed against it. they have maligned its teaching; they have sought to mock and ridicule its methods, which are based upon the teaching of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. The Lord's church is not the church of popular acclaim in modern times, but it has never been the church of popular acclaim, except just a few days after its beginning. The church has always been persecuted. The church has always been talked about, and if you please, comparatively speaking, the church of the Lord has always been in the minority. It is not unusual, therefore, that we find such an instance as the one we have read to you in the Word of God.

We then want to study, briefly, what people say against the church of the Lord. Such a study may help those of us who are Christians to be stronger, and I pray that it may help those who are not members of the church of Christ, to better understand the truth, which is spoken, and which we hope to present with the help of God to men of the world who are lost and dying.

In the first place, people who oppose the church say that the church is narrow-minded. They say that the church of Christ is so narrow-minded, that they will not extend fellowship to those

who are in disagreement. May I call your attention to the fact that Jesus said that the way to Heaven is a way that is strait and narrow. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat For strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7: 13, 14) Therefore, if we expect to go to heaven, we must be just as narrow as the way that God has provided. The Bible, the Word of God teaches us, and instructs in this way. We must be just as narrow then, as the Word of God. Suppose you carried a prescription from your doctor to the druggist, and the doctor had written on that prescription that the medicine is to be made up of three ingredients. The druggist looks at this prescription and decides that he will put in two of the ingredients specified by the physician, but he is temporarily out of the third ingredient, and as he looks upon the shelf, he decides that there is an ingredient that he has on hand that is just as soothing, and just as good, in his opinion, as the ingredient that the physician has called for in the prescription so he puts it in. Two-thirds of the prescription is true. one-third of the prescription is something which the physician did not prescribe. What has the pharmacist done? He has broken the law, he has crossed the boundary of respect. He is in disagreement with the truth, therefore, although he is two-thirds right. But that ingredient, which he puts in the prescription, that the physician did not call for, may be the very thing that will kill the patient. Now, friends, just how narrow does the pharmacist have to be? Just as narrow as the prescription.

Suppose you started out on a trip to New York. The first thing that you would do, if you were traveling by automobile, would be to get a road map and see which is the best highway that would lead you to New York. But could you start out from Nashville, and go just any road? If so, you might end up in Los Angeles, instead of New York City. You have to confine yourself, and be just as narrow as the prescribed route that is set forth upon the map. People can understand those things, but when it comes to confining ourselves to the truth of God, it seems that religious people have a great deal of difficulty. They had rather climb up some other way. But Jesus said that the one who climbs up some other way, "The same is a thief and a robber." Just how narrow, then, do we have to be? Just as narrow as the truth. Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17: 17) In John 8: 32, Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In Acts 17: 18 we learn of a circumstance, in which the Apostle Paul found himself. A circumstance that was not, and is not, unusual. The philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics encountered him. Listen now to their language. Some said, "What win this babbler say?" others said "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." Why did they say this? "Because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, he said "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." H. G. Wells, a rather celebrated unbeliever said that the Apostle Paul was the one proponent of Christianity who was more narrow-minded than his Master. Why did Mr. Wells have such a conception of the apostle? For the same reason the Epicureans and Stoics opposed him. The truth of God, which he preached, was too narrow to suit their notions. We, then, are confined to the Word of God, the law of the Christ. We must be just as narrow as the truth. When one says, then, that the church of

Christ is narrow-minded, I ask you this question. "By what standard does he judge the church?" Is it by the Word of God, or is it by some theological conception that finds its background somewhere in the minds of men, instead of in the mind of the Lord? BY WHAT STANDARD DO PEOPLE ACCUSE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST OF BEING NARROW-MINDED?

There are those, also, who say that the church of Christ overemphasizes baptism. There have been those who have suggested to me that all the church of Christ believes in, practices, and enforces, is immersion. Well, friends, may I suggest to you that the Bible teaches that baptism is a commandment of God. Now, men may argue about it all they wish, but still it will be right there in the Bible, where the Apostle Peter says, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized...." (Acts 10: 47, 48) It's commanded! In the Great Commission, Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Ananias, who was commanded to tell Saul of Tarsus what he must do, said to him "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22: 16) Therefore, it matters not about the arguments of men. The Word of God teaches us that baptism is a commandment. Now, notice this. The Word of God also says that baptism is the act that puts one into Christ. "For as many of . you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." (Galatians 3: 27) Baptism, therefore, puts one into Christ. Thus, begins the Christian life, walking after the Spirit and not according to the flesh. If any man is in Christ, "He is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5: 17) A man who is in Christ, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, stands uncondemned in the presence of the Lord. (Romans 8: 1) "If we live in the Spirit, by the Spirit, let us also walk." (Galatians 5) Thus, when we are baptized into Christ, it is truly the beginning of the Christian life. Why is it, then, that men today lament the fact that the church of Christ preaches baptism as one of the commandments of God? It might interest you, also, to observe that the Apostle Peter says, "The like figure whereunto baptism cloth also now save us." The apostle did not say, ". . . baptism only cloth now save us," but he said, ". . . baptism cloth also now save us." It is ONE of the things that God has commanded, therefore, it operates in our salvation. Can one be narrow-minded bigoted, prejudiced, or guilty of over-emphasis, then, if he endeavors to teach men that which men say is not necessary to salvation? Can one be accused of over-emphasizing the truth which men deny? If so, friends, how can it be? Think about it, because it is a serious matter. The Word of God says, "Blessed are they which do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22: 14)

Then, there are those who accuse the church of the Lord of being intolerant. Tolerance, in the eyes of many, is nothing short of compromise. Could the church of the Lord please God and compromise the truth? There are many instances in the Word of God where you see men endeavoring to compromise the truth. on one occasion, we learn, however, of a man, who refused and who was honored. When Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, you remember, the king sent him a note and said, "Come down into the valley of Ono, and let's talk this thing over." Nehemiah said, "I'm too busy; I don't have time to fool with you," or words

to that effect, of course. Compromise of the truth is a dangerous thing. If the truth makes us free, then it is to the truth we must be committed, and here is a question for all men to ponder. "Is God tolerant toward the religious vanities of men?" Is He? Surely, the Word of God somewhere answers that question. I believe the answer is found in Matthew, chapter fifteen, in the language of Jesus to which I now direct your attention. Jesus says, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" Sounds like people today, doesn't it? When the truth is preached, they become offended. The disciples, worrying about this situation, came to the Lord and said, "Don't you know that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?" "But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." How tolerant is God, then, toward the religious vanities of man? Friends, there is the answer to the question. Can the church of the Lord exist in a compromising situation that God does not approve? Is it possible for a Christian to stand idle, while he sees his fellow man going down the road toward destruction, because of error which he may have believed and embraced? I do not believe it is possible for a child of God to behold one who believes that which will destroy his soul, and stand idle! It is an impossibility for the church of Christ, therefore, to let men alone if we would uphold the truth. our obligation is to uphold the teaching of the truth, regardless of what men may think about it for we learn that the church is the "Pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3: 15) We are bound by the Word of God to preach the gospel. (Mark 16:15) We are told to preach the Word. (2 Timothy 4: 2) We are told to preach only the Word of God. (Galatians 1: 8, 9) Paul said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9: 16) Titus is urged to, "Speak thou the things which befit sound doctrine . . ." (Titus 2: 1) Many other passages could be added to enforce upon our minds this thought, that the CHURCH OF THE LORD CAN TOLERATE ONLY THE TRUTH.

There are some who have accused the church of Christ as not accepting heartfelt religion. Friends, I want to tell you that it is impossible for an individual to be accepted in the eyes of God any other way. Unless religion is heartfelt, then it is not the religion of Jesus Christ. But somebody says, "What I mean by heartfelt religion, you will not accept." It is something that people say they feel right here. (Holding their hand over their breast.) Strange but true, the heart mentioned in the Word of God, so often, is not in the breast of man. It is not the physical pumping station of the blood. The heart of man as described in the Word of God, is that which a man believes, is where his emotions dwell, is the inner man. It is not that pumping station of the blood that is so often referred to as the heart. It is the very dwelling place of the emotions and the characteristics of an individual that are seen outwardly. A man must obey the Lord from the heart, if he expects to be saved. Hear these words. From the sixth chapter of the book of Romans, beginning with verse seventeen, Paul says, "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, being then

made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." When were they made free from sin? WHEN THEY OBEYED THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST FROM THE HEART. Friends, that's something for us to think about also. The admonition of the wise man is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The heart is concerned with our salvation. But just to say, "I feel it in my breast," does not make it so. I must be constrained by the Word of God to know that I have accepted the truth, that I have obeyed the gospel of Christ, that I have become a Christian according to that which God requires, not just something that I might temporarily feel.

Then, there are those who say that the church of Christ is "old fashioned." But, before I discuss that, even briefly, I want to say this. May thanks be unto the God of heaven that the church of Christ is "old fashioned," if that is what it is. How old fashioned is the church? The church was established in the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 33. That's how old fashioned it is. But somebody says, "Even at that, the church ought to want to keep up with the times." Who cares about keeping up with the times when they are prompted by the pomp and the display of men? What good does it do to keep up with the times when the times (modern times at least) are misleading, when men who are modern say that you do not have to do this and you do not have to believe that, even though it is contained in the Word of God? The other day, I read from a publication of a certain theological school in the southern part of our nation, that every member of that religious institution knows that immersion is acceptable before God. But, in effect, they added, "It is just as well if we do it some other way." Thank God we are old fashioned enough to believe what the Bible teaches! A lot of people accuse the church of being old fashioned, because we do not put on the ceremony, the ritual, and the various things that are characteristic of some religious neighbors that we might have about us. But the church must be fashioned just exactly as the Word of God teaches, and the New Testament, friends, in round numbers, (the New Covenant under which we must live and abide) is about logo years old.

Now, in closing, may I call your attention to the fact that the church belongs to Christ. Any destructive criticism, therefore, that is leveled against the church is leveled against the Christ. Any time that men are critical toward the church, just because the church will not agree with their conceptions, they are not leveling a criticism necessarily toward the people and that be the end of it. They are also leveling a criticism toward the Christ. The Bible teaches that after awhile the church is going to be presented to the Lord, without spot, blemish, wrinkle, or any such thing, and that it is going to be pure, holy, and undefiled. of this, we read in the fifth chapter of the Ephesian letter. In order for the church to remain pure, undefiled, and dedicated to Christ, it means that we must be just as narrow as the truth, just as old fashioned as the truth, just as tolerant as the truth, emphasize nothing under God's heaven but the truth, and when we do that, we have great hope in our heart that the church will be kept pure, that it might be presented unto Christ as His holy bride, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

There may be those here today, who would like to obey the gospel, who would like to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. If you are here, in just a moment, the invitation will be extended and we hope that you will come. If you have wandered away from the fold of God, if you haven't been faithful to the Lord and His church, God teaches that you can come home, through the avenue of repentance, confession, and prayer.

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STAND FAST IN THE FAITH

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In 1 Corinthians, chapter sixteen, the Apostle Paul is delivering his final exhortation to the church of God, located in the city of Corinth, and he delivers to them the particular exhortation to which I now call your attention. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (1 Corinthians 16: 13) There is a particular phrase in which we are interested, in our study at this time, and that is the phrase, "Stand fast in the faith."

May I insist, as I begin this lesson, that I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe that Jesus Christ was born of the virgin, Mary, as the prophet predicted. I believe that Jesus Christ lived upon the earth for about thirty-three and one half years. I believe that during those years, He outlined and delivered the sacred principles, which form the New Covenant, and I believe that Jesus died, in order to make this New Covenant operative and valid. I believe, furthermore, that Jesus Christ died to establish the church, the kingdom of God, which is to carry out the divine principles of that New Covenant. I believe that the church, the kingdom of God is a necessity. I believe that men are mistaken, when they give expression to such thoughts as, "The church has nothing to do with it." I believe all of this, because of the wonderful evidence that is presented in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Believing all of this, I would be unfair, ungrateful, and above all, ungodly, if I did not urge men to stand fast in the faith.

When the apostle uses the expression, "The faith," he is talking about the system God has arranged. That includes all the principles of truth set forth in the New Covenant. Therefore, to stand fast in the faith, means to hold fast to everything that God has said, and to everything that God has done for the salvation of human souls. I would remind you, friends, that this statement is addressed to Christians. It isn't addressed to alien sinners; it isn't addressed to people outside of the church, it is addressed to those who make up the kingdom of God. "Stand fast in the faith."

May we then call your attention to the fact that in order for a congregation to stand fast in the faith, it is necessary that the congregation be thoroughly taught. An untaught membership of the church is dangerous, whereas a taught membership stabilizes the work and the worship of the Lord. It requires only one untaught generation of church members for the church to fall into apostasy

and digression. Little do we realize sometimes, the tremendous responsibility that is upon those of us who know the truth to teach it to those who do not. I suggest to you now, that I had rather be classified as an extremist, or a fanatic, than to be considered by people, as being so spineless that I stand for nothing. I had much rather be classified as a fanatic in my endeavor to teach men the truth, than to have men think of me as being a "man pleaser" and not the least bit interested in what the Word of God teaches. I do not wish to be classified as an extremist, nor do I wish to be classified as a "soft soaper," (and that is doing a little injustice to soap, but it is a common expression). I do not want men to speak of me as being a "hard preacher," or a "soft preacher." I just want men to speak of me as a gospel preacher, because the gospel is the power of God to save the souls of men. We need, then, to recognize that when one is warning men concerning the things that are taking place, that in issuing those warnings a man is, at the same time teaching. Pointing out what has happened, what is happening, and what may happen as a result, is the duty of every teacher, every preacher, every believer of the Word of God. Centuries ago, there

was a man by the name of Ezekiel, chosen to bear the message of God to the people. He was a servant of God in the sense that he was one of God's prophets, therefore, a teacher of the people. But a prophet often spent his time in warning people about things that were going to happen, and in Ezekiel, chapter three, verse seventeen, we have the following words: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." By no stretch of the imagination could men today, say that Ezekiel was not a teacher. Yet, Ezekiel was commanded of Jehovah God to WARN the people. Therefore, if an individual is warning the people, he is teaching the people. The time is upon us, and has been for many years, that we need to be warned. Yes, those of us, who are members of the church. We need more "watchmen in the house of Israel." That doesn't mean that an individual is to always be critical and never constructive, but it does mean, as we have an example from the old Testament, that we can watch and work at the same time. You remember in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, it became necessary for the people to bear a hammer in one hand, as it were, and a sword in the other. In this way, the people not only watched for the enemy, but they accomplished the work, which they purposed to do. The same thing is true with the church of God. We must work with one hand—fight with the other. We must watch and work at the same time.

It becomes obvious, then, as we consider some thoughts about this matter that there are among us, as the church of the Lord, some very evident weaknesses. It is not enough to say that the church is made up of human beings, and therefore, has always had its problems, its weaknesses, and its issues. That's so. The church is made up of human beings, and it has always had its problems for that reason. But that is not enough. Too many of us like to use that for an excuse. What we need to recognize, is that the church, because of the human element does have its weaknesses, and it is shameful, when we continue to try to sidestep these evident weaknesses that are among us, instead of facing up to the problem and trying to solve it. When we say evident weaknesses, we are talking, of course, about the church in general. The Word of God exhorts us to "Sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and to be ready always to give an answer for the reason of the hope that is within us with meekness and fear." Therefore, if there is existing among us some things that we cannot answer for, then it is better that these things should be dissolved. These are the things that constitute weaknesses among us today.

our weaknesses are emphasized by trends that are evident in the church of the Lord. I am quite aware of the fact, when I suggest this to you, that I am suggesting these things as a comparatively young man. I know that there are brethren who are older than I, who have far greater insight in many of these things than I, perhaps, will ever have. Yet, these weaknesses are pointed up in some of the trends that exist among us, so that anybody can see them, and about these things, we want to talk for just a few minutes. It has become obvious in the last few years that some are quite reticent and slow to emphasize to the eyes of mankind that the church of Christ is different. There are people who have an idea that the Lord's church should be just like any other religious institution. They are so slow to exhibit to the world that the church of the Lord is different, that many people do have the conception in mind, because of what they have seen and heard from some who are members of the church, that the church of the Lord is just



another denomination. Friends, when we examine the Word of God, we see that isn't so at all. A few moments ago, I suggested to you that I believe Jesus died for the church. I do believe it, and if I could offer nothing more today, from the Word of God than that statement in Acts 20: 28, how that Jesus shed His blood for the church, that would be enough to call your attention pointedly to this fact, that THE CHURCH OF THE LORD IS DIFFERENT. But some people in the church are far too slow to admit it, and some who claim to be members, perhaps, never will. There are many incentives offered for people of the church to try to be like those who are around us. Ancient Israel desired a king a long time ago; not because they needed one, but because everyone else had one. There are those in the church of the Lord, who claim membership in the church, to say the least, who cannot understand why we do not have the mechanical instrument of music like other folks. "They have it; why don't we?" The simple answer to that question is that the New Testament teaches us to "sing." That is why we don't have the mechanical instrument.

Then we see also, there is in existence, a trend toward doctrinal weakness. What do we mean when we say doctrinal weakness? We simply mean a trend in the direction of refusing to stand for anything. Paul wrote about the times that would come upon the church when he addressed the last letter of his life to a preacher of the gospel. This is what he said. "The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine." Now, Paul didn't say, "The time MAY come when men PERHAPS will not endure sound doctrine." He simply said, "The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine." Well, friends, that time has come. A blind man could see that the time has come when some people will not endure sound doctrine. They want a man to get up and be all sweetness and light, and if he touches anything touch it so lightly that nobody will ever know that he has touched it at all. And there are people who have such an attitude. Well, let us just say, by way of example, that there are people who have an attitude like a man with a very sore boil, and if you touch it, even lightly, he is going to holler just as loud as he can. There are people like that religiously. They want preachers of the gospel, and teachers of Bible classes, and elders of the church to be weak-kneed, spineless sort of people, and never touch anything, anywhere. Just let the church slide along and if it hits, well and good, and if it misses, who cares. God help us! If our attitude has been such as this, we have not become what is approximately a Christian. Listen to these words from the Bible. "Speak thou the things which befit sound doctrine." (Titus 2: 1) "Preach the Word." (2 Timothy 2: 4) "Whoso goeth onward and abideth in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." (2 John 9) our Savior said, "My words, they are spirit, and they are life." He also said, "The word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day." Not by what some theologian may think, but what the Word of God says. Isn't it time, friends, that we recognize that sweet words, polish, and appeal of some orator doesn't save anybody. When Paul went to the city of Corinth to establish the work of the Lord, (this very congregation that he wrote later and exhorted, "Stand fast in the faith,") and saw all of the ungodliness and wickedness, he said, "I did not come to you with excellency of speech, nor of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God, but I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." The power to save men is in the doctrine of Christ. not in somebody's vain, theological opinion. There is definitely in the church of the Lord, in some quarters, doctrinal weakness. The

Word of God exhorts us to, "Stand fast in the faith." May I remind you just here, that the Bible also says in Ephesians, chapter one, verse five, "There is one Lord, one faith...." You don't have a choice of faiths, according to the Bible, in which to stand. "Stand fast in THE faith." That is the exhortation of the Lord.

