

2002

**West Virginia Christian
Lectures**

October 6 - 9, 2002

"Give Me The
Bible ..." □□□

Published by

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Rt 5 Box 1468
Salem, West Virginia 26426-9475
WVaChristian@aol.com

THE BIBLE PLAN OF SALVATION

“Give Me The Bible ...”

Hear The Saving Gospel – Romans 1:16-17, 10:17

Believe That Jesus Is The Christ – John 8:24; Acts 8:37

Repent Of Sin – Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9

Confess Jesus As Christ – Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

Be Baptized (Immersed) Into Christ For The Remission Of Sins

Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:20-21

Arise And Walk In Newness Of Life In Worship and Service

Romans 6:3-5; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 2:10

COVER DRAWING

The cover drawing of the Central church of Christ building was done by Timothy Everson, a member of the Central congregation. Timothy is 18 years old and a freshman at Shepherd College. He is the son of Jim and Cindy Everson.

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September 2, 2002

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* Winford Claiborne's manuscripts in this book are not the lessons that he presented at the lectureship. See the *Preface* for an explanation. His lectureship lesson topics are listed on the Lectureship Schedule, printed on page iv. -Editor

LECTURESHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday, October 6

9:45 AM	Religious Attacks Against the Home	Winford Claiborne
10:45	Fathers Are Parents, Too	Winford Claiborne
4:30-5:30 PM	Area-Wide Singing Service	Area Song Leaders
6:00	What Would Jesus Do?	Winford Claiborne

Monday, October 7

9:00 AM	Preaching The Bible Through Example	Albert E. Farley
10:00	Ladies Class - The Bible Equips God's Woman	
10:00	For The Home	
11:00	I Need To Know God	Janie Gallagher
12:00 Noon	Social Attacks Against The Home	Don Cooper
1:00 PM	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	Winford Claiborne
2:00	I Need To Know God's Son	
3:00	I Need To Know Satan	Emmit Channel
7:00	I Need To Know God's Attitude Toward Sin	Brent Gallagher
8:00	Christ Of The Bible - He's Coming	Jim Farley
	Restoring God's Pattern For The Home	Frank Higginbotham
		Winford Claiborne

Tuesday, October 8

9:00 AM	Preaching Through Lectureships	Emmit Channel
10:00	Ladies Class - Bible Equips God's Woman	
10:00	For The Marketplace	
11:00	I Need To Prepare To Live	Janie Gallagher
12:00 Noon	Academic Attacks Against The Home	Ed Floyd
1:00 PM	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	Winford Claiborne
2:00	I Need To Prepare To Die	
3:00	I Need To Leave A Legacy	Clarence McDowell
7:00	A Great Man of a Great Book: Hugo McCord	Don Cooper
8:00	Christ Of The Bible - He Came	David Kenney
	God's Pattern For Husbands and Wives	Frank Higginbotham
		Winford Claiborne

Wednesday, October 9

9:00 AM	Preaching Through Internet/Printed Page	Tim Nichols
10:00	Ladies Class - Bible Equips God's Woman	
10:00	In The Church	
11:00	It Cheers Me When I Am Sad	Janie Gallagher
12:00 Noon	Political Attacks Against The Home	Terry Jones
1:00 PM	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	Winford Claiborne
2:00	It Warns Me When I Am Bad	
3:00	It Sustains And Guides Me	Steve Snider
7:00	It Outlasts Me	David Paher
8:00	Christ Of The Bible - He's Coming Again	Randy Chapman
	Silence Can Be Sinful	Frank Higginbotham
		Winford Claiborne

Preface

Several congregations initially approached us about the possibility of hosting the West Virginia Christian Lectureship in 2002, but, for a variety of reasons, none of these congregations were able to commit themselves to it. We, therefore, had decided that there would be no lectureship for this year.

However, on April 2, 2002, Mark Everson, one of the elders at Central, called to ask whether any congregation had asked for the lectureship. When I told him that none had, he immediately said, "We want it." I was very surprised and asked, "Are you sure?" I tried to express to him how greatly I appreciated their offer but that I did not want them to ask for it *simply* for the purpose of insuring that we would have one. Mark assured me that this was not the case. He replied, "We know how much good it did for us last year, and, if no one else has asked for it, we want it again this year."

Mark and the other elders at Central: Don Deitrick, and Danny Bowers, and their preacher, Warren Kenney, had already given much thought and discussion about having the lectures again and had already selected their theme: "Give Me The Bible." Warren has done an outstanding job again this year as our Lectureship Director in coordinating the selection of topics and speakers.

Our speakers have been very gracious and understanding in preparing and submitting their lecture manuscripts for this book. They have done so upon very short notice. Due to a very heavy workload and, also, because of the serious illness of his beloved wife, Molly, Winford Claiborne was unable to submit manuscripts on his lectureship assignments. However, he did submit several excellent manuscripts from his *International Gospel Hour* radio programs, and we have selected four to be included in our book.

Words cannot describe the joy and happiness I feel in my heart to be invited back to Martinsburg by the Central congregation and to work with them in this new lectureship. I commend them highly for their love's sake – love for God, for Christ, for the Holy Spirit of God, for the truth, for the church, and for the souls of those who are lost in sin. We thank God for his wonderful grace bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ our Lord!

I wish to acknowledge and thank everyone for all of the planning and hard work done in making this lectureship a success. In addition to the speakers, I especially wish to recognize all who helped put this book together, and my wife, Nancy, who spent many hours proofreading the pages of this book.

-Albert E. Farley, editor

THE INFLUENCE OF GODLY PEOPLE

Winford Claiborne

Genesis 18 tells of a visit of two heavenly messengers to Abraham. These messengers from God informed Abraham that his wife Sarah would bear a son even though both Abraham and Sarah "were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" (Gen. 18:11). After the messengers had delivered the news to Abraham, they arose and "looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way" (v. 16). The spokesmen for God told Abraham that God had determined to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah "because their sin is very grievous" (v. 20). Since Abraham had family members in Sodom - including Lot, his nephew - the father of the Hebrew nation was deeply disturbed at the men's message. Abraham did not want to see the cities of the Plains destroyed.

Abraham asked the Lord,

"Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes" (vv. 23-26).

Abraham must have had a very strong suspicion that fifty righteous people could not be found in Sodom; so he inquired if God would save the city if only forty-five could be found (v. 28). He then asked God about saving the city for forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally ten (vv. 29-32). God assured Abraham that he would not destroy Sodom if ten righteous people could be found.

We do not know the population of Sodom or of Gomorrah or of the other cities of the plains and for a very good reason: When the cities were finally destroyed, nothing remained - absolutely nothing. Modern scholars are not even sure where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located. Some Old Testament scholars estimate the population of these wicked cities to have been substantial, but they cannot go beyond that without speculating. Can you imagine a more deplorable situation than existed in these cities? Not even ten righteous souls could be found! In fact only four persons were permitted to leave, and one of them, as you know, did not make it all the way (Gen. 19:26).

Obviously, God would have liked for all the inhabitants of these cities to be righteous, that is, to live according to his divine will. But he did not demand that all of them be righteous. He did not even demand that one-half or one-third or one-fourth of them be upright and God-fearing citizens. Just ten people would have justified God's saving the population of the cities involved. When you think of the ungodliness and wickedness in many modern cities - and I am not trying to excuse the evil of our generation - you can know almost certainly that the cities of the plains were worse. I am not sure how much comfort that will be, but, at least, we can know that moral and spiritual conditions can get worse and will, if we do nothing about the immorality which exists in our day.

A question every preacher of every religious group has often answered in this: Has the United States become so ungodly - have we stooped so low morally - that God will destroy our nation? Of course, we hear all kinds of answers, but there is no one except God who really knows. We dare not go beyond what God has revealed on this or any other subject, but there is no doubt that nations in the past became so rebellious and perverse that God had no other choice than to destroy them. Does he abide by the same principles which led him to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?

Incidentally, God does not have to intervene supernaturally for a nation to be destroyed. The divine law of sowing and reaping applies to nations as well as to individuals. The people of a given nation can become so corrupt morally and spiritually that the nation decays from the inside. Drunkenness, homosexuality, adultery, broken homes, excessive violence, and corrupt government officials are just a few of the ways a nation can bring about its own death. The pages of history are strewn with a great number of examples of such cities and nations.

Some modernistic theologians are highly critical of the Bible's teaching that God was responsible for the destruction of heathen nations. For example, religious liberals pretend righteous indignation over God's command to king Saul and the army of Israel: "Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. 15:3). Liberals often ask: "How could a righteous God eliminate 'infant and sucking'? What had they done to deserve God's wrath?"

My friends, when a nation or a civilization became irretrievably evil, God punished that nation or civilization so that other men might have a greater opportunity of serving him and extending the borders of his kingdom. The cities of the plains, Amalek, Babylon, Greece are good examples of God's punishment of pagan cities and nations. Let us look briefly at two other examples from the Bible and one from secular history.

Genesis six describes the deep degradation of the world prior to the flood. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repents me that I have made them" (Gen. 6:5-7).

Were there not enough good people in the days of Noah to preserve the world from destruction from the flood? The apostle Peter mentions the flood and then says that "eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:20). How many people were on earth at the time of the flood? We have no way of knowing, but the number must have been enormous - many millions. Yet, of all the vast number of people living at that time, only eight were saved. There were not enough good people to prevent the flood, so God "spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5). "The world that then was," Peter says, "being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Pet. 3:6).