There is another trend which is quite evident, and that is the trend toward exhibitionism and a dictatorial spirit existing among us in some quarters. Too many people want to be seen by the crowd. too many people want to be continually on exhibition, and as they are exhibiting themselves, strutting to and fro, here and there, their attitude is, "Whether right or wrong, I have enough influence to make you do what I want done." Friends, that is a dangerous situation that faces the church. It can exist among preachers. It can exist among the elders of the church. It can exist with any member of the church. The attitude of exhibitionism, or the dictatorial spirit that is characteristic, sometimes with men, is not anything new. There was a man in the days of John, the Apostle, who was a dictator. He liked to be at the head of the crowd, and have people bow the knee when he passed by. His name was Diotrophes, and John says, "He loves to have the pre-eminence." Why is it that we can't realize that all of us are just human beings, and that at the very best in our Christian living, we are just simply the SERVANTS OF GOD. That's all. It matters not with how much clarity a man may present the gospel, or how much money a member of the church may have, or how little, or how much knowledge of the Bible, or how little, he is, if he is a Christian, just simply a servant of God. That's all that he is, and we ought to spend our time in serving Him, instead of trying to exhibit and dictate, as sometimes is the case. In Romans 8: 9, the apostle, by inspiration said, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." That to me, friends, is enough said.

There is another trend among us, that I want to mention, and perhaps this has brought to the church its most serious crisis today —worldliness in the church. No longer is it unusual in many quarters to know of dancing, beer drinking, whiskey drinking, gambling members of the congregation. And what about preaching against it? The other day, I read where some man, who was an older preacher of the gospel, made this statement. "I have ceased to preach against dancing, and against social drinking, and against many of the ills that have beset us, because I have decided that it doesn't do any good." Because it may not do the beer drinker, or the gambler any good for me to point out to him, with the love of God in my heart for his soul, that if he doesn't change his way of living, he will go to hell, just because he doesn't like it, does that relieve me of my responsibility? It is obvious to anybody who examines it, friends, that the church today has a weakness when it comes to worldliness. Yet, the Bible says, "Love not the world, . . ." and may I suggest this to you. I am neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I hereby predict that unless people of God, who compose the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, take their stand against worldliness, within two generations, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be squarely facing the very real threat of another digression. Now, friends, you mark that, and mark it well. If history repeats itself, then we are going to have a repeat, unless we take our stand for the truth of God against the world Today. When there is adultery, gambling, drinking, and all sorts of ills and sins that are besetting the church today, and nothing is ever said about it, what is the general consensus of those who examine the activity of the church? "Those people claim to be THE CHURCH,

but they never say anything against anything that is wrong." I am quite aware of the fact that there are people in the church, who say we ought to preach a positive gospel and never say anything negatively, but if you will examine the Holy Writ, you'll find that the apostle wrote Timothy, and two-thirds of the preaching that he urged him to do was negative preaching. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort." We need to take our stand against worldliness.

We need to emphasize and re-emphasize some of the things that have been emphasized in days gone by. We need again to teach men that we believe the Bible teaching, concerning baptism for the remission of sins. We need to point out to men that they must obey the primary principles of the gospel, if they expect to be saved, because that is what the gospel teaches. We need to call the attention of men to the church which Jesus built. Call it narrow-minded, if you want to, but I can read the New Testament from cover to cover and find within its sacred pages, **BUT ONE CHURCH**, and that is the church for which Jesus died. We need to emphasize the fact in the ears of men today, that we believe that **THE CHURCH IS** the church for which Jesus died. And furthermore, we need to cultivate once again in the minds of mankind a love for principle. When men came out of the various religious organizations, which they did in the days of the restoration, they took their stand with principle, when most of their best friends, and certainly their enemies stood against them. They fought for the truth! They preached it in brush arbors from stumps, in little country meetinghouses; everywhere they could, all over the land, they preached the truth, for they knew that Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." our young people need to know what a fight it has been for the church to come to the place to which it has come. our people need to realize once again the effectiveness of debating the issues that Exist among religious people, in the right spirit. We need to realize that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a dead, inactive thing, but it is a militant force, and if we are Christians, we are committed to carrying on the great fight of the faith, that we may lay hold upon life everlasting.

We need also to emphasize the fact that men today, who are members of the church, cannot fall for sectarian ideology. Do you realize that today, in our efforts to build up the Bible study (and here is one who believes with all of his heart that the Bible study ought to be promoted, and built to the very best and strongest that is possible), that there are people who have an idea even in the church of the Lord, that when they go to "Sunday School" that is all that is required of them to do? They take their little book, go to a class, and sit through the class, maybe answer a question, maybe not. Maybe they have looked at the lesson, maybe they haven't. As soon as "Sunday School" is over, they have to "beat it" somewhere else, because somebody is waiting on them to eat dinner, and they just have to go. What a shame! With all due respect to the Bible study, (God help us to have a better one.) may I remind you of the fact that the church existed for years without it. It did. That is, the Sunday morning meeting of the classes. They did not have the facilities which we have. We ought to meet for Bible study classes. This is an effective way to comply with Jesus' command to teach. It is a scriptural method of teaching. We have not fulfilled our duty, nor accomplished our purpose in worshiping God, however, when we simply come to a "Sunday School class," and then run out as soon as we can get out to go some place where we had really rather be. We have not fulfilled all the demands of the Scripture to worship God in spirit and in truth. We have missed (deliberately)



the feast for the soul provided in the assembly of worship. These are serious matters. "Stand fast in the faith."

The church has a glorious destiny, but before we reach our destiny, we must not, through our weaknesses, allow the church to be led into another digression. Let us, ". . . stand fast in the faith. . . ." This is a commandment of the Word of God. What is the destiny of the church? To be clothed upon with immortality. To be presented to Christ, as the bride is presented to the bridegroom. Yes, the destiny of the church is to live in that celestial city of God forever and forever.

If you are here today, and you are not a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church you can read about in the Bible, then we invite you to become obedient to the gospel, by believing in God, repenting of your sins, confessing the name of Christ and being buried with the Lord in baptism. You will then be a Christian. If you are a wayward Christian, come back home to the church of the Lord where you belong. You may have wandered far out in the ways of sin, but you can come back today. The Lord loves you, and He understands that you are weak and frail, but you will be lost, in spite of the love of the Lord if you do not repent and obey the Lord. Will you do that today, while together we sing?

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## PROBLEMS OF TODAY'S YOUTH

We are grateful to our heavenly Father that He has brought us this day, giving us the spirit and the inclination to worship Him and we are most happy to see gathered in this auditorium such a splendid audience.

In Genesis the forty-second chapter and verse twenty-two, we read:

"And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child: and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

Many of you remember the circumstances of this statement. We are not suggesting to you this morning that Reuben was inspired when he made the statement in verse twenty-two of Genesis forty-two. We are suggesting to you that it is a statement of fact that Reuben points out; that it is possible for those who are old to sin against those who are young, that it is possible for those who have the responsibility of looking after the young to sin against the young; and Reuben couched this thought in the words, "Do not sin against the child."

More and more we are faced with the problem that we like to call juvenile delinquency, and we are all conscious that our young people sometimes go astray. In the very beginning of this discourse may I suggest to you that I BELIEVE IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. I do not believe that our young people, as many like to express it, are "going to the dogs." I believe that we have as fine a group of young people in the world today as we have ever had. We have more of them, at least in this country, than we have had. But that is not to say that we do not have as fine young people as we have ever had in the United States. Yet, at the same time we are also conscious that we have many problems, and among these many problems are the problems of our young people. A few years ago, perhaps I would have been out of place to have mentioned some of the things that I hope to mention today, but just recently I crossed over that line that distinguishes me now from the youth. Therefore, I am suggesting to you on the basis of some little experience, but primarily upon the basis of that which is found in the Word of God, that our young people's problems should be dealt with gently, kindly, and yet firmly, because as they endure these problems, those of us who are older may be guilty of creating them.

The problems of our young people are complex problems. they are not always easily solved. They are brought about primarily through four distinct sources: the home, the school, the press, and religion. It is our hope to examine some of the causes of the problems of our young people, and, if possible, to find that which God has authorized, which is pure, praying that God will bless the truth that may be spoken to the honor of his name, to the upbuilding of his church, and to the salvation of many of our young people.

Let us begin by suggesting then, that some of the major problems that our young people are called upon today to deal with are created in the home. The home of today, in some instances, is considered as the house in which one lives and as a convenient place to sleep. The home, by some, is no longer considered as the medium through which God expects young people to be taught and trained. Yet, we have such admonitions in the Bible as the one found in Proverbs 22: 6, "Train up a child in the way he

should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." I may not be able to answer some of the questions that may be asked about that passage, but with all of my heart I believe it. The Word of God says, "Train up a child in the way he should go." That is our responsibility. The Apostle Paul, speaking the very words that God required him to speak, as he brought the Ephesian letter to a close, said, "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." There is no argument as to whether or not one should or should not obey his parents. It is simply an action that doesn't need proving. "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." There can't be any question about it. "Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)."

It is a little sickening today to see the way some young people treat their aged parents, the way some young people talk to their parents, but at the same time we cannot feel justified simply to SAY that young people do this. Behind this reasoning of young people is a complex which has most likely been created by those of us who are older. "Honor thy father and thy mother. (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long upon the earth. And, ye, fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6. 1-4) Here the apostle takes note of the responsibility that one encounters in the home, and here in this passage of Scripture, the apostle lays upon fathers a responsibility which they dare not shirk. What is it? "Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord." Fathers have forgotten this part of their responsibility. Fathers are busy making money and building businesses, etc., and forget that responsibility that God has placed upon us of teaching and training our children. It is true that fathers have the responsibility of providing for the home. That is another truth that does not need to be proven. But in providing for the home, there is the provision made in the Word of God, that fathers should discharge their responsibility of teaching and training their children.

We could not pass from the home without thinking about the mother. Mothers are the most wonderful creatures in the world. There is nothing as good, as kind, and as beautiful as a godly consecrated, Christian mother. Yet, it seems that in modern times we want to change the whole idea of motherhood and fatherhood and place everything on a different level and pattern our lives in a different direction. Whereas the Bible sets forth in effect that mothers are to keep the home fires burning, yet tie modern conception of things is to run, run, and run. always be on the go. The Word of God says that the women who are older are to teach the younger women to be keepers at home, or workers at home. I believe that means what it says. I would suggest, however, that God is placing this responsibility upon the mother in view of the fact that all things may be equal in her life to the extent that she does not have an emergency where she will have to go into the factory or the office and try with her own hands to help provide the living. But, a mother has a sacred responsibility, as well as the father, of teaching and training the young. "That the aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus 2: 3-5) Who is to do this teaching?

Why, the Lord said that the older women are to do this teaching. It is rather difficult for the younger woman to understand that she is to love her husband when she has lived in a house for eighteen or twenty or twenty-five years with the woman, who is her mother, who despises her husband. It is rather difficult to point out to a young woman that she is to be a worker or a keeper at home when all she has seen is her own mother running helter-skelter after clubs and parties and trying to climb the social ladder. Yes, many of the problems that are encountered by our young people today are problems that involve the homes from whence they come. Those who have criminal tendencies among our young people, who have been brought before the courts of law, have proven to the satisfaction of Mr. J. Edgar Hoover that the major problem with which they were confronted has been from the inadequacy of the home. Listen to what he says, "Almost invariably, parents are to blame for the development of young criminals." That's strong language, isn't it? "Almost invariably, parents are to blame for the development of young criminals. When a child goes wrong you usually find that he has been exposed to neglect, unhappiness, insecurity, parental conflict, drunkenness, or other bad influences at home." At the present time, the divorce rate is one out of every four marriages. (In Davidson County the divorce rate is one out of every three marriages.) Many of you, perhaps, are not in position always to see the problem that is created by divorce, but sometime when you may have the time, or take the time if necessary, to look into the eyes of a little child whose home has been broken by divorce; there in the depths of those eyes you will most likely see the story of tragedy. our young people are suffering the problems that they do in many cases because of their homes.

Then young people are meeting many problems because of school. Before I suggest one thing about the schools, may I say this. of tall of the people of the world that work with the public day after day, perhaps as much as any other people in the world that I appreciate, are our good teachers. They are most often underpaid, most often criticized, and perhaps the least appreciated, for the efforts that they put forth as any profession in the United States of America. Many young people can attribute their success in life to the influence of their school teacher. on the other hand, there are some young people who can attribute their wrecked lives to the influence of their school teacher.

our young people are confronted in the schools of today with teaching denying the influence and the existence of God, and such teaching as would make fun of religion. Now somebody says, "Well, that's rather hard to believe," and I knew it would be rather hard for some people to believe, and therefore, I am asking your patience as I read to you from a textbook used in a state supported school with which I am acquainted. This is what I read. "In so far as people believe in these things, they are of course realities (and he is discussing religion and the church, incidentally) and exercise profound influence on behavior." Now listen, "In all times and places, religion has been a haven for the weak, timid, inefficient, and oppressed." THAT'S WHAT OUR BOYS AND GIRLS HEAR FROM SOME OF THEIR TEACHERS. Again, from the same textbook, "In the present Western world, the power and influence of religion and the church are decreasing." Think of what it means when a young man or a young woman sits in a classroom and hears a man expound such philosophy as this discrediting religion and God, and denying the existence, if you please, of the Maker of this great universe. Think of the influence that it must have upon their



minds, their hearts, as they go out of that classroom into the various walks of life.

our schools are, as a general rule to be commended, yet at the same time they are not without their failures. It has happened often in recent years that schools have organized parties to keep young people off the streets, to give them some outlet for their energy, which, in principle, is commendable, yet they have allowed the thing to degenerate into dancing, and after the dance when supervision has ended, free love and love making become the common practice among some young people. Many authorities, as they are called, would deny the force of such statements in the Bible, as condemn revelry. Therefore, we suggest to you there are people who have seen through their own eyes the evil of the dance, and in accord with the divine principles set forth in the Word of God this is what they have said. From the Medical Review of Reviews (now this is a medical publication, mind you), "There can scarcely be any doubt that dancing came about as an adjunct of sexual stimulation." That's what medical authorities think about it. one of the leading professors of Chicago University, Professor W. C. Wilkerson said, and I want to impress this sentence upon you "A system of means contrived with more than human ingenuity to excite the instinct of sex to action." And this is from the publication in which women believe, "Many couples performing these dances should have a marriage license before stepping on the ballroom floor." Well, these statements have come from people who are not especially writing from the standpoint of religion. They are just writing from the standpoint of fact. We do our young people an injustice when in the schools we encourage them to dance because as we have read to you from authority, there can scarcely be any doubt that dancing came about as an adjunct of sexual stimulation.

Our young people are facing many of the problems that they face today simply because their problems have been created in the school. May I mention this also, and it is a fact that we should think about seriously. out of all of the young people right here in Davidson County who enter the ninth grade, less than one-half finish high school. This, within itself, is a problem. School authorities recognize this problem, but while we are recognizing the problem of trying to get our young people through school, we should not be guilty, if you please, of creating problems for them while they are in school. Sixty-five percent of all of the women who populate the red light districts of our cities, according to Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, got their start at the dance. It's serious.

Then there is the problem that is created by the press. Young people today are exposed to an kinds of obscene, lurid, and suggestive literature. Pornography has become a present day rage. There is no shame or stigma attached to it. As older people, so are younger people; they think as they read. Proverbs 23: 7, says concerning a man, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 4: 23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." And Jesus said in Matthew 12: 34, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Young people see this kind of literature. They read these lurid, obscene, suggestive descriptions and phrases, and then we pick up the morning paper, and a boy fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen years old has been apprehended by the authorities and accused of rape, and we wonder why. Instead of using the presses for promoting that which is good and wholesome for the minds of the young and the old, men have learned that things that are sensational and daring are the things that sell

and make money. Therefore, our young people are being sold upon the altar of monetary advancement. Yes, I know that these statements are strong statements. But it is time that these statements should be strong. Somebody may say, "Well, preacher some of these things are none of your business." Don't tell me they are none of my business. I have four children, and it is just as much my business as it is anybody else's. I want my children, and you want your children to grow up in a country and a world that is clean and wholesome, just as much so as we can possibly make it. But, how can it be when such influences are allowed to run rampant over the minds of our young people? The press has exalted the criminal, the divorcee, and the philanderer to such an extent that many of our present day youths have become sexually unbalanced, morally degraded, and spiritually starved.

We cannot forget in this day the influence upon our children of television. Regardless of whether we want to admit it or not, whether I do or you do, the influence of television is not always good. I am conscious that all of us may be guilty of a failure in our responsibility regarding this medium.

Then, there is religion. When it comes to religion (and we speak broadly when we use that term); present day division in religion has caused among young people skepticism and infidelity, and that cannot be denied. The charge can be laid directly at the feet of religious teachers. Many of our young people have departed from sobering thoughts of religion and spirituality because religious teachers are guilty of leading them in that direction. It is not unusual in this day to hear of a church that sponsors a dance for its young people. It is not unusual in this time to hear of a church that is making up money by the use of a game called Bingo, which is right now being discussed by the lawmakers of the United States, as to whether or not it should be outlawed as gambling. Our young people see the churches do these things, and then we wonder why that our young people do some of the things that they do. Instead of holding up the truth of God and manifesting an interest in the soul of man, many people who are religious, consider that the satisfaction of the body is of prime importance, and the salvation of the soul must take a secondary place.

The church of Christ, the church set forth in the New Covenant of our Savior, has a very definite responsibility in these matters. Paul wrote the church of God in the city of Corinth and said to them, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (First Corinthians 1: 10) He wrote to Timothy and said, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (First Timothy 3: 15) We also remember that Jesus said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." The only institution in the world that stands between man and his ultimate destruction is the church of Jesus Christ. Is it true, friends, that we might be accused of wavering and embracing some things that a few years ago brethren would not have countenanced because we say, "Everybody does it and we don't want to be old fashioned"? As I have often heard "A poor excuse is better than none." These problems need our thinking and our prayers, and they need to be solved.

A few years ago, these statistics were given by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and

medical authorities. May I call them

to your attention very quickly. In the United States, there are over 65,000 young women that turn to prostitution every year. In this country there are over 100,000 new unmarried mothers every year. Fifteen percent of the millions of people in the United States have had venereal disease. In our country, there are 12,000 murders a year, over 20,000 suicides a year, and listen to this. there are 450,000 college girls in the United States approximately, and 1,500,000 young women serving beer and whiskey across the bar. I guess it is ACROSS the bar, maybe they serve it ON the bar. But, be that as it may, there are over twice as many young women engaged in selling alcoholic beverages as there are young women in college. The United States is spending approximately \$9,000,000,000 a year for alcoholic beverages, and that is over and beyond, by a great extent, the total of what the people of our country give for religion, charity, and education combined. We see then why our young people have problems.

The solution to these problems is not easy. I hold in my hand at the moment the Book (the Bible) in which the solution is to be found. Let us not be guilty ever of sinning against the child. Let us use our influence and do what we can to bring people back to a full trust in the Word of God and to an increased faith and zeal in his kingdom. Let us do what we can to expel from our coasts textbooks that deny the existence of God and make a mockery of the religion of Christ. Let us do away, if possible, with trashy literature. Let us come back to a realization of the truth of God in all of its fullness. Let us restore to its proper place the home as God would have it; a father and mother in unison and love teaching and training their children that they may, like Jesus "grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

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## MARRIAGE—DIVORCE—REMARRIAGE

Tonight we come to you with the subject as previously announced "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage." I have no apology to offer for calling your attention to what the Bible says about these matters. I believe that the Bible teaches that which God will accept and that which He will reject in these matters. I do not stand here with any anticipation in my heart of being able to answer all the questions that may come to your mind during this discourse concerning these matters, nor do I have in mind to answer all the questions that have been asked already about them. It is my intention with the help of God to call your attention to exactly what the Bible says, leaving it where the Bible leaves it, and then pray as earnestly as we may know how to pray that God will help us to accept His will.

I would like to read from Matthew 19: 3-9. This is a very familiar passage and obviously one that is overlooked by men today. "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. and whoso marrieth her which is put away cloth commit adultery." Tonight, friends, we want to pursue this study by using the three headings that we have already suggested, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage."

It may be interesting to set before you the fact that according to latest figures, one out of every three marriages that are made in the United States, especially in cosmopolitan areas, will end in divorce. To say that this is one of our greatest problems is, of course to speak correctly. It is! People today sometimes marry with the idea there is nothing connected with marriage whatsoever but sexual attraction, there is no responsibility to be taken upon the shoulders of either one especially, but they are married for a while and as they may grow tired of one another, let that marriage be dissolved and start looking again. As one lady expressed to me on one occasion, "When I married my husband I really had in mind to live with him until I grew tired of him and spent what money he could afford to spend and then I fully intended to get somebody else. The strange thing about it was that after I married him I fell in love with him and we are still together." Did you know that young people sometimes marry with that idea? Surely they must, because here was a woman that expressed it. Marriage, as such is an institution of God, divinely approved, therefore it is a sacred and divine institution. When God created man He saw that man was incomplete within himself and He said, "I will make him a help-meet for him," thus, one answering to him, one to stand by his side, one to assist him, to help him, to be with him, and God made woman. The Bible says in Genesis, chapter two, that God brought the woman to the man and thus the first marriage took place. God brought the woman to the man. From that time even until this, God's law of marriage has been a universal law. Indeed, it has been

set aside on many occasions. There are those who teach that monogamy, as such, is of comparatively recent origin but Genesis two, says that monogamy had its beginning with the first man and the first woman. Monogamy—having one husband and one wife. God instituted the marriage in just such a manner and in just such a way as would be for man's good and man's upbuilding, and to build a sound and solid social structure.

It is the attitude of some that the best form of marriage is not monogamy but polygamy. That is where a man has a multiplicity of wives. There are others who deny that theory and say that the best form of marriage is polyandry. That is where a woman has a multiplicity of husbands. In a book of sociology which I once read, it teaches not the idea of monogamy, but the idea of group marriage, that is, let people come together in a social grouping, several husbands and several wives. When our young people are exposed to such theories they naturally absorb some of this theoretical teaching. They are led away from that definitely approved order which God already has given, monogamy, one husband and one wife. The Bible further teaches concerning marriage that God approved this form. At the beginning this was the way that it was and this is the way that God intends that it should be now one husband and one wife. The Bible further says in Hebrews 13: 4 "Let marriage be had in honour among all and the bed undefiled but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." In First Corinthians, chapter nine, the Apostle Paul mentions the fact that he had a right to lead about a wife, who is a sister (that is a sister in Christ), just as the Apostle Peter and the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord. Thus, marriage is an honorable institution and Jesus gave His sanction to the marriage ceremony when, as you remember, He went to Cana of Galilee, at which place He performed His first miracle, turning water into wine. Now, we have said all of that simply to give you a basis upon which we may work toward a conclusion in our lesson tonight. Marriage is a thing that God approves. It was a thing that God originated, therefore, it is DIVINE and SACRED. We want to emphasize that.

As we look further in the scriptures, we take note of the fact that in a true marriage, God joins the man and the woman, for Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Yet, today throughout the length and the breadth of our nation putting away has become more and more favorable. Separation and divorce has been the policy in many areas of our country and in some sections it seems that a person cannot live unless he is living with his third or fourth or fifth companion, and oftentimes these are the very people who exercise the greatest influence upon your child and mine. Marriage is not had in honor. it is had in dishonor. Marriage is looked upon not in a sacred, divine understanding, but looked upon lightly, entered as a thing to be easily severed, thus our society today is experiencing the terrible and tragic results. The law of marriage is stated by Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans. That law in a few words is simply this. that a woman is to live with her husband until he dies, a man is to live with his wife until she dies. The only way that the marriage is ever broken in honor is by death of one of the parties who has entered the marriage. Always when marriage is broken in any other way it brings dishonor to one or to both of the parties who have been in the marriage relationship. If a woman's husband is dead, Paul says that she is at liberty to be married to whom she will with this one restriction: (First Corinthians 7: 39) she must marry "only in

the Lord." Friends, that means that she must marry one that is a member of the church.

Now there is an argument on that passage among some people. There is the argument that this passage was written because of very peculiar and strange circumstances and that Paul was giving this advice and counsel because of the "present distress" in which Christians, at that time, were laboring. If that be the case, then the entire seventh chapter of First Corinthians, was written because of the distress of the times. Where is the student of the Bible who will suggest that the Apostle Paul was writing all that he wrote in First Corinthians, chapter seven, just because of the distress of the times? Why, you go back and you find the lesson in the first part of the chapter that Paul gave concerning the treatment of the husbands and wives of one another. Now, are we ready to say, that if that distress had not been upon the people that the Apostle Paul may have said something differently than he did about the relationship of a man and his wife? Certainly, friends, we do not admit that. The passage will not admit it, and therefore we suggest that what Paul says in First Corinthians 7: 39 is applicable now. that a widow should marry "only in the Lord." Somebody, I know is ready to say, "Brother Cobb, what if a widow marries out of the Lord?" All that I know for a widow to do in such a case is try to rectify the situation by converting the husband. That is all that I know to say. All that I know is what the Bible teaches on the subject, and the Bible says "only in the Lord." If a person disregards that, or doesn't know about it, then it seems that all that can be done is for the person who has committed the wrong to diligently, earnestly, and prayerfully work and pray in order that their companion may be converted. It can happen. The Apostle Peter said that in a case where a man might not be a member of the church that his wife by her patience, her faith, her understanding, her good manner of life, could lead that man to Christ. thirst Peter 3: 1-3) I know of a lady who married a man and lived with him twenty years before he came into the church. The church had a meeting. She had always asked him to go with her and he wouldn't go. This particular meeting came along and she invited him, as usual, to attend the meeting and he gave her some sort of nonsensical answer. Finally, one night he said, "Well, I believe I will go with you." The next night to her surprise he got ready and said, "I believe I will go back." The third night he went he was baptized into Christ. For twenty years that good woman had gone to the meeting house as we use the expression, "every time the doors were opened." she was faithful, loyal to the Christ and to the church. Therefore, in the marriage relationship, suffice it to say when two people who are Christians marry, it means having a better home, a better marriage and a better influence in the community. Now, the law of marriage has been set forth. It is simply that a man and a woman who come together in the marriage relationship must remain in that relationship until death comes to part them, and as that parting comes, the one who is left is free to marry "in the Lord."

The word of God also gives us the law of separation. There may be times and reasons for a separation. That would not give the parties a right to divorce. The word of God, it seems to me, is clear on this matter of separation. In brief, the Bible says that when a separation takes place that they are to remain unmarried or else be reconciled, and I believe that means just what it says. That, too, is set forth in the seventh chapter of First Corinthians. If two people can't get along, they are separated, and the cause of adultery

or fornication is not apparent nor prevalent, they may remain apart; but the Bible says to let them remain unmarried or else be reconciled. Sometime ago, I heard this story. A young lady was about to get married and her father called her in for a consultation. You know sometimes fathers run from such responsibilities, but he called his daughter in and said, "I want to talk to you. You are going to marry this young man and we approve. That is all right. We want you to be happy and contented. But, don't ever think that when you marry you are not going to have a few problems and a few difficulties and maybe a few cross words. I want you to know that any time you have any problems or any difficulties or any cross words you are welcome to come home—but BE SURE THAT HE IS WITH YOU." You know, a lot of people marry with the idea that if any difficulty comes up that they can just run home to mother. That is the wrong thing, friends, because in most marriages when little difficulties arise if people are going to run home to their mother then the highway is going to be rather worn between their house and mother's house. Now that is the truth. Marriage is the law until death but there is the law of separation; remain unmarried or else be reconciled, and that is what the Bible says about it.

Now to the question of divorce. We hear a great deal said about the "scriptural divorce" and we want to come to that in just a moment; but, friends, it seems that we should quit talking so much about "scriptural divorce" and do a little more preaching and teaching as a preventive measure against divorce. It is much easier to prevent in many cases than it is to correct. Divorces are brought about by many different things. Sometimes they come about as a result of conflicting personal ambitions. A woman and man marry. The man has his career and the woman has hers. Neither one of them want to give up their career. Therefore, since God has placed the responsibility of supporting the home and the family upon the man, it becomes a tragedy when the woman will not submit to the will of God and she becomes hard, cold, and cynical from the business standpoint because she is making a career. The greatest career in the world for a God fearing woman is the career of being a good mother, a good wife, a good home keeper, a good Christian. I challenge you to find a career that is any more beneficial, that is any more honorable, that is any more noble, that has any sweeter tendencies than that of the career of what a lot of people call the "housewife." But because of conflicting personal ambitions, divorces oftentimes result.

Another thing that causes divorce is social climbing. There is the attitude on the part of some people that they want to be in the "upper four hundred." That is, they want to have the finest home drive the best car, spend the most money, drink the most liquor, dance the latest into the hours of the morning, and live a life of debauchery and sin. There is no other way to describe it. Jealousy is created. The husband is jealous of the wife and the wife is jealous of the husband. There are conflicting ambitions. Divorce is the result. There used to be a song, "Too many parties and too many pals will bring you sorrow someday." That is just as true now as it was when it was written. Too many parties and too many pals are the wrong things. We do not mean by that, of course, that people should not have a wide group of friends. They should. People should have lots of friends, if possible, and good close friends, but the idea is the idea of social climbing.

Then, you know, there are people who are going to the divorce courts because one or both of the parties to the marriage have

decided that they will not have any children. How many of those people go to the divorce courts? 85%! Eighty-five percent of all of the people who marry, who decide that they will never have any children, wind up getting a divorce. Thus, divorces may be attributed to a refusal to fulfill the duty, the responsibility of perpetuating the race. It is on every hand. How it is that people go into marriage and expect to be happy without having a home and a family as God ordained is beyond the conception of many people and myself also to understand. There are some people who are unfortunate. Those people deserve the sympathy and understanding of those who are fortunate. There are some fine people who want children, but cannot have them. There are some, however, whose attitude is—No CHILDREN. Not too long ago, I heard of a remark that a man made. He said, "I don't want any children, don't intend that there be any children. I just can't stand a child going around the house with its nose running." Imagine that. A grown man making such a silly, ridiculous statement. Perhaps he had never given it a thought that somebody in days gone by had to go around wiping his nose. Divorces come to people like that.

Infidelity or unfaithfulness is certainly a cause of divorce and we need not spend a great deal of time on this particular thought. Hardship is also a cause of divorce. Many times a young woman marries a young man with the idea that he can immediately provide her with all of the comforts and luxuries that she may have known in her father's home. Young ladies, if that is the thing that you have in mind, don't ever marry a preacher, because I can tell you by personal experience that it just can't be done and it can hardly be done in the case of anybody else. There are very few young men who have the earning and the managing ability to provide the comforts and the luxuries which you may have known in your father's home. Sometimes, times are hard, and when they are, it becomes a real test of your love and devotion toward God and toward one another.

. Now, what about the problem of divorce itself. Divorce, as we use the word in the light of the teaching of the Bible, is a tragic thing, a tragic word, but note what the Bible says about divorce. In the passage we read a few moments ago, Jesus said that one cannot put away his wife and marry another except for fornication. The word "except" is the word used by the Son of God in that passage which indicates most certainly that here is the exception to the rule. The RULE is that you MUST LIVE TOGETHER UNTIL DEATH comes to part you, but here is the exception, whoredom or fornication. "Whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another except it be for fornication committeth adultery." I don't know why people worry so about that passage. That passage is just as plain as the passage "repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." The Bible just simply says that if a man puts away his wife and marries another except in the case of fornication, he is an adulterer and whoso marries her that is put away commits adultery. Well, let us notice another thing that this passage says. I want you to mark this in your heart and mind because it is true and a lot of people read the passage, perhaps, and never see it. Jesus said, "Whoso shall put away his wife except it be for fornication . . ." You know, a lot of times, a separation will take place and then it becomes a game of "wait and see" who is going to die first or who is going to sin first. A man thinks that his wife has sinned and he says, "Well I have a perfect right now to marry again. My wife has committed adultery." Go back and read what Jesus said, "Whosoever shall



put away his wife except it be for fornication . . ." When the PUTTING AWAY is done, it must be because of the sin of fornication. If the passage doesn't teach that, what does it teach? That eliminates that game of "wait and see." A man who puts away his wife with the intention in mind that she will possibly get trapped into sin and commit adultery so that he will have the right to marry again, is in that sense RESPONSIBLE for her sin. And so this game of "wait and see" is obviated by the Lord Jesus Christ right here in this one passage. The only exception to the rule of marriage, which is "until death do us part," is "except it be for fornication." Now somebody says, "Do you believe that Christ there allowed the person who was wronged to marry again?" It seems to me, friends, that would be the only purpose for what Jesus said. If Christ will not allow the remarriage of that individual, then what did he mean? However, if an individual is more interested in heaven than anything else, to be ABSOLUTELY on the SAFE side of the question, why would it not be better to remain unmarried and go home to heaven after a while without ever being troubled with the problem that could be or might be created in another marriage. Now then, that is just a suggestion that seems to me to be logical.

In our country today there are fifty-two reasons for which the courts of our land allow divorce. Jesus Christ gives one. The courts say fifty-two. The Son of God says one. Now those who believe the Bible will necessarily have to leave off the ruling and the ideas of the courts and take hold of the Word of God. Among the Jews there were two schools of thought on the idea of divorce and remarriage and those two schools of thought represent the schools of thought among us today. One school of thought was that a man could put away his wife for any cause and marry another. The other school of thought was that a man could not put away his wife for any cause and marry another. These were the two extremes, and Jesus taught neither. Jesus said, "Except it be for fornication." But, friends, here is a thought that I would like to leave with you and then we are going to our conclusion. In the old Testament we read in Malachi 2:13, where the prophet says, "God hates putting away." Four hundred years before Jesus uttered this statement the God of heaven revealed to ancient Israel that He "hated putting away," that is, a man divorcing his wife or vice versa. Therefore, we can say that it was never in God's plan to set up a social order and then have that order terminated or destroyed by divorce. God "hates putting away" and we need to think upon that matter.

Now, what about the question of remarriage? We have more or less covered it to some extent but we do want to make this suggestion to you for the sake of emphasis. There are people who have an idea that when a companion dies that the companion who is left should feel so deeply obligated that they would never marry again under any circumstances. But do you know, friends, the Bible also deals with that question? In talking about widows who were to be cared for by the church, the Apostle Paul pointed out that it was not the will of God that a widow be taken into the number under a certain age. Paul gives this exhortation, "I will, therefore, that the younger widows marry, bear children, guide the house." Now what's that? "I will that the younger widows marry." In other words, let the younger women who are widows MARRY. Why? Because it is better. It is better for them. It is better for the church. It is better for the human family. God made us and He knows what is best for us. Paul stated that it was the will of God that the YOUNGER WIDOWS MARRY. Now just

this suggestion concerning the problem of remarriage. That does not mean as I heard it said once that a proposal has to be accepted at the cemetery. Ludicrous, but nevertheless representative, the story is told that this woman stood weeping at the grave and as the grave was filled and the people began to walk away the preacher who was a widower came over, touched the lady on the arm and said "Now your husband is dead. He is buried. There is nothing more that you can do. Why don't you just marry me?" And the lady looked up at him with tear filled eyes and said, "I am sorry. The undertaker has already asked me." So, friends, we need to think seriously and soberly about these matters because they are matters that concern all of us as a part of the human family. You may search and search and search, but you will not find where that God has ever CHANGED HIS LAW to accommodate one man or one woman or one couple. God's law is the same to all men everywhere and God's law must be considered. our conception must be that which God would have it be; that His law is universal.

My prayer to God is that these thoughts may help you and help me to live a better life, closer to God, more faithful in His service, that after a while the gates of heaven may swing wide and we may with triumphant song go marching in to that celestial city of God there to remain forevermore. If there is one here tonight who is not a Christian, we implore you to come and obey the gospel then live the Christian life. Live faithful unto death and God will take you home. God is willing, Jesus is pleading, mercy lingers, and heaven waits. Will you come?

## MAKING MARRIAGE WORK

I would like to read to you a rather lengthy passage from the Word of God, and as I read these words, I trust that you will concentrate upon what the Apostle, by inspiration, is delivering to us for understanding and acceptance. In the fifth chapter of the Ephesian letter, beginning with verse twenty-two . . .

"Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church, because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself, and let the wife see that she fear her husband." (Ephesians 5: 22-33)

I have read this passage from the American Standard Version of the Scripture. Some of you may have noticed just a little difference in the wording to that which is commonly read, i.e., the King James Version, but we trust that you understand that these two versions make little difference, actually. The truth of God is set forth in the words of this passage to such a degree that any man, regardless of the version from which he may read it, can understand clearly and unmistakably, the divine principles that are stated therein. I would like for us to think upon those things that make marriage work. It would not be difficult for me to stand here on this occasion and point out many of the things that make marriage fail. We hear a great deal said, in our time, about the things that make marriage fail, and we ought to hear a great deal said about it, but many times we overlook the fact that we should think about those things also that make marriage work, i.e., the things that make marriage a success. I am glad to note that in our audience, we do have a number of young people, who possibly, in the near future, or the distant future, may contemplate marriage. I am glad, because I believe that the lesson that will be presented on this occasion from the Word of God should be helpful to you. At least this is the sincere prayer of my heart to the Maker of us all. All of us recognize that there is a desperate need today, for emphasis on the subject of the right kind of marriage. It has been said that the things that are emphasized the most, make the most impression and therefore, we need to think soberly and seriously about marriage and what makes it work. our young people, in consideration of these things, should determine to profit by the mistakes of others. Too many times, young people pattern their marriage after the marriage they saw existing in their own home, or in the home of someone else. IT IS GOOD TO PATTERN AFTER A GOOD EXAMPLE BUT GOD HELP US TO NEVER PATTERN AFTER THAT WHICH

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IS WRONG. Therefore, we solicit your attention, as we think of these things, in view of that which is taught in the Word of God.

What is marriage? A lot of people have peculiar ideas about what marriage is. Now, just what is it? It is difficult to define marriage in just a few words. You ask the average young person what marriage is, and he will say, "Well, that is when you go to the courthouse, get a license, a preacher, or a Justice of the Peace and he says a few words, and then you go home together." Well, that is a part of it, but that doesn't constitute all that is in the relationship of marriage. Therefore, I ask that you listen as we attempt, in as few words as possible, to define this relationship as God would have it to be understood. It is the joining together of man and woman in the closest relationship of life, in a way physically possible, socially approved, mentally discernible, and spiritually acceptable. Therefore, any relationship that does not meet these requirements, especially the last one to be considered, "spiritually approved," could not constitute lawful marriage. With that before us, let me suggest to you that marriage has been provided for the human family by the wisdom and goodness of God. This does not necessarily mean that one must be married to go to heaven. It does mean that it is commonly expected, because God has taught that it is better for most people to marry. God saw the incompleteness of man within himself, as we learn from Genesis chapter two, and seeing that incompleteness of man within himself He took from the side of man, a rib, and made the woman, and brought her unto the man. From the very beginning, therefore, of man's existence, he has needed somebody to stand by his side. God saw fit that this should be the woman; a companion, a wife, a helpmeet for him. on this basis, the writer of Hebrews says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge." (Hebrews 13: 4) God has decreed that as long as marriages take place, that **MARRIAGE MUST BE RESPECTED BY ALL MEN EVERYWHERE**. Just because some religious group, cult, or sect, or some group of ignorant people, who have never been advised of the entirety of God's truth, practice polygamy, does not mean that it is acceptable with God. In order for the human family to be happy. in order for the human family to endure; in order for the human family to be right before God, marriage, as an institution, must be respected by all men everywhere. That means in the United States as well as everywhere else. Now what are some of the things that make this holy, sacred, and divine institution successful?