In a commentary on the book of Genesis; *Paradise to Prison* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), Dr. John J. Davis, professor of Old Testament at Grace Theological Seminary, made these comments on Israel's conquest of Canaan.

"God promised Abraham a long life, and explained that not until his seed was in the fourth generation would it enter Canaan and conquer its inhabitants, 'for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.' This helps put the conquest into perspective. The campaigns under Joshua were not purely militaristic or nationalistic; they were also judicial" (p. 187).

In other words, God was judging the heathen nations in Palestine for their unbelievable cruelty, including human sacrifice.

Oftentimes biblical critics imply - if they do not actually affirm - that the conquest of Canaan was an arbitrary act of God's favoritism toward Israel - that God was not justified in forcibly removing the pagan tribes from the promised land. Such a thesis simply cannot be sustained. Archaeologists and anthropologists have refuted the charges of the modernists by showing that even the so-called worship of the pagan tribes had become crude, vulgar, and corrupt beyond imagination. God not only was just in removing these tribes from Palestine; he could not do otherwise and remain a holy and righteous God. When the iniquity of those tribes was full grown, God had no other choice than to remove them from the land he had promised to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

In studying these Bible examples, we are informed by inspiration that Sodom, the world in the days of Noah, the tribes in the land of Palestine and others were punished because of their rebellion against God and against common decency, but what may we conclude about those nations that are not mentioned in the Bible? For example, what can we say for sure about ancient Rome and the moral abominations which prevailed there? Did God destroy Rome because of their grievous sins?

I want to read you an excerpt from Dr. Tim LaHaye's book; *The Unhappy Gays* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978).

"Historians verify that homosexuality was rampant in the days of Rome, particularly in the upper echelons of leadership. Suetonius, in his book *The Twelve Caesars*, indicated that fourteen of the first fifteen emperors of Rome were homosexuals. The book chronicles the lives of these Caesars in detail, revealing their homosexual life style and demonstrating how it permeated the empire. King Nikodimes had none other than Julius Caesar as his bed partner, exulting on one occasion that he was 'the queen's partner and rival in the royal bed.' Caesar Augustus, it is charged, sold his services for 3000 gold pieces. ... Tiberius, a sadist, adopted young boys and used them cruelly. Nero seduced little boys; one, it is said, particularly met his fancy ... and he married him in an official ceremony. After the death of Nero, the next Caesar adopted the lad and continued the relationship. The baths of Caracalla in Rome were not significantly different from homosexual baths of today; you could get a bath, sex, or both. Just a few months ago, I visited the ruins of Pompeii - a Roman city of that era noted for its homosexuality. When our guide took us into a beautiful public bath which he said was 'for men only,' I couldn't help thinking, 'Shades of New York City, San Francisco, or San Diego.' No wonder both Gibbon and Toynbee concluded that homosexuality was one of the moral sins that contributed to the decline of the Roman Empire. Part of that deterioration included a population decline due to homosexuality" (pp. 10-11).

Was the collapse of the Roman Empire a supernaturally directed judgment or was this once powerful empire just reaping what it had sown? While I may not be able to answer that question to your satisfaction or mine, I am convinced that God will punish any nation whose people forget him. The wise man wrote almost three thousand years ago: "Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). The Roman letter teaches that when men give God up, he will give them up (Rom. 1:21-32). Even if God did not supernaturally reach down and punish men directly for their sins, how could any human being live without the comfort and love and sustenance of our heavenly Father?

A legitimate question at this time just may be: Just how far down to the road to oblivion is this great nation? There is no way we can be sure. Are there enough good people in America to keep our nation from becoming morally bankrupt? That this nation is racing headlong toward catastrophe, surely no one will deny. Will the American people repent and turn to God in time to prevent this nation's going in the same direction as ancient Rome or Babylon or Greece? There is a very real sense in which you and I can determine the answer to that question. Please think about the question as I open the scriptures to you and examine their teaching on our topic.

In our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, the value of a Christian's influence on society is discussed in some depth. Jesus said to his disciples:

"You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:13-16).

In our lesson today, I have given some indication of the moral and spiritual degeneracy which have characterized so many past civilizations and which have so adversely affected our own. A question is in order: Does the Bible teach that the influence of dedicated, consecrated Christians can remedy some of the moral and spiritual maladies which pervade this great nation? Of course, it depends on the number of faithful Christians and the intensity of their devotion. If "ten righteous souls" could have saved Sodom, how many would it take to save the United States of America?

Just how does Christian influence work to bring about the radical changes in the moral and spiritual atmosphere which are so drastically needed in our day? Actually, there is nothing mysterious about how godly lives change society. Let me offer some suggestions for us to consider.

First, there is absolutely no substitute for strong, sound, sensible and scriptural preaching. God's plan for changing men's and women's lives includes teaching men and women God's eternal truths from the Bible. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians as follows: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). The same apostle encouraged a young preacher to do his duty in service to his God and to his fellow human beings.

"I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Most modern churches- and I am not just talking about the liberal churches - are not attacking the evils of our day. The preaching which is being done has precious little resemblance to the preaching of our Lord, of John the Baptist, or of the apostles. The preaching which one often hears from the pulpit or from radio reminds me of the statement which introduces many books and television programs: "Any resemblance to anyone living or dead is purely coincidental." If the preaching one hears today has any resemblance at all to apostolic preaching, it appears to be completely unintentional.

If the men who occupy the pulpits of our land had the courage to condemn sexual impurity and call it what it actually is – sin - we would witness a tremendous reduction in this kind of behavior. We absolutely must stress the association of pornography, the modern dance, lewd dress, drinking and such like with the increase in sexual promiscuity and sexual violence. Does your preacher stand firmly against sin - all sin? Do you support that kind of preaching? Do you believe God will hold him and you accountable for failure to oppose all kinds of evil?

But, preaching alone will not be adequate to solve all the world's ills. A great number of our problems started long before the ones involved were old enough to hear or to understand gospel preaching. What I am about to say to you simply cannot be over emphasized: Regardless of what the church has done or is doing or plans to do, we absolutely must get to children at a younger age than the church has the opportunity of doing.

The home occupies the crucial place in the lives of our young people. Parents need to be apprized of the tremendous influence they exercise in the lives of their children. It would be magnificent if God could say of us what he said of Abraham. "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken" (Gen. 18:19). Of course, the influence which parents exert on their children may be either positive or negative. In other words, parents can be bad examples as well as good examples. Let us think for just a moment about the bad influence of parents.

Parents will often say to preachers: "We do not know where we went wrong in the rearing of our children. They have not become the kind of people we wanted them to be." In most cases, all anyone has to do to understand why the children have not done well is to examine the homes from which they have come. In many cases - though certainly not in all - the parents did not take the time to read the Bible to their children. The children never heard their parents pray - not even before meals. The parents used almost any excuse to miss services on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, or Wednesday evening. They seldom attended gospel meetings or Vacation Bible Schools. The children knew from observation that their parents were not always completely honest. The children saw drinking at home while at the same time the parents were severely criticizing them for experimenting with various drugs.

When children are reared in such an atmosphere, how could you expect them to have very high moral standards? When you combine what the children learned - or did not learn - at home with what they see in other church members, in their teachers and fellow students, it does not take a Solomon to know that many of our youngsters are heading for disaster. Some children have done well in spite of what they have seen in their parents and in other adults, but the numbers have not been phenomenal. Geoffrey Chaucer asked more than five hundred years ago: "If the shepherd is dirty, what do you expect of the sheep?"

One other aspect of the home's influence on children needs to be mentioned briefly: namely, the lack of courage on the part of many parents to say NO to their children. If your child wants to associate with wild and rebellious youngsters, have the courage to say NO, and say it in such a way that your child does not have to guess what you mean. If he wants to drink or dance or smoke or use marijuana or use indecent language or dress immodestly, stiffen your spine, put your foot down and stop it.

Of course, if you have a negative approach all the time, the influence of your life will be decidedly detrimental. All of us have seen the results of such totally negative attitudes. What we as parents must do is to exemplify the principles, attitudes, and attributes which we would like to see in our children. For example, if you want your child to attend all the services of the church, you must go to the services yourself. It does little good and can actually do harm to send your child to church services and not go yourself.

If you want your child to tell the truth, speak the truth to him and to others in his presence. If you want him to refrain from strong drink or never to smoke or to take the Lord's name in vain, you will have to set the example of clean living. Most of us can see so much better than we can hear that we desperately need good examples to emulate.

My friends, these are but a few ways Christians can change society by their godly behavior. If Christians would only use their most powerful weapon for good - their Christian influence - they could radically alter the course of human history in just one generation. We could literally turn the world upside down for Jesus Christ. If "ten righteous people" could have saved Sodom, then surely the influence of millions of morally upright people could influence the welfare of our great nation. May our Father in heaven help us to have the courage to let our light so shine that men may see our good works and turn and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL THROUGH MY EXAMPLE

Albert E. Farley

Our theme in our lectureship this year and for this week is high and holy. "Give Me The Bible." In her hymn, "Give Me The Bible," Priscilla Owens wrote, "Give me the Bible, Holy message shin-ing, Thy light shall guide me in the narrow way: Precept and promise, law and love combining, Till night shall vanish in eternal day." Yes, truly, the Bible – and only the Bible – contains the Holy message whose light, alone, can guide us in the narrow way that – through the combining of precept, promise, law, and love – can lead us from the night of this world to the eternal life surrounding the everlasting throne of God in heaven some day!