It is always a source of joy and wonder to watch a little child at play, and to discern how that little child endeavors to find out how things work. We sometimes become perplexed and annoyed because our little boy, maybe, wants to tear everything up. He doesn't think of it as tearing everything up. He is curious. he wants to know what makes the thing "tick." The expense of it doesn't matter. He wants to know what makes it run. When it comes to the marriage relationship, adults ought to be just as interested in what makes it successful, as a child is interested in what makes a toy work like it does, and until we develop that kind of interest we will never come to a full understanding of the teaching of God's Word. We should seek the whole truth on the subject of successful marriage, just as we seek the whole truth on baptism, on the worship of God, or on any other Bible theme. When we have definitely made up our minds that we want the truth, and will abide by the truth, then there is every possibility of a completely successful marriage.

In the first place, then, we call your attention to the fact that marriage works, when there is a knowledge on the part of the husband and wife of God's law. We have read to you, two passages from the Word of God. Let me suggest two or three more. In the nineteenth chapter of the book of Matthew, Jesus teaches that a man and a woman who are married, whose marriage is spiritually approved, have been joined together by the living God. "What therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Another passage relative to this, is Romans 7. A woman is bound by law to her husband ". . . so long as he liveth, but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." 1 Corinthians 7:39 says, "She is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." I take it that means that a widow must marry one who is a Christian. In 1 Corinthians 7, we learn that the relationship that is to exist between the husband and the wife, is to be a relationship that is wholesome, clean, pure, undefiled, and one that takes into account the needs of the other. The apostle says, "But because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife her due, and likewise, also the husband." The American Standard Revised Version says, "Conjugal rights." "The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinence." Verses ten and eleven of the same chapter. "But unto the married I give charge, yet not I, but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband, (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband,) and that the husband leave not his wife." Friends, I hardly see how language could be any simpler, or any plainer. God joins two people together. that's His law. These two people are to consider the needs of one another. That's God's law. These people are not to depart one from the other. That is God's law. But if one does depart from the other, then remain unmarried, or else, be reconciled. That is God's law. The only exception to these rules, or laws of God, is when fornication or adultery (and these two words are used interchangeably in the Word of God) has been committed. (Matthew 19: 9) Therefore, marriage can be a success, if the law of God is adhered to by the parties within that relationship.

In the next place, marriage will work, provided there is determination on the part of those who are married to make it work. oftentimes, people say, "Well, it just looks as if it isn't going to work out. It just looks like we are going to make a failure." Why? oftentimes, because there is no determination. Very few marriages exist to that anniversary that is called "golden" without determination. Friends, you know that is the truth. Think of it this way for a moment. When you took your companion in marriage, you did not know what eventualities in life might come about, did you? Nobody knows when a companion is going to become seriously ill. Nobody knows when a companion may become a shut-in. Nobody knows when fortunes are going to take reverses, and they are going to be left penniless. In these moments, it takes an understanding, based upon the teaching of the Word of God, and love and affection for that companion to make marriage work. When people enter the marriage relationship, it is a time for looking forward; not looking backward. It is very unwise for a husband to remind his wife, over a period of twenty-five years, how she burned the biscuits

the first morning after they were married. Marriage is an institution that is forward looking. We just cannot afford to look back. The mistakes that were made last year, have little, or nothing to do with the living out of today. Therefore, in order to make marriage work, we must be determined to look ahead. not be always looking back. You know, what people fuss at each other the most about, is something that has already happened. They can't fuss at each other about what is going to happen, because they don't know what is going to happen. Therefore, forget yesterday straighten out the mistakes made yesterday, and work toward tomorrow. Somebody says, "But tomorrow may never come." That's true, but while we work toward the possibility of tomorrow, today we improve the relationship of marriage.

Then, it also requires understanding. No marriage can be a success, unless there is an understanding of those in the relationship of marriage toward one another. This understanding includes the observance of the proper place of each other. You know, it is quite a fad to give pillow cases marked "his" and "hers," and in many of the showers that are given for young people today, they get a bunch of that stuff, you know, marked "his" and "hers." I don't believe I have ever seen any dish towels marked that way, but it might be a good idea, if it should be started. But the point I want to emphasize, is this. Although, that is a fad, and we think of it, sometimes, as being a little humorous, because not many husbands wash their hands, and then look at the lettering on the towel but here is the point. Just as surely as the towels may be marked "his" and "hers," just that surely God has designated the fields of responsibility. There must be an understanding, therefore, of the responsibility of each party in the marriage relationship. The wife is to remember that she is to be domestic, i.e., a worker at home. That she is to love her husband, love her children, that she is to love those things that generally go with being a good housewife and homemaker. That is found, if you please, in Titus, chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, and incidentally, the Word of God says that the older women are to teach the younger women these things. Now, if the younger women do not know these things, whose fault is it? It becomes necessary, sometimes, for a Bible school teacher, or a preacher to bring these points to bear upon the audience or the class, because of the fact that failures have been made. The older women are to teach the younger women these things, but it can't be done unless the older women first do it by example, and then secondly, by teaching. The Word of God says, relative to the man, 1 Timothy 5: 8, "But if any provideth not for his own, and especially his own household, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever, (or an infidel)." How bad is an infidel in the sight of God? Psalms 14: 1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." How bad is a man who will not seek to provide for his own? He is worse than a fool. That's how bad he is. Any man who is not willing to provide for a family that he has helped to bring into the world, is not worthy of wearing the term "man." of course, we are talking about people who are able. We are not talking about those exceptions, where a man may be sick, unable to work and provide for his house. We are talking about people who are able, and their name is legion, who go around "bumming" off the world and going by the philosophy of that old song that we have heard so many times, "The World owes Me a Living," and doing nothing under God's heaven, to make it possible for themselves. No, such an individual is not worthy, really, of the term "man" being applied to him.

Then, may we also call your attention to the fact that even in the marriage relationship, there is to be no usurpation of authority. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2, that a woman is not to usurp authority (or have dominion) over a man. This goes into the home, into the church, into every aspect of life. It is a spiritual thing. It must be duly considered as God's law. Let me also point out to you that God intends that a woman be recognized as a woman, and a man be recognized as a man, even in the home. There is to be no obvious effort to imitate the other, from the standpoint of "gender," let us say. Listen to these words. "A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man. Neither shall a man put on a woman's garment, for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah, their God." (Deuteronomy 22: 5) Someone may say "That's from the old Testament." That's true, but this is included just as surely as you live in God's New Testament term of modesty, and it couldn't be any other way. If it was an abomination to God then, it is an abomination to God now, and it is something that people in these modern times ought to give a little more thought. The idea of understanding, then, carries with it the understanding of the work and the place of the companion. It carries with it, understanding the needs of the companion. That includes physical needs. It includes social needs. It includes spiritual needs. All of these things are to be considered.

Briefly, may I call your attention to the fact that in order for a marriage to be a success, there must be within it, the element of maturity. Marriage is not for children. Marriage is for adults; people who have developed to the place in life where their reasoning is considered to be adult reasoning, where their understanding is adult understanding, and not the reasoning and understanding of a child. A well developed body does not necessarily indicate maturity. Maturity goes beyond the development of the physical body. It includes also, the mental processes of an individual. There are some people who have an idea that the well developed body with a good carriage, a beautiful face, indicates maturity, but not so in every case. Mr. Powers, who is supposed to be an expert when it comes to beauty, made this statement, and I just want to read it to you. "Beauty comes from within." You know, it isn't possible for everyone to be handsome. It isn't possible for every woman to have a handsome husband, nor for every man to have a beautiful wife, outwardly speaking. But it is possible for every person to radiate an inward beauty, an inward handsomeness, if you please that comes from loyalty, love, and fidelity to God, and to one another.

There must also be in order for marriage to be a success, respect for the companion. The Word of God says "A wise woman builds her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." (Proverbs 14: 1) Did you ever stop to consider that one of the things that is most necessary in successful marriage is respect for the companion. Laziness, sloppiness, slovenly attitudes do not make for respect of the companion. The Word of God says, "A husband is to cleave unto his wife." They are to become one flesh. Let us be sure that we develop these materials out of which each of us are made, to the extent that they cleave together, rather than break. And this comes by respect for the companion.

There must also be cooperation. Sometimes marriage demands more than a fifty-fifty proposition. If we investigate the Word of God, we can see how that God has taught that marriage is to be, how it is to exist, what men are to do within it from the standpoint of cooperation, but just briefly, let me suggest to you that it often means

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that one or both of the parties must go the "second mile." Surely, this is taught in the Word of God.

(NOTE: Due to the lack of time when the lesson was originally delivered, the next few thoughts were not included. We think it well that these thoughts be introduced into this lesson, in order to make the lesson more complete and bring about a better understanding by those who may read it.)

Some of the vital things which make marriage work are simply outgrowths of that which we now suggest. There must be existent in the marriage, the qualities of love, honor, and confidence. Surely, these things go hand in hand, as we are taught in that great classic description found in 1 Corinthians 13. The inspired writer says "Love suffereth long, and is kind. love envieth not. love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, cloth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil. rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth. beareth all things' believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: . . ." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8A) We cannot keep from noticing the difference in the inspired writing on the subject, and the practice of so many, so often. out of love for one another, there comes honor to promote happiness and confidence to undergird and strengthen the divinely approved institution. Where these three qualities are lacking, the situation in a marriage can approach desperation—and quickly. People who are married should concentrate prayerfully and earnestly upon the development of these noble qualities, in order that marriage may be truly a success.

Finally, I want to call your attention to this fact. A marriage in order to be completely successful, should be Christian. By that I mean that each of the parties in the marriage relationship should be Christians. A young lady told me not too long ago that she wouldn't marry a certain young man. When I asked her why, she said, "Because, he is not a Christian." She was wise beyond her years. Why will people place upon themselves a yoke that is so hard to bear? Yet, may I call your attention to the fact that when one who is a Christian marries one who is not a Christian, it becomes the responsibility, then, of the Christian to lead that one by good life and faithful service, into Christ. Christian marriage is the most wholesome thing that earth can afford, as far as our social relationships are concerned. A Christian marriage has everything with a spiritual aspect, but it can be a Christian marriage only when both of the parties in the marriage are obedient children of God. Christianity is a thing that draws people closer together, and makes unity and harmony possible. our Savior approved the institution of marriage. our Savior approved, even that part of marriage that is called the "ceremony." Marriage is a holy and divine institution. IT CAN WORK, in spite of the fact that one out of every three marriages in the United States today, is "going on the rocks." But these are the things that are necessary to make it work. I am regretful that I do not have the power to present to you this lesson as clearly as I believe it is set forth in the Word of God. But if these thoughts help your marriage, and help you make up your mind when you are about to marry, then God be thanked. It is possible to make marriage work, provided we do these things that are set forth in the Word of God.

If you are here today, and you are not a Christian, the best thing that you could do to provide for a better marriage, or to have a better marriage, is to become a child of God. Would you come forward then today, and obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.



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## LEST WE DRIFT AWAY

May we introduce our lesson by calling your attention to the reading of Hebrews, chapter two and verse one. This is a passage of Scripture familiar to all students of the Bible. It is a passage of Scripture directed to Hebrew Christians. It is a passage that is weighty and full of meaning for those of us who are members of the body of Christ.

*"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them." (ASV)*

It is obvious that the church of Jesus Christ is in danger of drifting away from God. The church today is in danger of drifting away from the truth of God. The church is in danger of drifting away from those great principles by which we should be governed and directed in our work. A ship upon the sea drifts when it has no anchor. A ship without an anchor is often in danger. The question that confronts us is, "Has the church lost its anchor?" Is the church adrift in the world? Has it lost its anchor of truth? This, friends, is a matter of grave and deep concern to all who love God's divine truth. We need to deeply and earnestly consider what the Word of God has to say about departing from the truth, departing from the living God, departing from that anchor of the soul which is both sure and steadfast. As we study today we hope to impress upon your minds the lesson that the apostle had in mind as he said we should be cautious and careful lest we drift away.

As we look into history, we take note of the fact that there have been departures of the church and of members of the church. One of the greatest of all departures came about through the corruption of the eldership of the church of God. We might call this departure a drifting away from God's order of government. In the twentieth chapter of the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul has called together at the city of Miletus the elders of the church at Ephesus. He delivers unto them one of the most resplendent speeches to be found in all of the New Testament. Among other things, he addresses to them a solemn warning to which I now direct your attention. Beginning in verse twenty-eight, the inspired speaker said:

*"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*

We note, friends, that the apostle plainly teaches in this passage that the church would suffer an apostasy. This apostasy came about through the corruption of the eldership. If an apostasy came about following upon, or in the wake of that which the apostle predicted and stated, the corruption of the eldership, then surely friends, a departure could come to pass in the church of the Lord even today through the corruption of the eldership. There are many in the church who love to serve God, and do so in their proper places and in their proper capacity. It is a matter of great pity and tragedy, however, when a man is given the responsibility of being an elder of the church of the Lord and then misuses that responsibility in such a way as to lead people, members of the body of Christ, away from God. The apostasy that came about through the corruption of the eldership, predicted and prophesied by Paul,

was consummated in an institution that is even yet one of the most formidable of all religious and political groups with which the world is acquainted in our time. This great apostasy was called by the Apostle Paul "the man of sin." It is referred to in the book of Revelation as the "mother of harlots." This institution, this apostasy that is engaged in religious practices and political intrigue, came to pass through the corruption of the eldership of the church of God.

Another departure, another drifting away has come through a failure to recognize the headship of Jesus. We are taught in Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church . . ." One who will not recognize Jesus as the head is guilty of disregarding a very plain and simple passage of truth. Jesus Christ is the only one who has had delegated unto Him by the living God the authority to rule, reign, live, and act as the head of the church. When Jesus came into the presence of his disciples, as we learn from Matthew 28:18, He said, "All authority has been given unto me both in heaven and in earth." (ASV) A failure to recognize the headship of Jesus contributed to a drifting away and a departure from God. If it has happened before, it could happen again.

We call your attention also to the fact that men have drifted away, they have departed from God, through the corruption of the worship. Not many years ago there was introduced into the worship of the church a mechanical instrument of music. The segment of people who insisted upon using the mechanical instrument of music in the public assembly have not been satisfied to stop with the use of the mechanical instrument of music. They have taken hold of one thing and another until today they are utterly denominational in their doctrine and practice. We are taught in God's Word that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) We learn from the Bible that the truth is the word of God. (John 17:17) We learn also that the truth will make us free. (John 8:32) We need therefore to respect the Word of God in the matter of worship. The Word of God teaches us to sing. Ephesians 5:19, "... singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Colossians 3:16 ".... singing with grace in your hearts unto God." Hebrews 2:12, "... in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." A man may search from the beginning to the end of the New Testament and he will not find one incident in which our Lord has authorized the use of a mechanical instrument of music in the assembly of worship. Men have departed, men have drifted away from the truth. They have drifted away from God because of the corruption of the worship.

Men have also departed from God by corrupting God's way of salvation. In Mark sixteen, beginning with the fifteenth verse, our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. but he that believeth not shall be damned." Men have corrupted this by saying that an individual may be saved at the very moment that he mentally consents to the fact that God is, that he can be saved immediately separate, apart from and without obedience to the command of the Lord to be baptized. Yet friends we read in the Word of God where our Savior said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

But not only have men corrupted God's way of salvation. Men have corrupted God's way of carrying on the work and the affairs of the church. This is aptly demonstrated by suggesting to you, by way of example, the missionary society that caused trouble some years ago among the brethren. Missionary societies are not necessary

to the propagation of truth. God has committed to the church the sacred responsibility of carrying the gospel of Christ to the lost. Paul, by inspiration, thus states clearly in First Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long that thou mayest know how thou ought to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." To the church, as the church, has been committed the responsibility of preaching the Word of God. Friends, the church is enough. We do not need some additional organization through which, and by which, to preach the Word of God. If God had wanted an additional organization, that is an organization in addition to the church to preach the truth, then surely God would have delivered us the directions whereby we could understand what kind of organization he would have wanted. But, in Ephesians, the third chapter, beginning in verse twenty the writer says "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." Through the church by the church, and in the church, Christians glorify God. To attempt to glorify God through some society, some auxiliary, some addition to the church which Jesus founded, is nothing more than a drifting away from those divine principles of truth that are found in the New Testament.

The question arises in our minds, "What were some of the causes of these past departures?" The apostle gives us the answer to that question in the passage that we read as our text when he said that they would drift away by not giving heed to the things that were heard. Talking to these Hebrew Christians, the writer insisted that unless they gave heed to the things that were heard, that is the truth of God, they would drift away. If we do not give heed to the gospel of our Savior, we are in danger of drifting away.

Then, departures also came about as a result of many people being in the church, or claiming membership in the church, who were only partially converted and ignorant. It is strange, friends, that we have the Word of God in all of its simplicity, fullness and power, and yet, as the children of God, we still speak the "language of Ashdod."

Basically, every departure has come about through unbelief. Hebrews, the third chapter, and the twelfth verse, is a passage that should weigh heavily upon our souls. The writer says, "Take heed brethren, lest haply there should be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God." Do you note that the writer said, "Take heed, brethren"? This passage was not written to those who were outside of Christ. It was written to those who were in the church of the Lord. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there should be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief . . ." What would an evil heart of unbelief produce? It would produce a "falling away from the living God."

As we look about us today, we are deeply concerned about some of the present trends in the church of Christ. There seems to be a lack of firmness and discipline among the people of God in this present day. Discipline in the church is a thing that is never heard of, if so, only occasionally. Surely, friends, there is a need for discipline in the church today as there has always been. There are those who continue a life of sin who must be disciplined, not because the church hates them but because the church loves them. We read Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, and we come to chapter

three of his second letter, and notice that he says in verse six, "Now

we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." What are we to do if a man in the congregation is walking disorderly, Paul? "Withdraw yourselves," thatch Paul's answer. When he wrote to the Corinthians he said that they were not so much as to eat with the man who was guilty of promiscuous sin. He said "Put him away from among you." There was a reason for that. His influence was corrupt. The church of the Lord suffered. THERE IS A NEED Today, FRIENDS, FOR DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH. The lack of discipline in the kingdom of God breeds worldliness. As stagnant water becomes a breeding place of disease bearing insects, so the church of the living God, that will not rise *to its* responsibility of discipline, breeds worldliness.

Then, another trend that is evident today is the trend to apply the soft pedal to preaching. Friends, when I die, I do not care for the dubious honor of being known by my fellow men as a hard preacher. Certainly, I do not wish to be known by the dishonorable term, "soft preacher." When I have finished my life here upon this earth, I pray God that I may be spoken of simply in this way, "He was a gospel preacher." It is impossible for one to make the gospel any harder or any more exact than it is. It is impossible for one to make the gospel any softer than it is. The gospel is the power of God to save us. (Romans 1:16) You can't make that any harder or any softer than it is. Therefore, applying the soft pedal to preaching is doing nothing more or less than refusing to preach the divine principles that are contained in the Word of God that ought to be preached.