My subject is "Preaching the Gospel through my Example." What a subject! It is a humbling and sobering assignment because I see before me all of my shortcomings and failures. As I see my failures, I feel like the words of Paul, recorded in Romans 7:18-25 – "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

And, yet, I take heart that God has given us His Holy Word, the Bible. We need not be in subjection to the law that is in our members - warring against the law of our minds and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death. As Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Therefore, I approach my lesson with the firm belief and trust in God, in Jesus Christ our Lord, and in the Holy Bible, inspired of the Holy Spirit, and speak to you, briefly, on the subject, "Give me the Bible: so that I may preach the gospel through my example."

It is God's Holy Will that the gospel be preached to every person on earth. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The commission to preach the gospel is in force until the end of time. Jesus said, in Matthew 28:18-20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This commission is to preach the gospel to every creature – every accountable person. "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." Mark 16:15-16.

The purpose of this great charge is clearly stated. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Every accountable person in the world has sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Romans 3:23; 6:23. Only the gospel can save us. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:15-17

The gospel, containing the power to save every person on earth, is truly a treasure – the most valuable treasure on earth. It is a divine treasure. Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Friends, these earthen vessels referred to by Paul are our bodies. To have the treasure in earthen vessels is to have the gospel in our bodies. When we truly have the gospel in our bodies, we can be the kind of example of which we speak today.

Preaching, primarily, involves the spoken word. This can be clearly seen from a study of the word and also of the examples of preaching in the Bible. In the Old Testament, i.e. Jonah 3:2, the word, "preaching" means a "proclamation." It also means this in the New Testament (Matthew 12:41). It means, "to herald, to announce good news, to talk, utter words, to say thoroughly, discuss." It means, "something said; a topic of discourse."

The vocal, proclamation – the public and private preaching - of the gospel is absolutely essential to the salvation of the world. Paul asks, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:13-15. Yes, Paul said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18. Then, he added, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

A dispensation of the gospel was committed to Paul and he cried, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" 1 Corinthians 9:16.

The commission – the charge – to preach the gospel to every creature was given, first, to the apostles of Christ. Mark 16:15-16. This charge, though, was to continue "even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:18-20. Paul handed down the charge to Timothy. "I charge thee therefore before God, and

the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:1-6. He also said this to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou has *heard* of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." This is the work of the evangelist. (4:5) The work of the evangelist is vital to the salvation of the world.

However, most of us – as God's people – cannot, and even should not, be evangelists in the formal, literal sense. Note the statement made by Paul, in Ephesians 4:11-12. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Note that Paul said that Christ gave "some" to be evangelists. He did not say "most;" he did not say "all." He said, "some."

The church surely needs more and more faithful evangelists – gospel preachers. There are no doubt some who ought to be preparing themselves to publicly preach the gospel and are not doing so. May God richly bless our homes, our congregations, our schools of preaching, and our colleges in preparing faithful gospel preachers. But is it not God's will that most or all of His people be evangelists.

We are a family – a body. The Bible says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:12. He added, "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." 14-18.

There is even a solemn warning in God's word about the responsibilities that come upon those who would become formal teachers of the gospel in the church. James wrote, "My brethren, be not many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." James 3:1. No, even though it is God's will that there be faithful gospel preachers in the church, it is not God's will that all be preachers.

All of us, however – as God's children - must be involved in and be a part of preaching the gospel to the lost world. The *church* – the whole church - is the "pillar and the ground of the truth." 1 Timothy 3:15. The pillar is "a column supporting the weight of a building." The ground is "a support, bulwark, stay." The church, collectively speaking, is to be the support – the bulwark – the stay

– of the truth! In the book of Revelation, the seven churches of Asia are symbolized by seven golden candlesticks. (Chapters 2 and 3). Again, candlesticks are intended to hold forth – support - the truth.

How may the church fulfill this charge and responsibility? Of course, it is accomplished through the public and private preaching of the gospel. However, it is also done through the support of the preaching of the gospel by those many faithful members who assist in this holy work. Those who support the preaching of the gospel are as vital in holding up the truth in a wicked and sinful world as are those who do the preaching. "How shall they preach except they be sent?"

But there is another very basic, fundamental, and important way in which the gospel is to be preached: that is, by the living of the gospel – by faithful obedience of the gospel in the every-day lives of the children of God. A great host of God's people – people who will never stand in the pulpit – people who will never teach a public Bible Class – people who will never speak on a lectureship – can (and presently are) "preaching" the gospel of Christ successfully and effectively through their examples.

In the early church, when the church at Jerusalem suffered a great persecution after the stoning of Stephen, the Bible says that Saul "made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Acts 8:1-4. We are not to suppose that all those who were scattered began to publicly proclaim the gospel. No doubt much of the preaching was public. No doubt much of it was in private. There is also no doubt that – in the midst of losing everything they had, and going into the regions of Judaea and Samaria - they all preached the gospel by the example of their Christian lives.

The Bible provides wonderful teachings and admonitions of how all of us – as Christians - can and must preach the gospel through our examples.
The power of an example is one of the most powerful of all teaching methods. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:13-16, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It has been said, "It is hard to resist the argument of a Christian life. That is an argument that all can understand."

The most powerful of all examples of teaching by example is that of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Bible says of Jesus, that he went about doing good. Acts

10:38. During the evening of the last Passover supper, eaten with His disciples, after the supper was ended, Jesus arose, laid aside his clothing, girded himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, washed the disciples' feet, and wiped them with the towel. "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." John 13:1-17. The word "example" here means "an exhibit for imitation or warning." It is also translated "pattern" in Hebrews 9:23.

Another example of Jesus' being our perfect example is recorded in 1 Peter 2:21. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 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:" Yes, Jesus certainly taught us, verbally, not to sin; Jesus certainly taught us not to return evil for evil. Yet, Jesus went so much farther than this. Jesus is the perfect example of doing His Father's will. And, in doing so, He preached the gospel by his example. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" Hebrews 5:8-9.

It is sad to say that you and I so often fall very short of this example. Too many times, we are like the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They said and did not. Paul said, of the Jews of old, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." Romans 2:21-24.

Verbal or audible preaching loses its power whenever those who preach the gospel are not living up to the standards of the gospel and are not preaching the gospel by their examples! Among those of us who teach and preach the gospel, there is sometimes a wide discrepancy between what we preach and what we practice. Brother Fred E. Dennis once wrote, "We ought to practice what we preach and preach what we practice. No doubt there are some who ought to stop preaching until their practice catches up with their preaching!" (*Fifty Short Sermons*, Vol. One (Reprinted), Bible Herald Book Store, Parkersburg, WV., 1942, p. 11). An unknown author wrote, "Preachers can talk, But never teach, Unless they practice, What they preach." Before we have

any right to help our fellowman get the mote out of his eye, we must get the beam out of our own eye, first.

The Bible records many men and women – young and old – who were very successful in preaching the truth through their examples. The Book of Hebrews, chapter 11, contains the list of a host of men and women who form a great cloud of witnesses – examples to all of the worthy fruits of faith in God. They preach today – not by word – but by example; by deed.

The very first on the list is Abel. The Bible says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (11:4). Friends, Abel has been dead for 6,000 years but Able yet speaketh! This word, "speaketh," means "to talk, i.e. utter words." In Acts 16:6, it is translated "preach." Yes, Abel continues to preach through his example.

Go through the list of the "Honor Roll of Faith" in Hebrews 11. By faith Enoch was translated because "he pleased God." (5). By faith Noah "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." (7) By faith Abraham obeyed God and went out, sojourning and looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (8-10). Space fails us to list all of the others. But do read about them – for they all continue to preach this message: "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." (11:6).

Are you not glad for the great examples in the Bible of men and of women who preach to us so eloquently through their godly examples? Are you not so very glad for those men and women whom we have known in our own lifetimes – and whom we now know in the many congregations of the Lord's church – who are truly preaching the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world through their godly examples? Widows – like the poor widow of Mark 12 – who give into the treasury of the church to support the work of evangelism, edification, and benevolence? Women – like Dorcas of Acts 9 – who spend many long hours sewing and making coats and garments for the poor or, perhaps, in making "bears" to comfort little children who are caught up in traumatic and tragic situations? Families – like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of John 11 – who open up their homes in gracious Christian hospitality to serve the Lord and His people with meals and places to spend the night? Parents and grandparents – like Lois and Eunice of 2 Timothy 1 – who take the time and make the strong effort to impart genuine faith to their children and grandchildren? Young girls – like the Israelite maiden of 2 Kings 5 – who set aside her own great personal loss and tragic circumstance to help her enemy master to find healing from his fatal disease? Young men – like Epaphroditus of Philippians 2 – who became sick, nigh unto death, for the work of Christ, not regarding his life, to supply the needs of Paul while he was in prison? Congregations of poor Christians – like the Macedonians of 2 Corinthians 8 – who first gave themselves to the

Lord, and then, in their great trial of affliction and deep poverty, begged Paul to receive their humble gift that they might have fellowship in the ministering to the poor saints of Judaea?

No, they do not mount the pulpits on Sunday morning; no, they do not stand before the microphones and television cameras and speak to thousands and millions; they do not speak on lectureship programs such as this one. Yet, their lives are living sermons – living examples of the Christ who died for them on the cross almost 2,000 years ago.