There is another trend that is evident among the churches. That is the trend to yield to practices that are unauthorized. Many of us get before us a fabulous idea of doing BIG THINGS. We deliberately disregard the truth of God and yield, because of our desire to do big things, to unauthorized practices for which there is no scriptural precedent. We, as members of the body of Christ, have for years endeavored to impress upon our neighbors that the Word of God teaches us in three ways: (1) by example, (2) by direct commandment, and (3) by necessary inference. I do not believe friends, that we can improve upon the methods and the manners of the congregations in the days of the apostles in carrying out the work of the Lord. We should never yield, therefore, to unauthorized practices for which there is no scriptural precedent. We should realize that the church of God is not a political organization. This is left to the government, to the state. We have put a very ugly connotation to the word "politics." The word "politics" is not necessarily a bad word. Politics could be a wonderful thing if properly employed but it belongs to government and not to the church. Jesus quenched all of the various and sundry opinions of men concerning a political kingdom, when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36)

We must know also that the church is not commercial. Commercial enterprise belongs to business. The church is not in business to make money. This is not a function of the church. If we try to put the church in business, we are out of harmony with the Word of God, yet the church is in business, the greatest business on the earth. It is the Lord's business, but it is a spiritual business, and therefore we should not be slothful in church business. Sometime ago, I heard this matter related briefly. A certain man at the end of the year stood before the congregation and read the yearly report

of the financial condition of the church. Upon finishing the report, he said, "I want to call this to your attention. We have more money in the bank at the end of this year than we had in the bank at the end of last year. Look how much money we have saved for the Lord." THE CHURCH IS NOT IN THE MONEY SAVING BUSINESS. The church is in the money spending business. All of us realize that we must be discreet, we must be careful in the expenditure of the Lord's money. We must also realize that when people contribute of their means, they contribute for the money to be spent for the honor of God, and to the glory of his cause, and the advancement of his kingdom.

The church is not a social institution. This belongs primarily to the home. Certainly we could not construe it to be wrong for members of the church to get together. Members of the church SHOULD get together and enjoy pleasant association and fellowship one with another. But, to saddle this upon the church, as the responsibility of the church, is entirely foreign to the teaching of the Bible. It is the responsibility of the church to preach the gospel, to help the poor, to lift up the souls of men. It is the responsibility of individuals, of the home, to provide the primary social life, that is certainly all right to enjoy if it is all right to have at all. Yes friends, we ought to enjoy the association and fellowship one with another, but let us not try to turn the church into a social organization. It is not a social organization.

There is also the desire in the hearts of some to be like those about us. We hear men cry and say, "Look what they are doing. Look what GREAT THINGS they are accomplishing." Yet, the people of whom they cry DO NOT HOLD FAST TO THE TRUTH. Those in the church who would use some of the unscriptural practices of those who seemingly are making such great advances, are guilty of an ungodly desire to be like those about them who teach not the truth of God, but error. Israel cried for a king. They rejected God to be like others. of this we read in First Samuel, the eighth chapter. We cannot, friends, imitate those who are preaching error while we ourselves are contending and standing for the truth WHICH THEY OPPOSE.

The purity of the church must be maintained at all costs. I am reminded just here that ere long many who are old in the service of God will go on to their reward, and the poem that was written during World War I comes to mind.

*"To you from falling hands we throw the torch,  
Be yours to hold it high  
If ye break faith with us who die,  
We shall not sleep . . ."*

Let us think of those who are younger, those who someday are going to have the responsibility of leadership in the church. Those who are older should be determined that the church should come down to those who are younger pure in doctrine, in conduct, in leadership. and may God help us here at Central to be a bulwark of the faith, to hold fast to the truth of God, to take heed to the things that were heard, the gospel of our Savior, lest we drift away.

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HORRORS OF HELL

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We are grateful to God as always for the exalted privilege of preaching the gospel of Christ. There are many people who do not realize that the preaching of the gospel includes the preaching of everything that God has spoken or said through one of his servants in this dispensation of Christ. To preach the gospel is to preach all that God has said about every subject that Jesus Christ has made valid by the shedding of his precious blood.

I confess to you, as I begin this discussion today, that it is not a happy subject. It is a subject that I present to you because of what the Bible says about it, and what the Bible teaches concerning it. It is not presented with any malice. We have no "ax to grind." We simply want to point out to you the pertinent truth that is contained in the Word of God concerning the subject of hell.

In the ninth chapter of the book of Mark, our Savior, Jesus Christ, is teaching his disciples and those about Him concerning the place of punishment that is called in the Bible "hell," and our Savior said:

*"And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into Life maimed, rather than having the two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable Are. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet, to be cast into hell. And if shine eve cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell. where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another." (Mark 9:43-50)*

The land in which we live is a land that is uncommonly literate. People in our country are educated and intelligent, at least to a certain degree. We are proud of our educational institutions. We boast of our scientific knowledge. We consider ourselves as people who are unusually blessed with these many facilities toward higher education and a better understanding toward the needs and the problems of humanity, and yet, many of our people who claim to be intelligent and educated and Bible readers, if you please, refuse to believe the Bible with respect to what it says about hell.

If we cannot accept what the Bible teaches about this place of punishment then we cannot accept what it says about the virgin birth. we cannot accept what the Bible says about the crucifixion or the resurrection; we cannot accept what the Bible says about many things such as the first miracle of Jesus, when He turned the water into wine. If we cannot accept what the Bible says about hell, we cannot accept the Bible, for the subject is certainly a part of the New Testament, the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. May I impress upon your minds that all that I know and ever expect to know about this place that God calls a place of punishment is what the Bible says about it. When I am out of the Bible, I am at a complete loss to know anything about it, because after all, it has been revealed to us in the Bible. What the Bible therefore says about it, we must accept. I believe in hell therefore, not because I necessarily want to believe in it, but because God has said there is a place (called in the New Testament "Gehenna" or "hell") that has been prepared. The Bible teaches men of the

existence of this place of punishment. We believe in it therefore, because the Bible teaches it. Notice in the Word of God that this place of punishment is not always named "Gehenna." We notice that God has simply stated in so many words that which awaits the souls of the doomed and the damned. He does not refer to it as "Gehenna." He simply refers to it in a word conveying to us that a place has been established in which the souls of men may reside through eternity in punishment that is everlasting and eternal. Notice, if you will, in the sixth chapter of the book of Romans, beginning with verse twenty-one. The apostle says:

*"What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:21-23)*

This is what many have called commonly an "antithesis." on the one hand the Lord says "death," and on the other hand the Lord says "eternal life." "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Whatever therefore, is the opposite of eternal life, is that which God conveys to us in the word "death." If a man lives eternally in heaven, then the opposite of that is true in "Gehenna."

In Matthew, chapter twenty-five and verse forty-six, we notice another antithesis. This time our Savior is talking about the eventualities that are going to take place in the judgment, and I would have you notice, friends, that our Savior uses language that all of us can understand when He says, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Now, whatever is the opposite of life is conveyed to us in the word that the Lord uses when He uses the word "punishment." Therefore, we can understand that there is a place in which men will reside called "Gehenna" in the New Testament, or "hell," and this place is set forth in the Word of God. I know there is some argument as to whether the word for "eternal" in Matthew 25:46 should be considered as dispensation or eternal, but I would have you note, friends, that the scholars that have given us the three most frequently used versions of the New Testament have translated the Greek word "aionios" by the words "everlasting" or "eternal." In the aggregate, that represents approximately one hundred ninety of the world's richest and ripest scholars of the ancient language of Greek in which the New Testament was written. I do not presume, therefore, to suggest to you under any circumstances that one man, trying to satisfy a particular opinion or cavil could stand against the scholarship of the one hundred ninety men who have been recognized throughout the world for their progress in this respect. Therefore, I suggest to you that we take it just as it is, in the way in which it has been translated, because this is the thought that God would convey to our mind. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The very fact that the Bible teaches redemption implies a place of punishment. A man is redeemed, but if there is no place of punishment from what is he redeemed? Redemption, therefore implies that there is a hell, a place of punishment, otherwise, no necessity of redemption. The very fact that Paul said in Romans 6:23, which passage we read a moment ago, that "the wages of sin

is death," certainly implies the fact that there is a place that is prepared in which the souls of men will be punished, otherwise why the judgment? If there is no place of punishment, why would our Savior have to die? If there is no place of punishment, why do we have to be members of the body of Christ? If there is no place of punishment, why was the blood of Christ shed to redeem us from sin? Why, surely, friends, these things are indication enough to those who believe the Bible that there is a place into which the souls of men will go to be punished through the ceaseless ages of eternity.

The question is then, what is it? As we have suggested to you the word used by our Savior and translated by scholars here is the word "Gehenna." I have before me some quotations which I think would be profitable for us to call to your attention at the moment, to point out to you what our Savior had in mind when He used the word "Gehenna." The first quotation is from Strong's Encyclopedia, page 20, which is the Greek dictionary of the New Testament. Strong says, "a valley of Jerusalem used figuratively as the name for the place or state of everlasting punishment." Well, let us read further from Dickson's Analytical Bible, page 105 "The place of eternal punishment, the antithesis of heaven, to which the wicked were cast after the last judgment." Another quotation, "The later Jews applied the name of this valley (Ge Hinnom) (Gehenna—land of Hinnom) to denote the place of eternal punishment. In this sense the word was used by our Lord." (Smith & Peloubet, Pages 249, 250) "Gehenna was in our Savior's time used for 'hell,' the place of the departed." (Parkhurst) All of these quotations certainly could not mean a great deal to our faith except from this standpoint; we know that when the Lord used the word "Gehenna," according to the best scholarship of the world, He used it with reference to the place in which the souls of men will be punished eternally.

The Bible conveys to us some pictures of this terrible place of punishment. In the fifth chapter of the book of Matthew, our Savior said in verse twenty-two, "But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." The words, "hell of fire," are "Gehenna of fire." Thus, our Savior used the expression that hell is a place of fire. In Revelation, chapter twenty and verse fifteen, "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." The Lord there uses the expression, through the Apostle John, "the lake of fire." In Revelation, chapter twenty and verse three, it is called a bottomless pit or an abyss. Listen "And cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him that he should deceive the nations no more . . ." Thus, hell is referred to as a bottomless pit. Now take a look at these descriptions. It is a place of fire. It is a lake of fire. It is a bottomless pit.

Many of you, have had the commonly experienced dream of falling. You have been conscious, during the time that you were asleep of the thought that you were falling. It might have been from a bluff. But you have all gone through that experience perhaps, at one time or another in your life, and it just seemed that you kept falling, falling, falling. The Lord thus describes this place of punishment, a place in which a man can find no foothold, a place in which a man can find no rest, and all of the while he is completely encircled on every side in this bottomless



pit that is described as a place of fire, yea a lake of fire. The Word of God also says in Matthew 22:13, that hell may be described as a place of outer darkness. outer darkness is the kind of darkness that is almost impenetrable. It is such darkness, as we sometimes hear the expression, that we cannot see our hand before our face. It is so dark in the sense in which our Savior described it that a man can see nothing. He is therefore not able to penetrate, to see outside, to go beyond the bounds and the limits of the habitation of the devils, of the doomed, and of the damned.

The Word of God also describes this place as a furnace of fire. (Matthew 13:42) Several years ago as a child, I can remember the glow that filled the skies in my home town when they got ready to pour off the slag at the furnaces. The slag would come out red hot and it would be poured out in such quantities that the whole sky over the city in which we lived would be lit up and filled with a red glow. The Word of God describes hell as a furnace that is, a furnace of fire. You can imagine, therefore, what kind of influence it will have upon the souls of humanity that are cast into that awful place. In Revelation, chapter twenty and verse eight the Bible says it is a place of fire that burns with brimstone. Brimstone in addition to the fire, if you please, or "fire and brimstone," as the expression is used in the Bible, can bring forth pain most excruciating; therefore, eternal and everlasting punishment that is excruciating.

one of the most terrible things about "Gehenna" is the association that people will have to keep and may expect in that place. The Lord describes this also in the book of Revelation, chapter twenty-two and verse fifteen. "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." The very kind of people that you would not tolerate in this life, as far as your association is concerned, are the very people that you will be called upon to be associated with eternally, those people in "Gehenna," people who are called by the Lord dogs; the fornicator, the liar, the thief, the abominable individual. Those are the very ones with whom you will associate, if your soul is cast into this bottomless pit of destruction.

Somebody says, "But an of this is figurative. Hell is a figurative place." Suppose it is. We are not stopping at the moment to argue the point as to whether it is literal or figurative in the sense of everlasting fire, but just suppose that the Lord endeavored to convey to us the fact through figurative language. What difference does it make? There is one thing that we know. If the Lord used "the hell of fire" in a figurative sense, IF He did, we can be assured of this one thing, that the words that the Lord may have used to convey this matter to us figuratively, are not as strong as the actual thing itself. Figurative language has never been as powerful as that which it represents. Therefore, if "hell of fire" is figurative language, as used by the Lord in Matthew 5:22, you may be assured of the fact that hell is worse than the Lord could find words in which and with which to describe it.

"Gehenna," or hell, contrary to the thinking of many people, is not the grave. There are those who have the idea that when a man dies and is placed in the bosom of mother earth he is immediately in hell. The Bible does not teach that doctrine. In the twelfth chapter of the book of Luke, verses four and five, our Savior said, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell (Gehenna) yea, I say unto you, Fear him." If hell is the grave, then a man would have power to kill and cast into hell, but since the Lord said, "Fear not him who is able to kill the body but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him," then HELL IS NOT THE GRAVE. It is beyond the grave and, if you please, beyond the judgment.

Hell is not on this earth. There are some who try to convince us that hell is simply a matter of being punished and tormented in this life. Not so, my friends. If it were on earth, then it would be possible for an individual to make hell actually exist in the lives of men and women. We use that expression figuratively, maybe, but it cannot actually happen, for the Bible says, "All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The Apostle Paul wrote those words to Timothy. Therefore, "Gehenna," the word used by our Lord, is not on this earth. It is beyond this earth and beyond the judgment. In Matthew 25:41, our Savior indicated certainly that it is not on this earth. Let us turn and read together this passage. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." That takes place at the judgment. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire." Preceding the judgment what's going to happen? The Apostle Peter said that "the Lord will come as a thief, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (or consumed)." Now after this, the judgment takes place, and the souls of men are cast into this eternal fire. Somebody may want to make the cavil, "But Jesus said that it is a place prepared for the devil and his angels." This place of eternal fire was a place originally prepared for the devil and his angels. - That is what the Lord said about it. But, the Lord also says that the man who lives in rebellion toward God will be cast into this place of eternal fire. Suppose that it was prepared for the devil and his angels. Does that mean that the Lord cannot cast the souls of the doomed and the damned into it? Certainly not! And although in its origin it may have been prepared for the devil and his angels it exists now, and the souls of the condemned will reside in it.

Sometimes in the presentation of a lesson of this kind, there are those who do not believe in it who use every kind of cavil and express some resentment toward anyone who would present a lesson about it. Therefore, may I again call your attention to the fact that THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT GOD HAS SAID ABOUT THE MATTER. If God had not said these things, then I confess to you that I would not know anything about it. The punishment of hell is eternal. Jesus said in the text that we read to you from the ninth chapter of the book of Mark that it has in it a fire that never shall be quenched, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Jesus asked the question of the scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites in Matthew 23:33, "How can ye escape the judgment (or the damnation) of hell?"

There are those who have taken words from the Scriptures and have attempted to show us that these words in the Scriptures mean annihilation, but friends, the Scriptures do not teach that. ETERNAL CONDEMNATION, ETERNAL DEATH, ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IS NOT ANNIHILATION. How do we know that? Well, let us try it and see if that is what it means. In the third chapter of

the book of John, our Savior is talking about the matter of perishing in "Gehenna," in this place prepared, in this place into which the souls of men will be cast. Listen to his words, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life." Now, let us put in the word "annihilation." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not be 'annihilated' but have eternal life." That is NOT what the Savior said. The word "perish" as used here by our Savior means, "to be deprived of, to lose, to die in the sense of being separated, cut off from God, to depart, to go away." It does not mean to be annihilated. Therefore, whatever the Lord had in mind when He said "eternal life," He had exactly the opposite in mind when he used the word "perish."

The road to hell is easy. Jesus describes this road as the "broad way that leadeth unto destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby." The easiest way for a man to go into this terrible place is to do nothing. Just sit down and do nothing and his eternal reward will be the casting out from the presence of God. Sin leads a man into "Gehenna," into hell. "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) Revelation 21:8, teaches us that those who have lived a life of sin will be those who are cast out from the presence of the Lord. Christ has shown us the way out. He has shown us how to overcome. He has shown us how to live instead of dying. He has shown us how to live instead of perishing. He has shown us how to live instead of being destroyed. Thus, live in bliss and happiness and peace and joy in that celestial city that is called heaven. The way that Jesus refuted the temptations of the devil was by saying, "It is written." You and I can stand upon the promise of God, believe the great precepts and principles that are set forth in His Word, and we can escape this place that was in its origin prepared for the devil and his angels.

Because of the limit of time, may we say to you very briefly that as the road to hell is easy, so the road to heaven is open to all who want to travel upon it. Jesus said, "I am the door. if any man will enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Surely, friends, the Lord would have you to make the right choice, and surely it would not be the choice of residing in a place of punishment through all eternity, but rather the choice would be to obey the gospel, obey the commands of God, become a Christian, live faithfully in God's service, and then in eternity bask in the sunlight of God's love forevermore.

In closing, may I read to you two other passages from the Word of God. In Daniel, the twelfth chapter and verse two, the prophet says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." our Savior said, in the fifth chapter of the book of John, verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." Would you come to Christ then today? And when the grave closes over your mortal remains, you will have the promise of life beyond the grave, life that is sweet, life that is beautiful, life that is eternal. Will you come now, while together we sing?

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CONVICTION OR CONVENIENCE

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*"And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time. when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."*

The age in which we are now living is an age of astonishing progress. There have been more advancements in many fields in the last three or four decades than in the millennium preceding America is the most wonderfully blessed of all nations on the face of the earth. of all peoples that inhabit the earth, the people of America are the recipients of the most wonderful material advancements. Labor saving devices are no longer considered luxuries, but are the rule in most every home in America. Because of these things we are constantly bombarded on every side to take advantage of every convenience. This high pressure salesmanship and philosophy of convenience has invaded the church. Men are prone to look upon hardship and inconvenience as insufferable. We attempt to find the easy way out, even in religion.

The church of the Lord needs to be aware of the dangers with which we are confronted because of the attitude of Christians toward convenience. In order that we may better understand the difference in convenience and conviction, let us notice the definitions of the two words. *Convenience*—"Freedom from difficulty or discomfort, favorable, easy." *Conviction*—"A doctrine or proposition which one firmly believes."

Recently, a man in conversation quoted a statement made by a gospel preacher who is known to most of you in this audience. The statement was something like this: "one of the greatest and most eminent fights which the church must conduct is the fight to keep the church of Christ from degenerating into a country club." The church, of course, is social in the sense that its members enjoy fellowship and association with one another. The church, however is not a social institution. The primary function of the church is not to provide a country club atmosphere for its members, but rather to preach the pure and unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of the philosophy of convenience, however, and the lack of conviction, the church of the Lord is being pushed more and more toward the yawning chasm of a society or social institution. Let us keep it clearly in mind always that the church of the living God cannot enjoy every convenience that might be enjoyed in some institution of the world whose primary objective is creating a social attitude and advantage.

It is not always convenient for members of the body of Christ to attend the services of worship. This becomes more frequently a matter of conviction. We are prone to marvel at those people who lived in days gone by who, with a large family, never missed a service of worship. Many of them, a few decades ago, would fill the wagon with hay or straw, get the children and load them in the wagon and drive for several miles in order to attend the assembly of worship. Another unique and unusual thing is that those people were hardly ever late. With all of our modern conveniences and in many cases smaller families, it seems to be well nigh impossible for people today to attend all of the services and especially to be on time.