Before we can preach the gospel through our examples, Christ must live in us and we in Him. How can we be examples of something of which we are not a part? Paul said, in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." How is this possible? We must be born again. We must, through our faith that Jesus is the Christ, repent of all sin. We must confess our faith that Jesus is the Christ before men and be baptized into his name for the remission of our sins. As Paul said, in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

In the early church, when the Jewish rulers, elders, scribes, and the high priest and his family brought Peter and John before their midst for trial, they saw their boldness and marveled. They considered the apostles to be ignorant and unlearned men. Then, the Bible says, "they ... took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13.

Have you been with Jesus? Is it obvious to those whom we meet? Can they see Christ in us and we in Him? Are we an example of Christ? Today, we walk by faith and not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17. If we are to be with Christ – if we are to be like Him and walk in His example - we must walk with him through the faith that comes from the Holy Word of God, the Bible.

This brings us back to our theme and our lesson subject: "Give Me The Bible." Today – and throughout the next several days, if the Lord will, we shall hear many excellent lessons on the many reasons why we need the Bible. My earnest prayer is that God will be with all of our speakers; may many people come and join with us in all of these lessons; may God bless every session with great interest and success; and may this lesson help all of us to have the great desire expressed in the hymn and in our theme: "Give me the Bible ..." - that I may preach the gospel through my example!

THE BIBLE EQUIPS GOD'S WOMAN FOR THE HOME

Janie Gallagher

INTRODUCTION

Suppose you just brought home a brand new gas grill. You are terribly excited to begin using it, knowing your family loves food cooked on a grill. You begin to pull the different parts of the grill out of the box and realize you have a big task ahead of you. Two approaches can be taken. One approach is to simply begin putting the pieces together the best way you can, hoping the grill will not blow up the first time you use it, or the other approach involves finding the instruction manual and carefully following the instructions given by the manufacturer on assembly and use. I tend to be the type to use the second approach mentioned. My husband, on the other hand, has been known to ignore the manual, thinking he can figure out what to do on his own. I usually smile my, “I told you so,” as I hand the manual to him many frustrating hours later. For some individuals it is difficult to accept that the manufacturer of a product knows the best way to assemble and operate his product.

As *our* creator, God knows exactly what is best for us. As our *loving* creator, he has not left us to struggle along with no help or instructions. He has given us our instruction manual – the Bible (*2 Timothy 3:16,17*). I love the title of this lesson. The Bible **EQUIPS** God’s Woman for the Home. God knew that we needed his help to live a productive and happy life. *Jeremiah 10: 23* says, “*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*” Because of that knowledge, God gave us “*all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*” (*2 Peter 1:3*) The wise man, Solomon repeatedly mentions throughout his proverbs our dependence on God and his instruction for our happiness in life. (*Proverbs 2:6; 3:13-22; 9:10; 19:23; 20:24*) I particularly like *Proverbs 20:24* which says, “*The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.*”

If we want the abundant life God has promised to us within our homes, we will look to the Bible for the instruction we need in *equipping* us to establish happy, healthy homes.

THE FIRST HOME

We can read of the first home established in *Genesis 2:18-25*. Here woman is described as a “help meet” for Adam. The first word of this phrase, “help,” is a noun, meaning “helper.” The second word, “meet,” is a preposition, meaning “suitable for.” So the phrase “help meet” actually means a helper suitable for Adam. Eve, the first wife, was created to be a helper and companion for Adam

because God saw that “. . . it was not good for man to be alone” (*Genesis 2:18*) Through this account of the creation of the first home, we see the purpose and necessity of homes. The foundation of any society is found within the home, and any society that follows God’s plan for the home is one that will thrive. (*Psalm 127:1*)

ATTACK ON GOD’S PLAN FOR THE HOME

I doubt Satan has ever left the family alone, beginning with the problems between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the present day assault on God’s family structure. The family is being attacked daily and we, as Christian women, have a responsibility to do what we can to counter- attack as aggressively as we can. The homosexuals and feminists in this country are certainly using every militant method they can to convince us that their lifestyles are alternatives to the “traditional” family. Their agenda shows up everywhere. We see homosexuality promoted on television. Recently, Nickelodeon, a cable channel geared toward children, aired a show which portrayed homes with two mommies or two daddies as normal families. Much of today’s literature is overflowing with positive references to homosexuality, divorce, and living together without marriage, leaving the impression that this is widespread and normal. Even the stories found in our children’s Reading books at school try to impart the message to children that these “alternative lifestyles” are appropriate and normal. Supposed professionals try to convince us that children are better off if parents divorce when they cannot get along. Feminists try to portray God’s plan for the family as a way to keep women in subservient positions. One feminist physician states that “...*bringing up daughters for nothing but marriage, mingles poison in the cup of domestic life...*” (*Harriot K. Hunt*). Isaiah warned against those who would “call evil good, and good evil,” in *Isaiah 5:20*. We cannot allow these militant groups to inundate us with their lifestyle to the point that we become as the Israelites in *Jeremiah’s* time who were unable to “blush” at the abominations they were committing. (*Jeremiah 6:15*)

OUR HOMES

Along with direct teaching from God’s holy word, God has given us, through the instruction of older Christian women, another means of acquiring the knowledge we need to establish the homes He intends for us to have. Titus 2:3-5 says, “*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.*” Once again God demonstrates to us that as our creator He knows what is best for us. God gave us the basic principles for a happy home within his word, but He knew younger

women would need the wisdom, knowledge, and encouragement they could get from older woman. What better way to learn how to establish our homes than from Christian women who have already applied those biblical principles and have learned through experience how to establish a successful home.

It is important to note that the reason given for younger women to learn the matters listed in verses four and five of Titus 2 is “that the word of God be not blasphemed.” The word “blasphemed” leaves the connotation of someone being discredited. What an awesome responsibility we have! Our homes can be the means whereby God’s word is honored or discredited. 1 Timothy 5:14 makes it clear that managing the home is a woman’s responsibility and it is her *primary* responsibility. With responsibility comes accountability. We will be held accountable to God for the homes we have established. We do young girls a great disservice by not teaching them the importance of the role they will play as a wife and mother.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY HOME

“A woman, who creates and sustains a home, and under whose hands children grow up to be strong and pure men and women, is a creator second only to God.” – Helen Hunt Jackson

We have established the importance of building homes that are in accordance with God’s will. Now let us examine a few characteristics of a Christian home.

Our homes should be places where

- Family members fulfill their God given roles
- Love abounds
- Spiritual training takes precedence

Family Roles

In setting up His plan for the family, God gave each member a specific role to fulfill. Colossians 3:18-21 summarizes those roles quite well. *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”* Most women have no argument with husbands loving their wives or children obeying their parents, but many resist the command for women to submit to their husbands. Women can argue, rebel, and even try to change the meaning of the word “submission,” but that does not change the fact that God commanded women to be submissive to their husbands. God’s “chain of command is clearly outlined in 1 Corinthians 11:3 where Paul states, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

The reasoning for this order was not cultural. We see in 1 Timothy 2:12-15 that the “chain of command” was in place from the beginning of time. *“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”*

Christian wives must realize that in refusing to abide by God’s command to submit to our husbands, we not only put *our* souls in jeopardy, but the souls of our husbands also, by contributing to their disobedience. Let us teach our young women to willingly accept the role God gave them within the family.

Additionally, wives are told to be “keepers at home.” This is another area that women are inclined to rebel against. The Bible does not teach that a woman cannot work outside the home, but it does teach that our primary responsibility is to our families. This idea will be dealt with in the lesson on “The Bible Equips God’s Woman for the Marketplace.”

Abounding Love

“They do not love that do not show their love.” – Shakespeare

In the list given from Titus 2:4,5 Paul mentions that the older women are to teach the younger women to love their husbands and their children. Paul, through inspiration, knew that women needed help in knowing how to properly show their love. Many times love is mistaken for only the emotional response one has for another, but love is much more. True, abiding love is one that unselfishly seeks the best for another. 2 Corinthians 13:4-8 is still the best description of love that one can find.

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (NKJV)

This description of love explains *what* women should do, but the more experienced women can, through their examples, show us *how* to love the proper way. If one examines the actions of women who have loving relationships with their husbands and children, one sees a woman who *enjoys* caring for her family. It is not a burden to her to fix that special meal, iron an outfit that is needed the next day (at midnight the night before), make an extra trip to the store, stay up waiting for family members to return home, patiently listen to the problems of her husband or children, help with homework, pack her husband’s lunch...the list could go on indefinitely. Happiness comes in *serving* those we love. Jesus gave us an example of this in John 13 when he

took the time to wash the apostles' feet. After doing so he told them in verse 17, "...happy are ye if you do them." Some women today deny themselves the joy that comes from serving their family because they have bought into the idea being promoted by the feminists that doing so makes them little more than a slave.

When a woman takes the time to show through her actions the love she has for her family, the love within that home will multiply. I vividly remember my aunt saying to me shortly after I was married that she thought she loved her husband the day they married, but that her love for him grew with every day they were married. I never forgot that. Too often a woman marries, expecting her husband and children to be responsible for making her happy when, all along, her happiness can be found within herself – with her ability to joyfully care for her family.

Spiritual Training

"...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." – Joshua 24:15

One of the most impressionable statements my parents ever made to me was what they said when I became engaged to be married. They told me they were happy for me as long as this was the man who would help me get to heaven. My parents were reminding me that in establishing my own home I needed to remember that God was to be the center of that home. Our home should be a place where we are saturated with the word of God. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Our home should be a place where God's word is read and discussed, where prayer is an important part of our daily lives, and where fellowship with other Christians occurs. Christianity should not be something that is reserved for Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, and Wednesday nights, with the occasional gospel meeting thrown into the mix.