The Word of God teaches us that we are not to forsake the assembly. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as

the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25) It would be extremely difficult to find a command in the Word of God that is any more explicit. In our efforts to excuse ourselves from attending the services of worship, we use the idea of "convenience" as an excuse, but it is hardly ever a reason. It is time for those who are members of the body of Christ to consider with all soberness the fact that the Word of God teaches us to assemble for worship.

Many who are members of the church endeavor to excuse themselves from attendance at evening services. The first day of the week is undoubtedly the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10) It is a day that is to be dedicated primarily to the worship of God. Where is the man or woman who is a Christian who can find a scriptural reason for not attending the evening services of worship when it is humanly possible to do so? Too many of us who are Christians have allowed television or other forms of entertainment to become competition with the evening services of worship.

Many churches (and we use the term "churches" in a broad sense) have closed their doors on Sunday night because it is not convenient for the members to attend the services. Men and women drive or ride buses many miles to work, to the theaters, etc., but not to worship. Some people have been known to drive fifty, one hundred, yes, even many more miles to attend a particular presentation of some form of entertainment. The inconvenience of doing such to worship God to many people would be an obstacle insurmountable. Yet, there are faithful Christians even today who must drive from forty to fifty miles to a place of worship, and if they attend the evening service they must remain in the city where they attend the worship until the evening service is concluded. What wonderful faith and great conviction such people demonstrate before the world!

It is oftentimes the cry of some members of the church that it is inconvenient to attend every service of the church where they may have membership. It is positively scriptural for an individual to be a member of a local congregation and further, to attend the services of that congregation. A congregation is made up of members. If a member of the church can be a "rolling stone," there is little reason for us to respect the local congregation. "Members at large" often mean little or nothing to any congregation in many cases. They run about here and there, not to worship nor to work but to criticize the efforts that are being made. Each individual, regardless of his ability or station in life, has a responsibility toward his home congregation. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Romans 12:4-5) Every member of the church of Christ should have a deep feeling of congregational loyalty.

In these days when we are blessed with more material advancements and possessions than we have received previously, it has been noticeable that some congregations have moved completely away from the field of service in order to capitalize on convenience. Certainly, we do not infer by any means that all conveniences are wrong, but is it the part of wisdom for a congregation to move from a field of service to a community where they can offer little service? Is it right for a congregation to move away from the opportunity to help the poor, to lift up the fallen, and to be a blessing to those who are in need? A brother, well respected in the church of the Lord, recently made the statement that he thought the trend toward

finer things (representing all conveniences) is a trend, in some respects, in the wrong direction. He meant to suggest by this, as we have pointed out, that many people are more interested in convenience than in service.

It is not always convenient to live the Christian life. Many things of the world will interfere if we allow them. So many of us, because of some mere inconvenience, fail to pray as we should. Yet, the Word of God teaches us to "pray without ceasing." Although the Bible teaches us to visit the sick and the unfortunate, because of some small inconvenience that we may encounter, we fail to do our Christian duty in this respect. We are to visit the sick and the distressed. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

There are those who claim they do not even have time to read the Sacred Word of God. They say they must sleep so many hours, they must work so many hours and they must eat at least three meals a day. When it comes to the feeding, the nurture of the soul through the reading of the Word of God, it becomes an inconvenience. Another of God's specific commands is "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

It is not unusual to find ourselves in surroundings that would make it easier and more convenient to sin than to live the Christian life. It is possible to surround ourselves with the type of people who will lead us, if possible, into sin (1 Corinthians 15:33). Christians are warned against making themselves a convenient target for the fiery darts of the evil one. We have such passages as this: "Abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22, R.V.) Also, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11) one who lives a Christian life will willingly suffer whatever hardship may be brought to bear, and will consider very little the convenience complex.

It is not always convenient to give scripturally. Scriptural giving is to be purposeful, bountiful, and liberal. This we learn from these statements of the Apostle Paul. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Corinthians 16: 2) "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give. not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9: 6-7) In order to please God our giving must be according to the divine standard set forth in these inspired words.

There are things that enter into the question of giving by convenience of which we all, perhaps, are guilty. We often make obligations for weekly or monthly payments on some new merchandise or commodity without giving due consideration to our duty toward God. Another of our failures is to spend on clothing and accessories, which often we do not actually need, but desire to have, simply as a matter of pleasing our vanity. Still another consideration is the fact that we are guilty many times of needless waste of food. Jesus, our Savior, pointed out the necessity of exercising care in matters of this kind when he commanded that the fragments left from the feeding of thousands on two occasions be taken up. Our

ability to give as we should to the work of God is often hampered by our carelessness and indifference and our failure to think about these matters.

The rich man of whom we read in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Luke, could not find it convenient to give even the crumbs that fell from his table to the poor beggar, Lazarus. As he sat in his house, faring sumptuously every day, being clothed in linen and fine purple and eating the richest, the best, the daintiest of food, he could not find it convenient to hold out a hand of assistance to a man laid at his gate, full of sores, who desired simply the crumbs that fell from his table. The Word of God records the fact that, "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."

There is a need for conviction in giving as in all other matters of work and worship in the service of God. It seems that many have what has been called "the dollar habit." It has become a matter of shame to those who can do better and should do better to continue to employ the "dollar habit." We are told that the value of the dollar has decreased until it is worth less than fifty-five cents. For a member of the body of Christ who has endured no sickness, no emergency, and has been wonderfully blessed with a good job, a good salary, and many of the luxuries of life, to cast in a dollar and no more must be extremely unsatisfactory before God. Let us remember that it is not a matter of convenience. it is a matter of conviction.

It is not always convenient to become a Christian. The pressure that is often brought by parents, relatives, and friends, keep men and women out of the church. our duty, however, is clear-cut. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:37-38) I know that when I stand before God in judgment that I shall not be called upon to answer for the soul of anyone in particular except my own. It is true that there are influences that may be brought to bear upon others by my example. It is not possible for me, however, to answer for the soul of my fellow man since he must stand before God even as I and give an account "for the things done in the body whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Becoming a Christian is an individual responsibility. A person must obey the gospel as an individual, keeping in mind that he must answer to God for himself.

The time of year is occasionally a matter of inconvenience to some who think of obeying the gospel. The Bible teaches us that we are to respond NOW, (Acts 17: 30). When Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus, the question was, "And now why tarriest thou?" (Acts 22:16) Saul of Tarsus was told to "Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." The time of year may not be convenient, but after all, becoming a Christian is a matter of conviction, based upon faith as it comes through the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Business interest or ambition will often present inconveniences to the man who thinks of becoming a Christian. Some time ago, I pled with a man to attend the services of the church, and his reply was that he spent some twelve to sixteen hours a day including Sunday, in the operation of a business. Any man who allows business interest or enterprise to come in his way of obeying the Lord is too busy. Perhaps, those kind of people have never read these statements of our Savior. "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or

sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall

receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, an

children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30) It is plainly set forth in these statements of our Lord that a man will be blessed more abundantly and live a happy life even here on earth if he is a follower of the Christ.

We read to you in the beginning of the lesson that Felix, who heard the gospel preached by Paul, said, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." So far as the Bible record is concerns, Felix never found a time convenient to hear and obey the gospel of Christ. He went so far that he hoped that Paul might give him money to set him free. There is no record, however, of Felix ever becoming a man of conviction instead of convenience.

Will you not put aside the obstacles that may stand in your way, the inconveniences that you may be caned upon to suffer, and by your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ become a man or woman, boy or girl, of conviction? If you are not a Christian, you will show in just a moment whether you are thinking more of conviction or convenience. Why not lay aside the sins of your past, confess the name of Jesus Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, and then stand in the presence of God as a Christian of conviction?



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PREMILLENNIALISM

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We are grateful indeed for the splendid audience that has assembled to study with us on this occasion. Your presence is indicative of the fact that you are interested in the subject of premillennialism.

The theory of premillennialism has done, and continues to do, much damage to the body of Christ. In many places the church has been divided and heartache and trouble have been caused by the driving of the wedge by the premillennialists. The theory of premillennialism is nothing more than a vain speculation, and it is our intent to bring to your attention such facts as to show that it is merely a theory or vain speculation.

We would not suggest that all premillennialists who claim to be members of the body of Christ believe all of the points that are set forth in the theory. They do believe some of them. The theory is simply that Christ will return to the earth and set up a kingdom and sit on David's literal throne in the literal city of Jerusalem that he will gather all the Jews to Palestine and re-create the old Jewish Empire, and reign for a literal one thousand years upon the earth.

The word "premillennialism" means "before the thousand years." "Pre" meaning before, "millennial" meaning one thousand years and "ism" conveying the idea of a doctrine.

The Scriptures do not teach the return of Christ to this earth but Christ will come. (John 14:3.) Jesus said, "If I go . . . I will come again." We learn from 1 Thess. 4:17, that those who are in Christ at his coming will rise to meet him in the air and "so shall they ever be with the Lord." The premillennial theory would have the Lord coming again at least twice, first for his saints, secondly *with* his saints. In between his coming for his saints and his coming with his saints, the premillennialists tell us there will be seven years of tribulation. I have investigated and have nowhere found that the word of God intimates that Christ is coming the first time for his saints, and the second time *with* his saints, and having a period of seven years of tribulation in between.

Having learned that the Bible nowhere says that Christ will return to set his foot upon this literal earth again, we suggest that it teaches that the kingdom has already come. Let us investigate a few passages and see.

Dan. 2:44 says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." There were four world kingdoms according to Daniel. These were the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian or Macedonian, and the Roman. Daniel said, "In the days of these kings" the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom. Some of you may remember just a few years ago when Mussolini came to power and marched into Ethiopia and tore down the throne of Haile Selassie and destroyed that country and during the time that he was carrying on his carnage in overrunning Ethiopia and other vicinities and areas, there were some who believed the premillennial theory that were rejoicing because they said, "This is going to be the reinstituting of the Roman Empire, Christ will then come to set up his kingdom." Do you know what happened to Mussolini and the empire that he started out to build? Mussolini became a subject of Hitler, he and Hitler both got into trouble and both of them as far as we know, now are dead.

Where is the empire? Ever since Mussolini's time the Italians, and I say this with all due respect, have been dependent to some extent on the United States for the bread they eat. That is no reflection in particular on the Italian people, either. The dream of the millennialists about the Roman Empire failed to develop.

"In the days of these kings," God shall set up a kingdom. Now the question is, did God do what Daniel said he would do? In Daniel, the seventh chapter, he said, "I saw . . . one like the Son of man" come to the Ancient of days. The "Son of man" must refer to the Son of God and the "Ancient of days" refers to God Almighty. "I saw . . . the Son of man [the Son of God]" come "to the Ancient of days [the God of heaven]." "And there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7: is, 14.) He is talking about the same kingdom that he mentioned in Dan. 2:44. Now, when is the Son of man going to come to the Ancient of days to receive this kingdom? How can we know when he does that? Listen to Daniel. "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven...." Now if we can find where the Son of God came to the Ancient of days *in the clouds* of heaven we can establish the fact that the kingdom of Christ is about to come into being. Because the Lord would then be gone to receive it. We now turn to the first chapter of Acts and take note of the fact that Jesus had ascended *in the clouds* of heaven which the prophet Daniel said that he would do, and his ascension into heaven was that he might receive the kingdom. So, we don't have to guess about that. Do you see that? Why, of course you do. All right let us go on. In the old Testament there are repeated references to the coming of the house of God, the church, the kingdom. Just a few of these references. Isa. 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-5, teach of the coming of the kingdom, of the house of God. Joel 2:28-32 points out the things that are going to take place in the last days and how that deliverance will be in Jerusalem. Zech. 1:16 pinpoints the beginning of the kingdom in the city of Jerusalem. Therefore, we know without a doubt that it is going to come in the days of the Roman kings. It is going to begin in the city of Jerusalem and as Isaiah said, it will be "in the last days." We come to the New Testament and we hear John saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2.) We hear Jesus say "I will build my church. and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom." (Matt. 16:18 19.) Jesus said, "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1.)

We turn to the second chapter of Acts and note the fact that it is in the days of the Roman kings when this takes place. The apostles are in the city of Jerusalem just as the prophet said they would be. The power comes with the Spirit. The Spirit came and took his abode in the apostles. They began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. There is the time and the place. This is the opportunity and Peter said these are *the last days*. "*This is that*," he said, "which was spoken by the prophet Joel; it shall come to pass in the last days." The power comes, the kingdom comes. The place and the time are correct, the time that God has chosen has now come. The kingdom comes into being! Before Pentecost the prophets point to Pentecost as the beginning of the

kingdom. Every passage thereafter, that speaks in any sense

of its establishment, points back to Pentecost as the beginning. Therefore, the Bible itself pin-points the establishment of the kingdom of God, in the city of Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost, after the ascension of Jesus.

Now just a few passages to show that this is true. In Col. 1:13 Paul said, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Notice that word *"into."* How can you get into something that doesn't exist? When you came to this service tonight you came *into* this auditorium. How could you come *into* this auditorium if it were not here? It would be an impossibility. How could people, then, in the days of Paul be translated *into* the kingdom of God's dear son if it did not exist? Again, Rev. 1: 6 says that God has "made us to be a kingdom" (ASV) and Heb. 12:28 says, "wherefore, receiving a kingdom." Already received it, don't you see? "Made us to be a kingdom," "receiving the kingdom," "translated into the kingdom," and John says, "I John, your brother . . . in the tribulation and kingdom." (Rev. 1:9.) In 1 Cor. 15:24, 25, we are plainly told that Christ must reign. I want you to notice that word, *must*. Christ *must* reign till he hath put his enemies under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Then what is going to happen? He is going to "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." How can he deliver up the kingdom if he does not possess it?

The kingdom is made up of certain things. In order for there to be a kingdom there must be a king, there must be subjects, and there must be law. Christ is "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." (1 Tim. 6:15.) Christ is the king but how could he be a king without a kingdom? He has a kingdom! The church is the kingdom. Matt. 16:18, 19 certainly teaches that the church and kingdom are one and the same. In Col. 1:13, 18, 22-24, the apostle is talking about the church and also about the kingdom. Therefore, the church and the kingdom are one and the same thing! So then Christ is the king, the church, the kingdom and the law is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:2.) The apostle wrote to the Philippians and said, "our citizenship is in heaven," because Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, and is now sitting upon the throne of his father David. I wouldn't ask you to believe that, friends, if the Bible didn't teach it.

Acts 2: SO says, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." What was the purpose of his being raised up? Peter says, to sit on David's throne. Now if Christ is not on David's throne, and the premillennialists say that he is not, therefore, God raised him up but according to the premillennialists, hasn't done anything with him yet. The Bible says that he raised him up to sit on David's throne. "This Jesus [that is the same one who was buried] hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." God raised him up for the very purpose of occupying the throne of his father, David. The millennial teacher contends that God would have raised him up to sit on the throne of his father, David, but he didn't have to sit down immediately. No, he didn't have to sit down immediately. He just had to sit down on the throne of his father, David, *when God told him to*. When did God tell him to? He raised up Christ to sit on his (David's) throne. (Acts 2:30, 31.) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts

2:36.) If that doesn't drive in the "nail" I don't know of a passage in the Bible that does. God made him Lord and Christ, and therefore Christ is tonight reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords at the right hand of God on the throne of his father David. We are also told that Christ is at God's right hand. (Heb. 1:3.) This passage teaches that God exalted him to be at his right hand, therefore, Jesus is reigning now, ruling now, and governing now, the kingdom of God.

It is said that there were three major promises made to ancient Israel, and that they have not all been fulfilled. These three promises are the land promise, the restoration promise, and the seed promise. The millennialist contends that God did not fulfill the land promise, and therefore there must be a restitution or restoration of ancient Israel in order that the land promise might be fulfilled.. In Gen. 15:18, God told Abraham what the extent of the possessions of Israel would be. In Deut. 1:7, 8, Moses told the people to possess it. In Josh. 21:43, Joshua says that they did possess it. "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers. and they possessed it, and dwelt therein." "Joshua, how much did God give unto Israel?" ". . . all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers. and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he aware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them. the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord has spoken unto the house of Israel. all came to pass." (Josh. 21:43, 45.) What about the land promised When Joshua gave his final address to Israel he said that God fulfilled *all* that he said he would do for Israel. Josh. 23:14 says "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you. all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Second Samuel 8:3, teaches that David recovered the land when it was lost and Solomon (1 Kings 4:21) reigned over it.

When the Israelites entered into the promised land, they were under compulsion to set up six cities of refuge. (Num. 35: 6, 10-28.) This was done as the people were given their inheritance. The fact that the land was distributed (Josh. 19:49), the people received their inheritance (Josh. 19:51) and the six cities of refuge were set up and appointed (Josh. 20:7-9), is further proof that the land promise was fulfilled.. That takes care of the land promise.

Moses said in the book of Deuteronomy, that if the people should do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord that they would utterly perish from off the land. God drove the people out of the land and yet God promised these people he would restore them to the land from whence they had been driven out. often the restoration promise that concerned ancient Israel is twisted to mean that God is to restore the ancient kingdom of Israel. The restoration promise does not mean that! The restoration promise that God made was to restore the people from Babylonian captivity. The Jews were captives in Babylon for seventy years. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews were restored to their land. (Jer. 25:8-12. Ezra 1:1-4; 2 Chron. 36:20, 21.) It is seen from these passages that the restoration took place during the time of Cyrus, king of Persia. In Hos. 13:10, God said, "I will be thy king." Thus, the people were restored to their land with God as their king. The restoration promise has been fulfilled.

There is no argument about the seed promise in particular because most everybody recognizes that the seed was Christ. We will not spend any time on that particular point but just to emphasize it by saying that God said unto Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Christ came through the seed of Abraham, therefore he is a blessing to all mankind. (Gal. 3:8, 14, 28, 29.) Jews and Gentiles alike can obey God and come into the kingdom of his dear Son. (Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 1:13.)

The Bible teaches that the ancient system of Israel will not be reconstructed. In Jer. 22:24, God said, "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence." Now what's the matter? Why God is going to take away all of these things that have been known in ancient Israel. Let us go down to the latter part of the chapter. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless." Who is he talking about? Coniah! "A man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." No more shall a man who is a descendant of Coniah prosper reigning upon the literal throne and in the literal city of Jerusalem and in the land of Judah. How much simpler could God make it? Friends, we can understand that. As we come down the stream of time we see that it was just exactly as God had said it would be, that the descendants of Coniah could not and would not prosper on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem and in the land of Judah. (See also Jer. 19:10, 11.)

Since that is true, we call your attention to this fact. The millennialist has Christ coming back to this earth and ruling and reigning a thousand years. But the Bible says that we are not going to know Christ any more after the flesh, *not going to know him again after the flesh*. In 2 Cor. 5, the apostle is making an argument to the effect that God is going to bless those who are living faithfully in his service with life. He is going to bless them with a body not a physical body but a body that is from the Lord, a tabernacle not of human flesh but a tabernacle which comes from God, a building from God. The apostle goes on to explain that we shall know Christ no more after the flesh. Now in order to re-establish ancient Israel and have Christ sitting upon the literal throne of David in the literal city of Jerusalem, it becomes a necessity that Jesus come back to the earth in the flesh. Now listen, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." (2 Cor. 5:16.) That spells the doom, friends, of the idea of a thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

The idea of Rev. 20:1-10, is not that Jesus will reign upon the earth for a literal one thousand years. Jesus is reigning now over his kingdom.

If the one thousand years of this passage is literal then by all means the "key" is literal, the "dragon" is literal (so the devil is a "dragon," a "serpent," literally), the devil is literally "bound" with a literal "chain" for a literal "thousand years." The point emphasized by the "literal" idea is that the passage cannot be taken literally—therefore, the thousand years mentioned in the passage is not a literal thousand years, *nor does the passage teach a literal earthly reign of Christ*.

When followed to its logical conclusion, premillennialism denies the authority of Christ. Jesus said, "All authority has been given

unto me in heaven and on earth." Premillennialism says that is not so. Premillennialism denies the wisdom of God, for premillennialist teachers, as such, contend that Jesus Christ came, the Jews rejected him, he could not establish his kingdom, therefore, set up the church. That simply means that God in his wisdom could not accomplish what he sent his Son to accomplish and because the Jews did not respond to the invitation of the Son of God, that means that God is going to have to do it all over and the church is just here, more or less as an accidental measure to take the place of the kingdom that God intended to establish when he sent Christ the first time. Now, if that is so, what right does anyone have to say *that God can do the second time what he failed to do the first time*? If Christ has to come back to accomplish what God sent him to accomplish in the first place, what assurance do we have that God is going to be able to accomplish it the second time? We have no assurance, therefore, we suggest that premillennialism denies the authority of Christ and disregards the wisdom of God.

Finally, if premillennialism is true, and I don't believe it is, but if it is true, then the word of God is an imposition upon the minds of humanity. I read Eph. 3:8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." If premillennialism is true there wouldn't really be any need for that, for the premillennialists would have us believe that at the reinstituting of the old Jewish Empire, world-wide conversion will take place. So there would be no need of our preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ today. Eph. 3:10, 11, teaches that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known through the church and that this was God's *eternal* purpose in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We cannot under any circumstances conceive of God having been defeated in his great appointment.

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## QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT THE CHURCH

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In preaching the Gospel of Christ, we have been asked many questions. It has been my experience, and I do not say it boastfully but I do say it proudly and humbly, to present the Gospel by the means of radio off and on for the last twelve years or more. Through some of these years, it has been a day by day effort to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God to all who would listen. In the course of time, we have had many interesting questions. Some of these questions have been foolish questions, such as the question, "Who was Cain's wife?" Well, there is only one answer to that question. Cain's wife was Mrs. Cain. of course, a lot of people ask that question because they think it involves some theological concept as to where Cain's wife came from. That question actually is a foolish question. It has no bearing upon our salvation and, therefore, it is a waste of time, generally, to consider it.

We have had such questions come to us as this. "Where is the passage of scripture that says, 'Every tub must sit on its own bottom'?" Well, friends, I don't believe that passage is in the Bible. I think that passage came from some place other than the Word of God.

Then the question has come to us, "Does the Bible not teach that the time will come when we cannot tell the seasons except by the budding of the trees?" Well, you know, I have heard that all my life but I have never read it in the Bible; and so on and so on it might go, questions that have been sent in and questions that have been received.

Many of the questions have been questions that relate to the salvation of the soul, to the church, to the destiny of the human family, and we are concerned today with some of the questions that we have received, questions that have been asked by intelligent people, who had an intelligent grasp of life and who wanted to pursue intelligently what the Bible teaches in answer to these questions.

The first question that we want to consider that has been asked by a multitude of people is concerning the ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. There are those who suggest that the church of Christ is just another denomination, and in making such a suggestion they then begin to question and say, 'what is its origin?' Did it not have its origin in the nineteenth century? Did it not have its beginning actually in the United States of America? Were its fundamental principles not placed upon the page by some intelligent scholar?" And so the questions go about the origin of the church of Christ.

Well, friends, let me suggest to you that the Bible gives us the answer to these questions. We do not claim to hold to any human mechanism and, therefore, we refer your minds to the teaching of the Word of God concerning the origin of the church. In the second chapter of Isaiah, beginning with the second verse, Isaiah says, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This, plainly is a passage of scripture relating to the establishment of the church of the Lord, the kingdom of God.

QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT THE CHURCH



In the ninth chapter of the book of Mark, Jesus said, "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said unto the Apostle Peter and the other apostles, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In the second chapter of the book of Acts we find the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the consummation of the promise of Christ, and the church of Christ comes into being. That is, it comes into being in the sense that it becomes a vital living, active, moving, powerful force. The church of Christ, the church of the Lord, did not originate then in the nineteenth century! It originated in the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 33, just as the Lord of heaven teaches us in the Bible. It came into being during the time of the Roman kings, and it is interesting to note that it was established upon the first day of the week. We are met today, and this is the first day of the week. The kingdom of God or the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was established in the city of Jerusalem on the first day of the week. As this day dawned bright and clear no doubt there were those who had no idea of the tremendous thing that was about to happen. The multitudes who came running together to hear the preaching of the apostles in their native languages surely could not have understood previously that this was the day that the kingdom of God was to be established. They may have read the scriptures, yet it is apparent that the Jews, as a whole, misunderstood. The Messiah had come, He had given His life, had been buried, raised the third day, ascended after awhile to the throne of God and there glorified, and now the kingdom comes; a magnificent day for a magnificent beginning.

What is the origin, then of the church of Christ?—A.D. 33, during the Roman kings, in the city of Jerusalem, on the first day of the week. Any church that had its beginning prior to that time is TOO OLD to be the church of Christ. Any church that had its beginning after that time is TOO YOUNG to be the church of Christ. The church had its origin in the city of Jerusalem. Any church having its origin ANY OTHER PLACE has the wrong place of origin to be the church of Christ. When Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," He meant for us to understand that the church He built would belong to Him and not to someone else.

Another interesting question that has been asked time and time again is, "WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH?" Briefly we learn from the Bible that the church continued through the apostolic era, yet, even before the Apostle Paul died he forewarned the people of God concerning the emergence of that great apostasy, or falling away. When he talked to the elders of the Ephesian church, he said, "I know that after my departure, grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Thus, the apostle clearly set forth the fact that the church was to see an apostasy, a falling away. This apostasy, according to the warning of Paul in Acts, the twentieth chapter, came about through the eldership. The way that it came about through the eldership was the exaltation of one elder above another. Why, bless your hearts, friends, no one elder in the church has any more authority than any other elder in the church. Men who are elders in the church may have varying abilities but one elder does not have any more authority than another. Therefore, this great apostasy had its beginning by the corruption of the eldership and by the exaltation of one above another. Finally, we see that one elder becomes the bishop of the

city, another becomes the bishop of a territory or a diocese and eventually a hierarchy was consummated. Thus, the church departed from its original ground and its original purity and ceased to be the church of Christ and became, as the writer of Revelation points out, THE GREAT APOSTASY, "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS," and as Paul described this institution, "THE MAN OF SIN." Thus, the history of the church; founded by the Christ, existing for a period of time, then suffering an apostasy, and after awhile a reformation, set in order by great men who were not interested in getting all the way back to the original ground and concept of the church, but who were only interested in reforming the religious institutions of their day. After awhile, such men as Abner Jones, James O'Kelly Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and John Smith, and many others who could be mentioned in the United States of America and also in Scotland, decided that the only way that people could be well pleasing to God was to get back to the ORIGINAL GROUND of unity and faith which is the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. They set about to bring the people back out of apostasy, away from the man of sin, out of the clutch of the mother of harlots, that the church once again might stand in all of its purity and glory in the presence of God as the church that Jesus built.

As time goes along, we discern that they met opposition. There were those who were so ingrained in their religious prejudices and practice that they persecuted these men and others who sought to bring people back to the ancient order of things. After awhile, after much intense and prayerful effort, we see rising above the denominational systems and tenets of faith, the church that Jesus built.

The question that is in your mind at the present time is this question. "What, then, happened to the church that Jesus built during the dark ages, that period of twelve hundred years when the Bible was chained, so to speak to the hands of the clergy? What happened to the church?" The only answer, friends, that I would endeavor to give to that question is that the church continued to exist in its SEED FORM, and that is not difficult to understand. Usually in trying to illustrate this, I use the seed of corn. The reason for that is simply that my name is Cobb. I usually make that connection. Suppose we took a seed of corn and put it in a container where the seed would not be corrupted. We then buried that seed in the earth in such a container that it would not decompose and rot, and corn should cease to exist as far as men would know, upon the face of the earth for one thousand years. Then after awhile, due to the process of erosion, the container would be exposed, and some man might be walking along through the field and kick this container with his foot, notice something unusual about it, break it open and there he would see the seed of corn. He might not even know what the seed was supposed to be but any way, he would examine the seed and not knowing what it was, he would kick it back into the hole from whence it came. After awhile, that seed of corn placed in the hole from whence the container came, would sprout and grow first the blade and then the ear, and what would you have? Wouldn't you have corn? Why would you have corn? Because the seed was corn. The church of the living God existed in its seed form through the dark ages. If there happened to be no loyal congregation of Christians, yet the church of the living God existed in its seed form. Jesus said in Luke 8. 11, "The seed (talking about the kingdom, the seed of the kingdom) is the Word of God." That being the case, whenever you plant the will of God in the hearts

of men and women, what does it bring forth? Why, it brings forth after its kind. Seed does not produce something, friends, that is not after its kind. If a man wants to produce watermelons, he plants watermelon seed. If a man wants to grow pumpkins, he plants pumpkin seed. If a man wants the true church of Jesus Christ to exist in the hearts and in the lives of men, he plants the Word of God. That is how simple of understanding it is, and THERE IS NO EXCEPTION TO THAT RULE. Seed produces after its kind. Therefore, if the Gospel of Christ is preached today it will produce the same thing that it produced in the days of the apostles. If the Gospel of Christ was preached two hundred years ago by earnest, prayerful, faithful men, it produced the same thing then that it produces now. And what does it produce? It produces members of the church, the kingdom of God. one who dares then to preach anything else jeopardizes his soul and leads astray sincere and conscientious people, and it ought not so to be. John says in Second John 9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." That is enough said. So the answer to the question, "What about its history?"

Another question that frequently comes to a Gospel preacher or a teacher of the will of God is the question concerning the worship. Some time ago, there was a fine lady who wrote me two letters. one letter was thirteen pages long and the other was fourteen pages long and if I remember correctly, one of the letters was written on legal size paper. The endeavor and the burden of her letter was to convince me of the fact that the worship of God was not to be upon the first day of the week. And you know I appreciated her letters. Sometimes when people differ religiously they don't want to talk about it. They think that folks just ought to be quiet and calm and say nothing, but if a man differs with me religiously, I enjoy talking with him about our differences. I believe that is the way that Christ would have us to be. So this lady was endeavoring to show me the fallacy as she considered it, of our worshiping upon the first day of the week. But the Bible teaches, friends, that the Lord established the church upon the first day of the week. Pentecost always came upon the first day. The Lord was resurrected upon the first day of the week. In Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter, we can definitely establish the fact that Jesus came forth from the grave upon the first day of the week. John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Some people are prone to argue about that and say that the Lord's day could be any day, but apparently John had a particular day in mind. What day could it have been if not the first day of the week, since the Lord arose upon the first day, the church was established on the first day, and the early Christians met on the first day? Does it not seem reasonable to you, since this is the only time in the New Testament that the term is used, that John was deliberately referring to that day that Christian people met in public worship to God, the Lord's day? Therefore we worship on the first day of the week. As we mentioned to you the early church met on the first day, leaving us an example, an apostolically approved example, of that which God Himself approved in First Corinthians 16:2. "Upon the first day of the week," says Paul, "let each one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." When did they come together? Upon the first day of the week. In Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread . . ." When did they meet? Upon the first day of the week. In Hebrews 10:25, the apostle says, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much

the more as ye see the day approaching." There was recognized, then, by the early Christians a definite day upon which the people of God were to assemble to worship, to pray, and to honor God, and that day was the first day of the week. It is quite obvious that in the New Testament there is No COMMANDMENT to observe the Sabbath. There is No PENALTY that the New Testament mentions if people do not observe the Sabbath. There is No EXAMPLE in the New Testament of the early church observing the Sabbath. There is an example of the apostolic church, that is the church in the days of the apostles, meeting upon the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK to worship God.

There are questions also relative to our worship. "Why does the church of Christ not use an instrument of music?" Several years ago, I went to a little town in Kentucky to hold a meeting, and there as I passed by one of the places of worship in that little city, I was amazed at the fine melody coming from stringed instruments on the inside of that meeting house. It sounded good, and it sounded like it was being made by people who were really musicians. But THE LORD has not placed the MECHANICAL INSTRUMENT IN THE CHURCH. Let us read a few passages. Before the establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper which was later to be observed by the church, and when they had finished the Lord's Supper, Matthew 26: 30 says, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of olives." Then we notice in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts that Paul and Silas were in the prison, and at midnight they prayed and SANG praises unto God. They prayed, mind you, not played, but prayed and sang praises unto God. In the First Corinthian letter, the fourteenth chapter and the fifteenth verse, Paul says, "Let us SING with the spirit and with the understanding." In Romans, the fifteenth chapter, and the ninth verse, the same apostle says, "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and SING unto thy name." Well, we notice further in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, SINGING and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Just this observation on that passage. I have heard people say that you cannot sing psalms without a mechanical instrument, that the word "psalm" indicates a mechanical instrument of music. Let us read the passage again. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Singing—singing what? Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16, says, "Singing." Hebrews 2:12 says, "Sing." In the fifth chapter of the book of James, James says, "Is any among you merry? let him SING psalms." Hebrews 13:15 says that we praise God by the "fruit of our lips." That is what the New Testament says about it. That is WHY the church of Christ DOES NOT use a mechanical instrument of music in its worship.

These are some of the major questions that have been asked by religious, by intelligent, by honest people. There are many others, of course, that have been asked over the years but our time has fled away, and the thing that we want to impress upon you now is the fact that the church of Jesus Christ can be identified today. Take the New Testament, read what it says, believe what it teaches, and then find the people who observe, without addition and without subtraction, what the New Testament teaches, and you have found the church of Christ. In the Colossian letter, the inspired apostle

says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

I believe, friends, that there are people in our audience today who now understand the answer to some of these questions. that you now understand about the origin of the church, the history of the church, the worship of the church, and that you would like to be a member of the church that you can read about in the New Testament. What a splendid, wonderful thing it would be today for you to become a Christian before you leave this place of meeting. Everything is in readiness. The pool is filled, a change of clothing has been prepared for all who might desire to come. The Lord Jesus Christ is extending His arms of love and mercy, the prayers of the saints of Christ Jesus are being lifted up in your behalf there are people who are praying that you, this day, may decide to become a Christian. Friends let me ask you this question. How could you go wrong? How could it be wrong today for you to obey the Gospel? Just do what the Bible teaches, no more and no less, and thus become just a member of the church that you can read about in the Bible, nothing more and nothing less. How could you do wrong? While the mercy of Christ lingers, while the angels await your coming that they might rejoice, while we pray and while we plead, as the people of God, and while we sing, will you come?

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## THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

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In the seventeenth chapter of 1 Samuel beginning with verse 45, we have the following "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.. This day will the Lord deliver thee unto mine hand. and I will smite thee, and take shine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth. that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." In this passage we see the undying confidence of David in the providential care and assistance of Almighty God but primarily the thing with which we are concerned at this moment is the statement that David made, "The battle is the Lord's."

You recall, of course, that the occasion of David making this statement was when he went to fight against the giant, Goliath. Goliath was a tremendous man, a man of great strength, such a tremendous man from a physical standpoint that he, of necessity, had to have a soldier of the army of the Philistines to bear his shield. The story is told in the Bible that David defied Goliath, who was making his boast in the presence of the army of Israel With a smooth stone that he took from the brook, he was able to overcome this giant and deliver the people of God. The smooth stone within itself was not sufficient. The strong arm of this young man, who was still of ruddy countenance, who was but a youth, was not sufficient, and of all of the people who stood in array on that momentous day, perhaps David realized more than any other one the insufficiency of himself, therefore, David said, "The battle is the Lord's."

Today we are engaged in a conflict against the forces of evil, and as this conflict rages in torrents about us, we are aware of the fact that we are not sufficient within ourselves and there is not within us the power, alone and apart from God, to overcome the enemy. Jesus illustrated this so well when He gave unto us the story in the twelfth chapter of the book of Luke, of the man who became rich and abundantly blessed. When his harvest was so great that his barns were not able to hold the fruit and the goods, he said, "I will say to my soul, Thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink and be merry," but while he was so thinking God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Here is a case where a man thought he was sufficient within himself and God showed unto him clearly and unmistakably his insufficiency.

Centuries ago a man who was strong physically, mentally, and morally, well educated and intelligent, went out to walk among his brethren and saw one of the enemies of his people smite one of his brethren and he killed the man and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out to talk with his brethren, thinking that surely they would understand that he had come to deliver them and they said, "Will you kill us as you did the Egyptian yesterday?" And Moses fled. Forty years later we see the same man as Jehovah God revealed unto him from the burning bush that He would have him go down into Egypt and deliver His people. Note the difference in the attitude of the man. Forty years ago he thought that surely his brethren would understand that he was the man. Forty years later

he replied to God, "Who am I that I should do this great thing?" It sometimes takes men a long time to learn their insufficiency, and as we battle against the forces of evil, one of the first things that we must recognize is that we are not sufficient within ourselves WE ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO STAND ALONE. We are not strong enough to be without God.

We must recognize that this is the Lord's battle. We are not battling, therefore, for ourselves. We are not aspiring to the glory and the honor that may come to a victor. We are striving rather against the principalities and the powers and the dominions of darkness. We are endeavoring to lead people to Christ. We are not endeavoring to set up some earthly dominion. -We are not seeking to establish some earthly, powerful, political kingdom. We are rather seeking to lead people to the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." When Jesus lived and walked among men, He did not seek to glorify Himself, nor did He seek to defend His person. When He was questioned in the judgment hall of Pilate, He replied not. When they spat in His face and smote Him, not a word did He say. Yet, when the word of God, or the counsel of the Almighty was attacked, Jesus was the first to respond to its defense. It is not a matter of defending our person or ourselves. It is a matter of - fighting the Lord's battle. There are those who think that because the battle is the Lord's, that the Lord ought to fight it, but, my friends, the Lord provides for us the tools and gives us the opportunity of serving Him and fighting the battle against the forces of sin and of evil.

We are not interested in the spoils of war. We are interested in the souls of men. Without realizing it, all men who live upon the face of God's earth today are engaged in this battle. As you are gathered in this audience this very moment, you are on one side or the other. You are either fighting FOR the Lord or you are fighting FOR the devil. Whose side are you on? When the people did not know which way to go and what they wanted to choose, Joshua said, "Choose you this day whom you will serve but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." There is a question in the Bible that is something like this, "Who is on the Lord's sides" Surely the time has come, friends, as we sometimes use the expression, for the people of God to "stand up and be counted." For Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." It becomes perfectly clear from reading the eighth chapter of the book of John that Jesus recognized the existence of only two kinds of people in the world the children of God, and the children of the devil. Therefore, you are fighting for one or for the other.

Perhaps there are those who would suggest that they are neutral. Here is a man, perhaps, who will say that, "I am not on the devil's side but I have never come out on the Lord's side. I am occupying neutral territory. I am certainly not doing anything for the devil although I am not doing much for the Lord." Friends, that is an impossible position. Listen again to the words of Jesus, "He that is not with me is against me." How much clearer cut could Jesus have stated the situation? "He that is not with me is against me." You, therefore, are either fighting for the Lord or you are fighting for the devil. There has never been a fight in the history of man that could be said that it was fought for nothing. Men do not fight for nothing, they fight for something, and the only description that I know and the only definition that I can use of the word "nothing," is just the word "nothing."