The Lord obviously gave men a responsibility to oversee the spiritual nature of their families, but their wives can be working partners in this necessary endeavor. Below are listed some suggestions for making your home the spiritual haven it should be.

1. **Read your Bible and pray together as a couple.** Nothing will bring two people closer or strengthen a relationship than sharing their love for God.
2. **Encourage your family to start their day together in prayer.** There is no better way to send your family out into the world each day. Before the day has begun, each person has been reminded that God is the one in control, that He will be there for any situation faced that day, and that He will give each family member the strength to overcome any temptation.

3. **Teach your children Bible verses.** We spend so much time with young children teaching them to say their ABC's, counting, memorizing nursery rhymes, etc. If they can learn those things through repetition, they can learn Bible verses – ones they will never forget.
4. **Let your children see you reading your Bible.** Often times women are so busy during the day that they leave their Bible study for evenings when the children are in bed or they do it before the children get up in the mornings. I realize it is important to have your own quiet time with God, but it is important for your children to see you spending time with God's word. You may not get much out of those sessions, but you will be embedding a picture in your children's minds they will never forget.
5. **Be constant in your attendance to worship services.** Your children should never doubt that on Sundays and Wednesdays your family will be worshiping with other Christians.
6. **Subscribe to religious periodicals.** This will help to "saturate" your home with a spiritual atmosphere.

Making our homes a spiritual training ground is the most meaningful task a woman undertakes within her home. Being married to a non-Christian may make that task more difficult, but it is not impossible. Paul understood the influence that Timothy's mother and grandmother had over him when he said in 2 Timothy 2:5, "*when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.*" Paul recognized that in spite of the fact that Timothy's father was a Jew, he had been taught well by his mother and grandmother. In 2 Peter 3:1-2, Peter encourages women whose husbands are not Christians to win them through a positive example. It can be done.

Will it not be wonderful to one day look around heaven and see those precious souls who meant the most to you here on earth – your family? Let us do all we can to make that dream a reality.

I NEED TO KNOW GOD

Donald R. Cooper

I wish to thank brother Warren Kenney and the elders of this congregation for inviting me speak on this Lectureship again this year. Jan and I truly enjoyed our time with you last year, which was our first visit to Martinsburg. So, I was more than delighted when Warren called and asked me to be with you again this year. I commend you on the theme chosen, "Give Me The Bible." It appears that we who are speaking this week have been asked to declare reasons for needing the Bible. Specifically, I have been assigned "Give Me The Bible ... Because I Need To Know God."

A favorite passage of scripture and one I have preached for fifty years is 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9,

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that **know not God** and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

It is the view of many that Paul was writing about two different groups of people, (1) the heathenish Gentiles who refused to acknowledge God, whom God gave over to a reprobate mind (Romans 1:28), that these are the ones referred to by Paul as "they that know not God", and (2) the ones said to "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" say some, are the unbelieving Jews who rejected Christ and His word. I'll leave debate on those matters to the more scholarly. However, it seems clear to me that both groups could very well fit both descriptions. And, the end result is the same for both, eternal punishment.

Can anyone in this audience or among those who read this manuscript, imagine not knowing God? Personally, I cannot! I'm so grateful to have had Christian parents. I have never in my accountable years not known God. I cannot imagine a childhood without God. Such a lack of knowledge would have prevented me from obeying the gospel at an early age, thrusting me into the latter category spoken of by the apostle Paul (vs. 8a). Not knowing God would probably have led me to choose a mate who did not know God, perhaps one like those spoken of by Paul in verse 8a. Not knowing God would have been eternally fatal for my offspring unless another caring soul had taught them about Him. Not knowing God, I surely would not have chosen to preach the gospel of Christ for fifty years. No, I cannot envision a life without God. Can you?

With these few thoughts in our minds, let us just think for a few minutes of the many benefits, now and eternal, for knowing God. In doing so, we assume that we believe in the existence of God and desire to be His benefactors. Based on these assumptions, let us continue, remembering our original premise, i.e., knowing God means more than mere acquaintance. It means acknowledging Him in all we say and do. We are reminded by James that even the devils believe in the existence of God (James 2:19), and tremble. Our faith must surely exceed theirs.

I must know God in order to be accepted by Him (Acts 10:34,35). Again, we emphasize the importance of acting on our belief, for Peter said, "...he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (vs. 35). This was the desire of His Son, our Savior, who said, "...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Can we not understand why the Lord's Father declared from heaven, "... This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5)? I want to hear my heavenly Father speak in like manner of me when I stand before Him at the judgment bar on high. And, I know He will if I acknowledge (know) Him in my life in everything I do (Matthew 25:23). It ought to be the aim of every Christian to please God (1Thessalonians 4:1), meaning to satisfy God, give pleasure to Him. Pleasing God has a definite impact on us, now and forever. Pleasing God is what Christianity is all about. As already noted, it was Christ's ultimate goal (John 8:29). The great man, Enoch, was spared death because "he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5).

On the negative side let us consider some of the consequences of not knowing God. Not knowing God permits man to live after the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) and not inherit the kingdom of God (Romans 8:5-8). Even some who have once known God are capable of backsliding and not knowing God in the sense of now acknowledging Him. This occurred with Israel. It can and does occur with some today (1 Corinthians 10:1-12). The condition of one who knows God and then falls away from Him is vividly described by the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 2:20-22.

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Lest we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, let us be reminded that the “sophisticated” sins we commit also displease God (Proverbs 6:16-19) and put us in the company of “those who know not God.”

In passing, we should remind ourselves of the possibility of doing all the right things but in the wrong way. The Pharisees were very skillful in such (Matthew chapters 6 and 23). And, the consequences are the same for us as for them.

Knowing then how imperative it is that man know (please) God, we who preach must take seriously our responsibility of making God known to man. This requires that we preach that which pleases God, even if it doesn’t please men (Galatians 1:10). That which pleases God is His word (1Corinthians 1:21; 2 Timothy 4:2). If we fulfill our duty in this regard, we shall be free from the blood of those who refuse to know God and who obey not the gospel of Christ (Ezekiel 33:8,9; 1Corinthians 3:14,15).

Being servants of God requires that we spread God’s word so that souls will be saved (Romans 10:13-17). What a privilege it is to speak for the Master.

Our lives are enriched when we follow the instructions of God. These instructions are contained in His word, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16,17). We must obey these. Let us notice a passage from Paul’s writings to the Colossians (3:18-23), and how society, in general, and our lives, personally, will be enhanced by obedience thereto: These instructions will make better wives (vs. 18), better husbands (vs. 19), better children (vs. 20), better fathers (vs. 21), better servants in the workplace (vs. 22), and all Christians will have a better attitude in all that they do (vs. 23).

We need to look at the verse that precedes these that deals with authority. God expects us to be guided by what He has said. We would be well served by tossing aside the religious manuals, disciplines, etc., which are written by man in favor of searching the scriptures for what is right and acceptable unto God (Acts 17:11).

It seems appropriate to close this message with words found in the hymn, “Give Me The Bible”, verse three: “Give me the Bible, all my steps enlighten, Teach me the danger of these realms below; That lamp of safety o’er the gloom shall brighten, That light alone the path of peace can show.”

Only by **knowing God** - by accepting His word - can we truly consider ourselves sanctified (fully devoted to His service), for His word is truth (John 17:17) and ought always be our standard of authority (Colossians 3:17).

Truly we all need to know God.

I NEED TO KNOW GOD'S SON

Emmitt Channell

The founders of the world's religions made various claims. "I have found the way," says one, "I have seen the way," says another. Perhaps the message was, "God has shown me the way," or "I can tell you the way." In Christ, however, we have one who says, "I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6). Coming from a mere man, this would be a boast of fantastic proportions. It was statements like this which led C. S. Lewis to propose the "trilemma" about Jesus Christ. He said that Christ was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord of Glory.

People in Jesus' day had various opinions about who He was. When Jesus came near a place called Caesarea Philippi, "he asked his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13) They answered "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14). Jesus then wanted to know what the disciples thought. Peter, speaking for all of them, said "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) Upon hearing that confession, Jesus told Peter that he had not received that knowledge from men but by revelation from the Father in Heaven (Matthew 16:17). It does make a difference where we get our convictions concerning Christ.

People in our day have various opinions concerning the nature of Christ. Some, like the Jehovah Witnesses and the Mormons, think he is a created being. Skeptics consider him to be an ordinary man whose followers made Him to be something other than what He really was. Some consider him to be a good man but not deity.

The Bible emphasizes the need for each of us to have personal convictions concerning Christ. It is not enough to have grown up among people who have convictions about Christ. The facts regarding the nature of Christ must be individually believed and acted upon. After hearing the opinions of the populace, Jesus wanted to know what the disciples thought. Jesus is interested in what you think about Him.

He claimed to know the Father and to have been sent by Him (John 7:29; 8:55; 10:15; 17:25). He claimed to have special relationships with the Father which no man could have: to have seen Him and to have been in His bosom (John 1:18); to have known the Father and the Father to have known him (Luke 10:22). He claimed that if one knew him, he would know the Father also (John 14:7)

Later, Paul wrote that Christ is "the image of the invisible God" and "by him were all things created" and "by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:15-17). In Hebrews 1:3 Christ is declared to be the brightness of God's glory and "the express image of his person."