Down close to my home, is a little town that has a court house and a square all around, as many of our towns do. Out in the front yard of this court house, or in front of the building, there is a statue, I believe of either a Confederate soldier or a soldier of World War one. Some years ago somebody said to me, "Now if you go over to this statue and say, 'What are you doing today?', the statue will say nothing." Well, you know since that time, I have looked at that statue every time I have passed that court house, and of course he would say nothing. He would not say anything and that is just about the way some people try to fight the battle of the Lord, "They say nothing." Why you could take a baseball bat, if you could get away with it and go into that court house yard and demolish that statue and he would still say nothing. That is the way that some people try to fight the battle of the Lord, "say nothing, do nothing, be nothing."

Jesus said, "You are either for me or against me." If you are for Christ, you are against the devil, if you are for the church, you are against religious division, if you are for Christ, you are against the rulers of the dominions of darkness. You can't be for Him and His church and absolutely say that you are against nothing because you must be. In the sixth chapter of the Ephesian letter the Apostle Paul recognized this principle. I would like to turn and read to you what Paul said. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." The meaning of that is simply stated by Paul in another place in the Second Corinthian letter. Paul said, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Now notice again, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." I would have you note that the apostle uses the word "against," four times in that verse. Why Paul, do you mean to say that we should take a NEGATIVE view of some things? Indeed! We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. WE ARE AGAINST THAT! It is the Lord's battle.

Today on every side men are abusing God by abusing His Gospel. Are we against such an attitude on the part of man? We wrestle not against flesh and blood, we hate not the man who may oppose the doctrine of Christ, but it is lawful and right and expedient and necessary to hate the false precepts that he may be living and teaching. David said in the long ago, "Therefore, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way," Psalms 119:128. Now do not misunderstand me, friends. I suggested to you that the Bible teaches us that we are AGAINST something. We are not against men. We are against the doctrines and the practices that are leading people astray. We are against spiritual wickedness in high places, the darkness and the dominion of Satan. Again to the sixth chapter of the Ephesian letter, the apostle says, "Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." I have read that passage to call your attention to the word "stand." Notice again this time in verse thirteen, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand." The next verse, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the



Spirit, which is the word of God." You notice that, friends, Paul says "stand against something" four times and he says "stand for something" the same number of times in the same passage. And I want to emphasize again that if you stand for something, you stand against something, and "the battle is the Lord's."

God has sent His people forth to do battle and has encouraged them to the extent that they may have undying faith and confidence in His watch, care and keeping. You might say that Joshua occupied a peculiar position. He had been one of the generals in the army of God under the leadership of Moses. You can naturally therefore, assume that Joshua was somewhat timid and afrighted about taking the grand position that Moses had occupied through forty years with the armies of Israel. And how did God seek to encourage this man that he might not express any timidity? Hear these words, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." You say, "Yes, but those words were to Joshua." True, but in the New Testament Jesus said, "I will be with you always even unto the end of the world," and Paul said "Therefore stand."

In this battle against the forces of evil, opposition does not terrify us, we know that opposition is going to come. In the fifth chapter of Matthew, in the sermon that is commonly called, "The Sermon on The Mount," our Savior said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." In the fifth chapter of the book of Acts, we learn that His disciples took this attitude about it in the days of the early church. Acts 5:41, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." In First Peter 4:16, Peter says "Therefore if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." And the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, a young preacher of the Gospel, and he said, "Yea, if any man would live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." Yes, there will be those who will oppose you, there will be those who will oppose the truth, there were those who opposed Christ, there were those who opposed Paul, there were those who opposed the Apostle Peter, there were those who opposed Stephen to the extent that he became the first Christian martyr.

There will be those that will oppose you if you stand for the truth, but remember the words of David, the king, "The battle is the Lord's." We need not be afraid that we are fighting in a cause that is just and that is right because God has sent us forth to do battle and there is no unrighteousness with God. If we love Him we fight readily and willingly for the sacred and divine principles of truth that God has delivered unto us in His Word.

The question may be in your minds, "With what do we fight?" If we wrestle not against flesh and blood, if we wrestle against the kingdoms of the world, then what do we fight and how do we fight it? Again we call your attention to the fact that Paul said "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness" and so on, and the weapon with which God has provided His people is the very best weapon the sword of the Spirit. The sword of the Spirit has never destroyed the life of a man, but it has saved the souls of countless men. It has revealed unto man and made him conscious of the fact that there are some things that men do that will send our souls

into the bottomless pits of hell. The light of God's truth has revealed unto us the way, however, we may go to heaven. Through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who gave his life for the sins of the world, we can be saved.

As we fight, therefore, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we fight not through enmity toward an individual's person. We seek to turn the searchlight of God's everlasting truth upon his sins and to make him conscious of the fact that he needs Jesus in his life, and that the only way that Jesus Christ can come into his life, is through an acceptance of God's terms of pardon and conditions of salvation. The apostle wrote to Timothy in First Timothy, chapter six and verse twelve, "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on eternal life." And he wrote his Corinthian brethren and said, "So fight I not as beating the air." The picture in that passage is simply this, Paul was alluding to the sport of boxing, he was using that as an example. Those of you who watch the boxing matches on television, sometimes are acutely aware of the fact that some men who pretend to be boxing are simply flailing the air. Paul says, "I do not fight as one who flails the air, I have an object to hit." What is it Paul? Spiritual wickedness in high places; the exposure of the sins of the human family, making the human family conscious of their need of the redeeming blood and the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

To sum this all up, we suggest to you, friends, that today we are engaged in a battle, a battle which has already been joined, a battle in which the camps are arrayed against one another. "The battle is the Lord's." We fight for the truth of God in whatever field. We fight for every commandment of God, involving whatever action. We fight to save the soul of every man and every woman, regardless of their color and nationality, their place of birth or financial condition or educational attainments. The souls of men are precious in the eyes of God and for the souls of men we fight. We cannot escape from our responsibilities, we cannot say to our fellow soldier, "I am tired, will you fight for me?" For the Bible says, "Be not weary in well doing for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." Therefore, the battle cry is distinctly heard, "onward Christian Soldiers," and the blood stained banner of Jesus Christ is unfurled across the great array of the faithful soldiers in Christ Jesus, who stand in solid phalanx, without fear and without shame, to sing the songs of Zion and to fight for God and for truth.

If you have not entered the battle on the Lord's side, we invite you, friends, to come in humble, submissive obedience today to the Gospel of Christ. that you might be cleansed from all of your sins that you, along with other faithful Christian soldiers, may then hold aloft the banner of our Savior, our Savior who died for us and who invited us to come to His bleeding side for the remission of our sins, by saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Will you accept Him today? Will you come in humble, submissive obedience to His Gospel? If so, come, now, while together we sing.

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THE UNDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH

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We are exceedingly grateful to our heavenly Father for the opportunities and the blessings that we enjoy on this occasion. meeting together to worship God in spirit and in truth, endeavoring to bring those who are lost to the Christ, the Lamb of God, "who taketh away the sins of the world." We are keenly conscious of the fearful responsibility that rests upon us at this moment. We sincerely covet the prayers of all Christian people, in order that we may fulfill our responsibility intelligently as God would have us to do.

our lesson today is based somewhat upon the text that was read to you at the very beginning of this service. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. and in his law cloth he meditate day and night." That, of course, is found in Psalms, chapter one. We have also this statement in the book of Psalms. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." There is a principle contained in these words, a principle that we desire at this time to investigate under the heading, subject, or caption (if we may use such terms) "The Undenominational Church of the Bible." In order that we might understand definitely the meaning of this title or subject, perhaps we should define the terms. By "undenominational" we do not mean to convey the idea of "intra" denominational or "inter" denominational. We do mean to convey the idea of "non-denominational." When we speak of the church of the Bible, we speak of the church that is set forth in the Scripture, that is built upon that sacred principle, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it . . ." That is the consummation of the precious promises of Jesus. Matthew 16:18, "And upon this rock I will build my church . . ." When we speak of non-denominational Christianity or the undenominational church of the Bible, we mean that which the Scriptures set forth, not that which many people hold to religiously, but that which the word of God teaches as non-denominational, undenominational Christianity, and the church of the Bible.

All responsible people should be interested in an investigation of the undenominational church of the Bible. We should be interested in such a study because it may remove from our minds some fears and misleading conceptions. At the same time, it may enlighten and save us, and most assuredly we are interested in our salvation. Furthermore, we suggest to you that we must study intelligently and carefully, recognizing the great and severe responsibility that is involved in the examination of such a subject. This study should stimulate us to a greater effort to know and to understand the truth.

It has been quite amazing the past few days, the headlines that we have seen constantly in our newspapers about investigations about atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs, communism, and various other and sundry matters that threaten democracy. We are interested in these things because they throw a shadow across this great land in which we live and for which most of us would die. I do not mean by that, that all men who would die for this nation would necessarily have to take up the sword of carnal war. I do mean to say that most men who enjoy the liberties and freedoms that this country provides, would willingly give their life in service to this great democracy. Therefore, the shadow of fear is across the land. This shadow is cast by the fear of an atomic war, by being overcome



by the fallacy of Communism, by having our freedom and our democracy destroyed by these forces. Yet, our fear, as pungent as it may be and as close to the hearts of the American people as it may come, is not a fear such as the fear that should strike across the hearts of men and women who have embraced that which is not authorized in the word of God and who are giving their lives in service, as intelligently as they know how, to that which the Bible, the word of God, has in no wise counseled, provided, nor authorized.

When we speak, then, of the undenominational church of the Bible, we are speaking of that glorious institution that WAS NOT AND DOES NOT CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN FOUNDED BY MEN. We are speaking of that sacred and divine institution that was built by Jesus Christ, of which institution Jesus said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." When we speak of the undenominational church of the Bible, we do not speak of some institution that has been erected in honor of some great reformer, but we speak of that glorious body of people for which our Savior died. Certainly we do not take away any of the credit that belongs to those men who centuries ago, though under the shackles of the Apostasy, endeavored to reform the existing religions of their day. We do not take from them the honor which they are due. But, at the same time, we do not take from the Christ the honor that is due Him. When Jesus plainly said to His disciples, "Upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," once and for all Jesus clearly and unmistakably showed forth the fact, without contradiction, that no other way would be provided by the living God than the way that Jesus stated would be provided. "I will build my church . . ." The undenominational church, the church of the Bible, the church set forth in the Bible, is the church that was built by Christ.

Secondly, when we talk about this matter, we are not talking about some religious institution that will recognize human heads. Whenever there is a religious institution that will recognize human heads then that institution, at least in that part of its recognition ceases to be the church that is set forth in the Bible. When the New Testament says in the words of Christ Himself, "All authority hath been given unto me both in heaven and in earth," that obviates the idea that Jesus Christ would ever set up any human head to rule and to reign over the church for which He died. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is surely capable of ruling in His kingdom, of reigning over His dominion and of heading that blood-bought institution which the New Testament sets forth as "the church." The church of the Bible, directed by the New Covenant, does not recognize any human heads. We are not bound to bow the knee nor to submit in practice to the ideas and the theories that may be pronounced and promulgated by SOME MAN who has been elevated as a human being to head some religious institution. We believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. We believe it because the Bible says it. In Colossians, the first chapter and the eighteenth verse, the writer says, "And he is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." In Ephesians, the first chapter and the last two verses, we are told again that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. "And hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Not only do we recognize that Jesus Christ is the founder of the church and the head of the church, but the undenominational church

of the Bible must also recognize that it is not in any sense bound by human creeds. What do we mean when we use the expression "human creeds"? The word "creed," of course, means "I believe."

When a man says, "This is my creed," he is simply saying "This is what I believe." When we say then, that the church set forth in the New Covenant recognizes no human creed, we simply mean that the church set forth in the new covenant is not bound nor concerned, nor authorized to recognize something that has been concocted in the minds of men, generated by the words of men, and bound upon men to believe and unto which men must submit, if they are to have membership in a certain religious order or organization. When we say that we recognize no human creeds, we are bound by no human creeds, we simply mean to set forth, by that statement of fact, that to the Christ and His word and THAT ALONE are we bound in religious faith and practice. Sometime ago, headlines were made all across our nation by the admission of a certain religious teacher that on par with the word of God and on equal basis with the Bible, stands the tradition of men. The Lord said, "Your very traditions are the things that have made void the word." When men become bound by tradition, they become bound by unauthorized and ungodly principles. The church that is set forth in the New Covenant is not bound by any human creed. Just a few passages to impress upon your mind the solemnity of this fact. Matthew 24:35, Jesus, our Savior, without any fear of condemnation from God and without any fear of retribution from man, made the statement to which we call your attention. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." In the twelfth chapter of the book of John, Jesus taught in verse forty-eight, "The words that I speak unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day." To impress upon the mind of a young preacher of the gospel his responsibility in holding fast to the counsel of God, Paul wrote in Second Timothy, the third chapter, beginning with the sixteenth verse, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Then again, in Second Peter, the first chapter and the third verse, we read the statement that says, "God has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." And in First Peter 1:25, the Apostle Peter says, "The word of the Lord endureth forever." What does God seek to impress upon our minds? That we are to recognize the Word of God, that we are to look upon the Word of God as the FINAL COURT OF APPEAL in religious matters. We are not bound to nor submissive to any human creeds, but that which is set forth in God's word. The Apostle Peter commanded, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Why do I believe thus and so religiously? Because the Bible says it, not because some council convened and authorized it, not because some synod taught that it would be a good dogma, but because the Bible teaches it. I believe it because it is in the Word of God. Friends, I ask you today, is there anything wrong with that?

The undenominational church of the Bible does not labor under human names. When we speak of the name of the church we turn to the New Testament and there find terms and names by which the Lord has referred to His people. oftentimes, in the New Testament we simply read "the church." On one occasion in the New Testament we read "the church of the Lord," Acts 20:28, American Standard Version. In one place in the New Testament, we

read "the churches of Christ," Romans 16:16. In First Corinthians, the twelfth chapter, we read "the body of Christ." In First Corinthians 1: Writhe church of God." In First Timothy 3:1

"the church of the living God." All of these and others we find in the New Testament. We are to live and to labor under these as set forth in the New Testament. The question sometimes arises in the minds of people, "Why do you folks that claim to be members of the church of Christ always refer to the church as the church of Christ?" Because we are doing that which the Scripture authorizes. In referring to the church as the church of Christ, we are fulfilling that statement found in Colossians 1:18, that says that Jesus Christ is to be pre-eminent. When we refer then to the church of Christ as the church of Christ, to whom do we give the pre-eminence? To the Christ.

It is scriptural today, friends, to recognize the church by the name "the church of God." It is also scriptural to recognize the church simply as "the church." But mind you, it is possible for a religious people to take a SCRIPTURAL NAME and PROFANE the practice. When we wear a scriptural name, we should endeavor in every point and in every principle to be scriptural in practice. We simply cannot take a scriptural name and stand upon that alone and then practice whatever we please and truly be the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must not only take the name, wear the name and be proud of the name, we must also preach and practice what the New Testament teaches. Human names create prejudice, bring about misunderstanding, and deny the counsel and the wisdom of God. As responsible individuals, we are to be known as Christians. In Acts, the eleventh chapter, we are told that the disciples were "called CHRISTIANS first in Antioch." In First Peter 4:16, Peter said, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." Friends, in the love of God, and for the sake of righteousness, why would it not be well for those who serve the Lord to be known simply as Christians? Because of the wearing of human names, because men today are wedded to human creeds, because men want human heads, because men freely admit that the religious institution of which they may be members was founded by men, we cannot have peace in the religious world.

A little while back, it was suggested that it would be well for men to come together around a table where they might counsel with one another, talk over their religious differences, and solve these differences and come together upon that which is set forth in the Word of God. I challenge your attention today, friends with this thought. If men today would come together in such a meeting, throw away their human creeds, eliminate their human names together with their human heads, and take an open Bible and reason as intelligently from the Bible as we would reason from a textbook, then denominationalism would cease and men would come together in that glorious unity for which our Savior so earnestly prayed when He said, "Neither pray I for these alone but for all them that shall believe on my word, that they all may be one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us." John 17:21. Without any fear, I suggest to the great mass of people here assembled and to all who may be hearing my voice across the land, the church of Christ is interested today primarily, fundamentally, and always in the unity of people upon the sacred authority of the Bible. Therefore, the church of Christ IS NOT and DOES NOT claim to be a denomination. The church of Christ is impelled by the great impetus provided by the counsel and the wisdom of God to preach the Christ and the cross, to point out

to man that Christianity is not without its cost but that Christianity places upon each individual who may embrace it a cross to bear and a responsibility to fulfill. As I have heard it said, "men today want to have preaching, but the kind of preaching that substitutes the cushion for the cross." That is not the kind of preaching that we need. We need, friends, to preach the whole counsel of God as Paul said to the elders of the Ephesian church in their meeting at Miletus, "I have not withheld from you anything that was profitable unto you, and you know it. I have proclaimed to you the whole counsel of God."

Denominationalism today divides the religious world and yet the Bible teaches unity. Denominationalism breeds doubt. This was expressed by a heathen in the land of China to a missionary in words something like this. After hearing several American missionaries proclaiming their various theological conceptions and endeavoring to wed people to certain human names, the Chinese very proverbially said, "Go home, get together, and come back." Denominationalism creates confusion in the minds of men and women and boys and girls. Men today rest their souls not upon the wisdom of God but upon the proficiency of men. Masses of people today are persuaded by preachers who employ unusual rhetoric and who are unusually well schooled in the art of oratory. It matters not in many cases, as to whether or not he has proclaimed the truth in all of its fullness. Men are heard to say, "I do not believe that he would lead you astray. He is a man of letters, a man of wisdom a man who has studied the Bible." And yet, as that man stands upon the rostrum and holds the attention of a concourse of people and preaches that which the Lord Jesus Christ has not authorized to be preached, he brings about confusion, he arouses doubt, and he creates over and over again denominational concepts in the minds of men and women. It is little wonder that our young people today wear upon their faces the countenance of confusion when it comes to religious matters. Mothers and fathers are divided, husbands and wives are divided, the masses of people are divided, not over what the Bible says, so often, but about what the Bible does not say. Men do not have any trouble understanding what the Bible says. The religious world is divided mostly over what the Bible does not say.

Denominationalism in effect, denies the wisdom of Almighty God In Ephesians, the fourth chapter, the Apostle Paul expresses the wisdom of God by saying, "There is one body and one spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." "one body," that is the wisdom of God. Denominationalism, as such, would make God partial instead of impartial. Whereas God has given directions to all men as to what they must do and be in order to be saved, denominationalism endeavors to destroy that by suggesting that men can take what they want, just so long as it soothes their conscience they can be well pleasing unto God regardless of their practices, just so long as their conscience is good, clean, and clear. The apostle said in Acts 23:1, "I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day" and yet some of that time this very man was holding the clothes of those who threw rocks at Stephen until he died. Yet he did it in all good conscience. Friends, does this not make us aware of the fact that "except the Lord build a house they labor in vain that build it"? Does this not make us wise and give us a better understanding of the words penned by the Psalmist when he said, "Blessed (or happy) is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in



the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law cloth he meditate day and night"?

In conclusion, may I point out to you that the Apostle John by inspiration said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." The doctrine of Christ DOES NOT recognize human foundations, human heads, human creeds, human names, but the doctrine of Christ recognizes the founding power of Jesus, the headship, and the lordship of the Christ, the Word, and the Christ who made it valid, the name of Jesus, "sweetest name on mortal tongue, sweetest note in seraph song."

If you are here now and not a Christian, we ask you to come. Come to the Christ of the Bible, come to the church of the New Covenant, come to the Lord who loves you, humbly submit in obedience unto His will and He will receive you. As we hold this book aloft, will you not look at it? It says, "New Testament." And the words that are contained in this New Testament are the words that will judge you, that will judge me in the last day. Therefore, friends, while mercy lingers, while the Christ pleads, and while Christians pray, will you not come?