Jesus constantly tried to teach people His identity. He healed the sick of palsy so that they may know that he had power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). No wonder the Jews accused him of blasphemy! They recognized that this was equal to claiming to be God (Luke 5:21; Mark 2:7) (compare Isaiah 43:25 and Micah 7:18). He claimed to do the same works that the Father does. (John 5:21-23; Jn 17:2). He claimed that he came down from Heaven from the presence of God (John 6:42). Jesus had said, "when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28) and "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32). The people responded "the son of man must be lifted up? who is this son of man?" (John 12:34)

The centurion, seeing the earthquake as the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, the graves opened and saints arising from the dead, said, "truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

Paul later wrote that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

When Peter, on Pentecost, preached the resurrection, "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41) By Acts chapter 4 the number of them which heard the word and believed was about five thousand, counting only the men (Acts 4:4).

When people truly understand who Jesus is, they respond in obedience to His commands (Acts 2:37-38). When they do not believe or refuse to obey, they stand condemned (Mark 16:16). WE MUST KNOW WHO JESUS IS!

But there is more to knowing Christ than knowing ABOUT Christ. Paul, who was already a Christian, said, concerning Christ, that he wanted to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10). He was willing to "count all things but loss" that he might have that relationship with Christ (Philippians 3:8).

What does it mean to know Christ in that sense. It is obvious that Paul is not speaking of a passing acquaintance with the fact that a man named Jesus

once lived upon this earth. Look carefully at the three phrases Paul used in speaking of "knowing" Christ.

The first phrase Paul uses is "the power of his resurrection." What power is there in the resurrection of Christ and how do we benefit from it? Consider this important passage from John 5:21-29:

²¹For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

²²For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

²³That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

²⁴Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

²⁵Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

²⁶For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

²⁷And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

²⁸Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

²⁹And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Notice that Jesus claims the power to raise the dead. Not only that, He says that the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son. He speaks of the coming resurrection when that judgment will take place. But look at verse 24! Here he speaks of more than the power to raise dead bodies. He speaks of passing from spiritual death to spiritual life.

He had said the same thing to Martha at the raising of Lazarus: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26). Martha did believe, but she did not fully understand what Jesus was saying. Many still don't understand it. Paul must have thought about it a lot because he writes about it so often.

Before one can be raised from the dead to stand uncondemned before Christ in the judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), he must pass "from death to life." This comes by "knowing" Christ in the power of His resurrection.

We are buried with Christ by baptism into death so that we can walk in newness of life. It is in this uniting with Christ in the likeness of his death, burial, and resurrection that we contact the blood of Christ shed in his death and partake of the power of His resurrection from the dead. Note verse 8 "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Christ's death is a picture of our death to sin; his resurrection is a picture of the new life that we live in Him (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:3). It all comes about by knowing the "power of the resurrection". In Ephesians 1:17-20 Paul prays that all his readers may know Christ in this sense.

The second phrase Paul uses is "the fellowship of his sufferings." Paul wanted to "know" Christ by having fellowship with him in suffering. Why would he want to suffer? He explains in 2 Corinthians 4:10-13 that it is all about doing the work of Christ. He wanted the life of Christ to be seen in his life. He was willing to suffer and die like Christ in order to preach the Gospel. His concern was for the spiritual body of Christ, and he was willing to suffer for it. (Colossians 1:24) He told Timothy "...if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:" (2 Tim 2:11-12) Peter wrote: "but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." (1 Peter 4:13-14) Both Peter and Paul knew Christ in the fellowship of suffering. I wonder if we do?

The third phrase Paul uses is "being made conformable unto his death." Only those who have died with Christ can "know" Christ in the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering.

The apostle John also writes about "knowing" Christ in this deeper sense. In fact the word "know" is one of the key words of his epistles, and he uses it in some of the strongest statements in the New Testament. Consider some of his bold statements. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." (1 John 2:3) "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." (1 John 2:5) "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:4)

From these and other verses, we conclude the following: (1) "To know Christ" in this sense means not only to know who Christ is but to have a right relationship with him. (2) This relationship and how to obtain it is described in the scriptures. (3) In order to have this relationship, we must obey the commands given in the scriptures.

Paul wrote to Titus about those who profess a relationship with God but do not live up to their profession, "They profess that they know God; but in works

they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." (Titus 1:16)

In his epistle, John makes it clear that "saying" is not the same as doing. They are two different things. (1 John 1:6,8,10; 2:9; 4:20)

In 1 John 5:20 John uses "know" in both ways we have just discussed. First, he says that there are some things which we know about Christ. Second, he says that these things which we know about Christ bring us to the place where we can know Christ.

WE MUST KNOW THE SON.

Do you really know Him? Obey His word today!

I NEED TO KNOW SATAN

Brent Gallagher

The devil has been portrayed in popular literature and in the media down through the years anywhere from being a comical character to a being who is almost omnipotent with total control of those he affects. The Bible certainly does not suggest Satan is to be laughed at. And even though very powerful, the Bible does not teach Satan is all-powerful. Satan is the enemy of the Christian, and it is imperative to know who Satan is if one hopes to one day live in Heaven.

Satan's Origin

The Bible does not explicitly state from where Satan came. Even though this is true, the biblical evidence suggests Satan was created by God and later rebelled against Him. What are some proofs which would lead one to this conclusion?

First, everything in the universe is either contingent or non-contingent. Contingent beings (those who depend on someone or something else for their existence) by their very nature are created. Non-contingent beings (those who do not depend on others and are self-existent) are eternal and omnipotent. The eternity of the Godhead can be found in various passages (Psalm 90:2; Micah 5:2). Also, God's omnipotence is taught in Scripture (Job 42:2; Genesis 17:1). In contrast, Satan is shown in the Bible not to be all-powerful, and, therefore, not eternal. Satan's power to harm Job was limited (Job 1:12; 2:6). His power over the kingdoms of this world was delivered to him (Luke 4:6). When one resists Satan, he flees (James 4:17). His ultimate destruction reflects his limited abilities (Revelation 20:10). Since Satan is not all-powerful he obviously cannot be eternal like God.

Second, the Bible mentions the fact that there were some angels who had sinned and rebelled against God. In 2 Peter 2:4 the Apostle states, "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment." Jude says in verse six, "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day." It makes sense to suggest Satan was among those angels who rebelled – probably their leader. Not much is said in Scripture concerning this rebellion. There is no doubt God created Satan a good being. God and evil are eternal opposites (James 1:13-15). Everything good in this world comes from God (James 1:17). At the end of the creation week it is stated that "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." (Genesis 1:31). How then did Satan become evil? God obviously created angels with freedom of choice. Some of them, including Satan, chose to rebel. When did this rebellion

occur? It had to have happened between the time of creation and when Satan approached Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter three.

Satan's Names

There are many names and descriptions applied to Satan in Scripture. When one examines these names he realizes how truly crafty and evil Satan is.

The name “Satan” basically means “adversary.” This word is found in the Old Testament in a general way to describe any adversary one may have, but it also is used specifically of Satan. The devil’s name, “Satan,” is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew term. In the New Testament the word “satan” is found thirty-six times and is always used in reference to the devil.

The term “devil” is used of Satan thirty-seven times in the New Testament. “Devil” has a broad range of meanings including “one who accuses others, slanders, misrepresents and deceives.” Satan is described in Revelation 12:9 as “the one who deceives the whole world” and in Revelation 12:10 as “the accuser of the brethren.”

Seven times in the New Testament the word “Beelzebub” is used in reference to Satan. Beelzebub was an ancient god worshipped by the Philistines and can be translated either “lord of flies” or “lord of dung or filth.”

In other names of Satan in the New Testament, we see his character revealed even more fully. He is referred to as “the evil one” in Matthew 13:19. Jesus describes him as a “liar,” the “father of all lies,” and a “murderer” in John 8:44. Satan is called “the ruler of this world” by Jesus in John 12:31. He is referred to as “the god of this world” in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Belial, or “worthless one” is his name recorded in 2 Corinthians 6:15. Finally, in Revelation 12:9 he is called “the great dragon and serpent of old.”

Satan's Work

Satan’s goal is to take as many souls as possible with him to Hell. There are ample biblical stories which illustrate this fact. Throughout divine history he tried to destroy those who belong to God. In Genesis chapter three he is successful in tempting Adam and Eve and sin enters into the human race. He is described in Job 1:7 as “going to and fro on it.” The Apostle Peter tells us that Satan “walks about as a lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8). He even tried to destroy Jesus (Matthew 4:11; Hebrews 4:15). Everything wicked and evil in this world is ultimately attributed to Satan (James 1:13-17).

There are three basic avenues through which Satan works to accomplish his goal. In 1 John 2:16 the Bible says, “For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is

of the world.” The devil uses trickery, deceit, and half-truths in accomplishing his work. It is Satan’s desire that mankind gets caught up in this world by tempting people to live only for the moment and to be concerned only about this life.

Satan also works in the “intellectual” realm or “doctrinal” realm by tempting people to believe ideas which do not originate with God. The Apostle Paul talks about such ideas in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 where he says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down stronghold, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Paul also writes about those who would in latter times teach forbiddance of marriage and abstinence from certain food in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. He refers to such ideas as “deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.”

Satan uses any means available to keep people from obeying God and by tempting those who belong to God. When the seed (word of God) is sown on the wayside soil, it is the devil who takes the word out of their hearts “lest they should believe and be saved.” (Luke 8:12). In 2 Corinthians 4:3 the Apostle Paul writes of those to whom the gospel is veiled. They are referred to in verse four as those “whose minds the god of this age has blinded.” Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:11 concerning Satan and states that “we are not ignorant of his devices.” In describing the qualifications for bishops the Bible warns in 1 Timothy 3:7 of those who might fall into “the snare of the devil.” The Christian is to put on the whole armor of God so he can stand against the “wiles” of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). Thayer defines “wiles” as “cunning arts, craft, deceit, trickery.”

In discussing the work of Satan the topic of demon possession and whether Satan works “supernaturally” today must be addressed. The word “demon” is a transliteration of the Greek word **daimonion**. The Bible is silent as to their origin. It is possible that demons are the angels which rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Whether they are fallen angels or some other type of beings, the Bible states that Beelzebub, or Satan, is their ruler (Matthew 12:24). In New Testament times they inhabited people and caused much suffering (Matthew 17:14-23; Mark 5:1-20). Both Jesus and His apostles had power over demons (Matthew 12:22-30; Mark 16:15-20). There are only two recorded instances of demon possession in Acts and none in the epistles (Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16). There are different passages which discuss Christ limiting the power of Satan at the cross (John 12:31; Colossians 2:15). Also, in the context of a discussion concerning Jesus’ power over demons, He alludes to a time when the strong man (Satan) will be bound (Mark 3:27). It is interesting that when God used His Spirit miraculously to reveal His will and to perform miracles in confirming His will that Satan also seemed to have greater power over individuals. Perhaps the cessation of spiritual gifts and the miraculous

coincided with the cessation of supernatural demon possession (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:11-16). Regardless, the New Testament does not give Christians instructions on how to ward off demon possession or how to exorcize demons. It would seem that if supernatural demon possession were to continue, the Bible would have more to say concerning this fact and as to how Christians should react. This is not to say, though, that demons do not work in today's world. False teaching is referred to as the "doctrines of demons" in 1 Timothy 4:1. It is possible that Satan's means of temptation is through demons. One needs to distinguish, though, between supernatural (that over which one has no control) demon activity and the possible "natural" work of demons in this world.

Overcoming Satan

It has been shown that Satan is powerful though not *all* powerful. Jesus was/is more powerful than Satan. At different times in His earthly ministry He referred to the fact that He had come into the world to destroy Satan (Luke 11:17-23). Jesus showed His superiority to Satan by not giving into temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15). The ultimate proof of Jesus' power over Satan was at the cross where Jesus conquered death and limited Satan's power (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Ephesians 4:8; Colossians 2:15). Satan's ultimate destruction, though, will not occur until the return of Christ (Revelation 20:10).

Jesus' disciples can also overcome Satan. Perhaps the best place to learn how to overcome temptation is in Matthew 4:1-11 where the temptation of Jesus by Satan is recorded. The devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread (following forty days of fasting), to cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, and to bow down to him. In the first two temptations Satan quoted Scripture (misusing it) and in the third temptation Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus. Jesus responded to all three temptations by quoting Scripture. The importance of knowing and applying Scripture can never be underestimated in overcoming temptation. One is reminded of David's statement in Psalm 119:11 – "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you" – when he sees Jesus' response to Satan. The Bible warns Christians about Satan, shows how cunning he truly is, but also shows the rewards and punishments for both resisting Satan and for following him. The temptation of Jesus Himself shows how Satan works and should be heeded by Jesus' disciples. Notice *how* Satan tempted Jesus.

First, Satan tempted Jesus when He was weakest. Following a forty day fast Jesus was undoubtedly hungry and one can understand the desire of Jesus to turn stones into bread. Satan knows exactly when to strike. Society is one filled with stress and anxieties. How many times have marriages dissolved, parents isolated themselves from children, friendships been ruined, and churches been divided all because one or more parties were under stress

and said or did things they normally would not have? Satan is at the core of such problems. What about the individual who is struggling financially and is tempted to “cut corners” on a business transaction or on his taxes? Again, this is Satan tempting people when they are most vulnerable. One needs to constantly be aware of his weaknesses as he judges his life against God’s word so as to not let Satan gain a foothold (James 1:22-25)

Second, Satan tempted Jesus with something He desired. This, of course, is the very nature of temptation – to either have a desire for something one has no right to or to use sinful means to meet a legitimate need. Jesus had the power to turn stones into bread and to call angels to save Himself. Yet to give in to Satan’s challenges would have compromised who Jesus was and His purpose in coming to this earth. Christians need to be acutely aware of what things are tempting to them and seek to avoid such things. The temptations themselves may vary from Christian to Christian and also vary from period to period in a Christian’s life. James shows how temptation can progress from a thought, to sin, to death (James 1:13-15). Sometimes Christians may have to physically flee a situation to avoid sinning (Genesis 39:1-12). It is foolish and perhaps fatal to assume that one is “spiritually mature” and above giving in to temptation (1 Corinthians 10:12). It is extremely wise not to “play with fire” when it comes to the temptations Satan will send one’s way (Proverbs 5:8-9).

Third, Satan tempted Jesus to take a shortcut. Jesus came to this earth to rescue the world from Satan’s dominion. The means of doing this was through the cross. The devil offers the kingdoms to Jesus if He would bow down to him. In a sense Satan was offering to Jesus what Jesus had come to achieve. But the *means* of reaching this goal is what was important. God’s will was for it to be through Jesus’ death, not through the worship of Satan. Christians are tempted to take shortcuts many times. It especially seems true that sometimes well-intentioned people can fall into Satan’s snare in this area. For example, it is God’s will that the gospel be the drawing power to bring people to Him (John 12:32; Romans 1:16). Yet some in the church put primary emphasis on gimmicks, religious drama, and worship styles which are more for the entertainment of the worshiper than the worship of God. Justification for some of these practices is that they draw large numbers of people, therefore, they are fine. Such reasoning originates with Satan.

It is vitally important that Christians be knowledgeable about Satan so they can overcome him. It is also important to remember that since Christ is on the Christian’s side, he can be victorious over any temptation and difficulty which comes his way. It is fitting to close with 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond which you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

I NEED TO KNOW GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

James E. Farley

The theme of this 3rd West Virginia Christian Lectureship is "*Give Me The Bible.*" We thank the good elders at the Central church of Christ in Martinsburg, WV for hosting the lectures again this year, and a special thanks to Warren Kenney for directing the lectureship.

The theme is a good one, for America and the world certainly need the Bible in this age of uncertainty, skepticism, and humanism. (Proverbs 14:34). The world is in darkness ... the darkness of sin, confusion and error. God is not the author of this confusion (I Corinthians 14:33), for He is light and in Him is no darkness at all (I John 1:5-7). But those who do not truly follow God (non-Christians ... and here we certainly include those of the sectarian or denominational groups claiming to follow Jesus) are indeed in this darkness. Paul wrote to the Ephesians saying that they were at one time "darkness", but at the time he wrote to them they were "...light in the Lord". He admonished them to "...walk as children of light". (Ephesians 5:8). These Ephesian Christians, like all true Christians after them, were "called out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9-10). They were called, of course, by the gospel of Jesus the Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14; cf. John 6:44-45). They, like all true Christians today, were "delivered from the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). This is precisely why Paul admonished the Ephesians, as well as those of Thessalonica to walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5).

A large part of this walk "in the light" (I John 1:7) - this Christian walk - is to preach and teach to the lost world about Jesus who is the Christ. We have this as a ministry and have therefore renounced the ways of the world. It is our purposed goal to open the blinded eyes of the world; preaching, not ourselves, but Jesus as the Christ. Paul wrote of it with the following words, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Corinthians 4:5-7).

Yes indeed, we must cry out, "GIVE ME THE BIBLE," for, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:104-105). There is simply no way man can find his way through this dark world of sin and error without the light of the Word of God.

My particular topic under this theme is "Because I need to know the attitude of God toward sin." My lecture will break this title down into its three logical divisions for our study today.

"I Need To Know"

God does not want people to be ignorant; He wants people to know the Truth. The first passage that comes to our minds along these lines is John 8:31-32. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Just a glance at the New Testament helps us to see that God wants people to be informed:

Romans 1:13 - "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren..."

I Corinthians 10:1 - "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea..."

2 Corinthians 1:8 - "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia..."

I Thessalonians 4:13 - "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

Ignorance of God's Right Ways can lead to false worship (John 4:19-26; Acts 17:22-23). Ignorance of God's Will leads to people not submitting to God, but going about attempting to establish their own right ways (Romans 10:1-3). Ignorance, or having one's understanding darkened, leads to alienation from God, and even getting to the point where the deceptive nature of sin, and its hardening characteristic, causes one to become past feeling (Ephesians 4:17-19; cf. Hebrews 3:13).

There are those today who claim we can know nothing absolutely or for sure. We hear them spout out their words, "There are no absolutes ... all things are relative..." I wonder, are they absolutely sure about that? Strange, isn't it? Any doctrine that reasons in such a circle just cannot be true! Shades of relativism have crept into the minds of some members of the body of Christ today, and this damnable doctrine is doing untold damage to the cause of Christ. When one says that he cannot know anything for sure, he has certainly gone beyond what is written in the Word of God.

The Word of God affirms we can know the Truth and be made free thereby (John 8:31-32). A theme of the little book of First John could be "know," for the inspired writer uses the word over 20 times in those five short chapters. Paul wrote concerning the reason he was able to bear under the pressure and

persecution of his day, and the reason why he was not ashamed was, "... 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" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Yes, we have a need to know... and we certainly can know!

"I Need To Know God's Attitude (Mind)"

What we have in the Bible is the mind of God in human language. The Great God of heaven has extended His grace toward us, and has given to us the verbally inspired Word. This is an amazing thing to contemplate for God did not have to give us the Word; we did not (do not) deserve it, nor can we ever repay Him. We cannot merit this wonderful gift from the heavenly Father! But, He is a Giver; indeed THE GIVER of "Every good gift and every perfect gift ..." (James 1:17). The Bible is a good and perfect gift from God, and is a result of His amazing grace (Titus 2:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Without the Bible, we could assemble all of the brightest and wisest people on Earth, of all ages, and still not know the mind of God on any topic. This is the apostle Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. The preaching of the gospel (God's mind) is foolishness to the worldly. Wise men of the world could never have conceived of the wonderful plan that heaven presented: that the Son of God would come to earth, live as a man, and die on the cross for the sins of the world ... and then rise from the grave! Now, that is ridiculous to a carnal mind; it was in the first century, and it is still foolish to the carnal minded person of the 21st Century. Paul did not come to Corinth with the great philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, or Socrates. In fact, he warned against such philosophy and traditions of men (Colossians 2:8). Paul came to Corinth preaching Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. His preaching was not laced with enticing words, nor with the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 2:1-8).

Paul wrote that the wisdom of God is a mystery to the world. "...none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). This good news did not come out of man's heart and mind, but it is the Great God of heaven who revealed it to the apostles and prophets of the First Century (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Then Paul writes to the Corinthians concerning the fact that no man can know the mind of another man unless and/or until that man reveals his mind to the other. The same is true with God. No man can know the mind of God unless God reveals His mind to man. The apostle Paul says that this is precisely what has happened (1 Corinthians 2:11-13). Paul calls this revealed mystery "words ... which the Holy Ghost teacheth ..." (verse 13). And, then he concludes this thought with verse 16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

We do need to know the mind of God, and we can say "Praise God" for we have the mind of Christ revealed in the New Testament! With this wonderful revelation we can know what God thinks about sin.

"I Need To Know The Mind Of God Concerning Sin"

There is simply no way mankind can discern good from evil, right from wrong, darkness from light, without the Word of God which reveals the mind (or attitude) of God. (Hebrews 5:10-14). Man, left to his own devices and without the Word of God, just cannot figure things out for himself. In fact, this is precisely why there is such a mess in the world today; even in the world of "religion" - even among some members of the body of Christ. If we are not careful to stay "in the old paths," within the "doctrine of Christ," we can find ourselves thinking without guidance from the inspired Word. This can lead to catastrophe for the people of God, and one only has to look about us in our own day and age to see how many individuals and congregations are swamped with teachings from men's philosophies and traditions, and not from the verbally inspired Word of God. When we leave God's thinking on things and begin to do things as we THINK they should be done, we are in error and in need of repenting! It is sin, and sin separates between man and God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Proverbs 14:12; Romans 6:23; 2 John 9). Sin is that which is contrary to God's Will - God's attitude - God's mind! It is a transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). The word "transgress" (1 John 3:4; 2 John 9; etc.) is a word that literally means "to step across" or "to go beyond." When one transgresses God's law, he goes beyond what is revealed and written. (1 Corinthians 4:6).

Isaiah 55:8-9 - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Our goal should always be to mold our thoughts and our ways into what we know God wants. We can know what God wants for He has revealed His right ways (Romans 1:16-17). His thoughts and His ways are right. If our thoughts and our ways are in conflict with His, then it is we who are wrong.

Jeremiah 10:23 - "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Compare also 1 John 1:5-7, 2 John 4-6).

Proverbs 14:12 - "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Because sin has a deceptive quality - and a hardening power - a person can THINK he is walking as God would have him to walk. It may seem right, but if it is contrary to God's revealed righteousness, it is sin!

1 Kings 12:25-33 - God had ordained how and where the Jews were to worship Him, but Jeroboam changed the worship ... worshipped at Bethel and Dan instead of Jerusalem ... built another house of worship instead of the Temple ... established another priesthood instead of Levi ... ordained another feast in the eighth month "... like unto the feast that is in Judah ..." ... he himself offered sacrifices upon the altar at Bethel ... he devised these things "... of his own heart ..." "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan." (verse 30). Keep in mind that sin is a transgression of God's revealed law. (1 John 3:4). Jeroboam transgressed when he usurped the authority of heaven, and devised a new religion "of his own heart." Proverbs 28:26 says, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool ..."

I Kings 13:33-34 - "After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off and to destroy it from off the face of the earth." Note that Jeroboam's sin is called "his evil way." Anything that is contrary to the doctrine of Christ today is evil. (2 John 9-11). Notice, too, that Jeroboam's house was "cut off." Sin has a separating power! It brings about death! (Romans 6:23).

2 Kings 17:21-23 - "... and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he has said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." Again we see that sin is the great separator (Isaiah 59:1-2)! Israel was removed out of God's sight! What a terrible thought!

2 Kings 5:11-12 - "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." Here we have a classic example of one who "thought" apart from God's revealed right ways.

Saul of Tarsus was one, like Naaman of old, who thought without benefit of God's divine guidance. He said, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). Because his actions were contrary to the name of Jesus, they were sinful and he a sinner. Saul was therefore separated from God because of his sins. He referred to his condition prior to submitting to the Lord with words such as

"blasphemer," "persecutor," and "injurious." He stated that he had been the "chief" of sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

Sin comes about when people are drawn away by their own lusts or desires. James tells us that when this lust "...hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, when it is finished (or full-grown -ASV), bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15). Paul admitted that his error began when he "thought with myself.." (Acts 26:9). When "self" got in the way he was led by his own desire, and not by God's revealed righteousness. Paul commented on this kind of trap when he wrote of his physical brethren, the Jews. He said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-3).

God knows what sin is and what sin does, and He has revealed right from wrong to us in His verbally inspired Word, the Bible. We can, and must read it to understand and know God's mind concerning sin (Ephesians 3:3-5; 5:17). Because sin separates between man and God, there had to be a reconciler - a redeemer. God's great justice would not allow for sin to go unpunished. A price had to be paid. God so loved man that He sent His only begotten Son to die in our stead (John 3:16). He came and tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). He was the perfect Redeemer, Reconciler, and Savior. He was tempted in all points but was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He is the One - the only One - who could have possibly taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29). His very name, "Jesus," means that he would save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21). He is our substitute and the covering for our sins; He is our propitiation (1 John 2:2). Yes, a price had to be paid for sin, and heaven offered Jesus as that perfect redemption. He paid the ransom. (Matthew 20:28, 1 Timothy 2:6).

In order for man to take full advantage of this marvelous mercy and amazing grace, he must humbly and meekly submit to God's righteousness - God's right ways (Romans 10:1-3). We must "gladly receive the word" - "with meekness" - so that our souls can be saved from sin (Acts 2:41; James 1:21). This means that we must DO something (James 1:21-25) - not to merit our salvation from sin, for we cannot earn heaven's gift. We are, "... justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

However, we still must have an active faith (Galatians 5:6; James 1:21-25; 2:14-26). Faith must lead one to repent, for God commands all men

everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Faith must lead one to open his mouth and confess the sweet name of Jesus the Christ (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37). Faith must lead the alien sinner to be baptized (immersed) in water, and into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 6:3-5). When we are baptized into Christ we are baptized into His death where His precious, soul-cleansing blood was shed (John 19:30-37; Romans 6:3-5). It is here then, in baptism, that our sins are initially washed away (Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16). We rise to walk in newness of life, for we have been born again - born of water and the Spirit (Romans 6:3-5; John 3:1-10). We are then a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17), for our sins are remitted through Christ's blood. We are reconciled to God, and we, as children of God, have access by prayer to the precious blood on a continual basis (1 John 1:7-10).

Let us ever praise our God for His wonderful grace in giving us His mind through the Word. We can know how to be saved from sin, and how to stay saved from sin only by adhering to the New Testament of Jesus the Christ.

CHRIST IN PROPHECY

Frank Higginbotham

Our introduction to Christ does not begin in the New Testament with the birth of Jesus in the town of Bethlehem. We rather learn of Him from the words spoken by Prophets of God hundreds of years before His birth. Many of the details of His life were made clear long before He came to earth. This point is critical in proving that Jesus is indeed the Christ who was to come. Fulfilled prophecy is a part of the abundant evidence in the Bible to prove that Christ is the Son of God. If men spoke clearly of Him and described in detail His life hundreds of years before it occurred, we can rightly conclude that He is the Son of God. If the prophecies failed and were not fulfilled as given, it would be right to conclude that He was just another man who tried to deceive the world about His identity. Thus, it is clear to us why so much depends on fulfilled prophecy.

Someone has said that there are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament describing Jesus. When these are considered carefully in the light of their fulfillment, we strongly proclaim Christ as the Son of God.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17,18).

In this passage Jesus made the statement that He had come to fulfill the law. Did He do so? In John 17:4 Jesus said this: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In this He declares that He had fulfilled prophecy. In giving His commission to His disciples He stated that it was necessary for Him to fulfill the things that had been written about Him.

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27).

The nature of these prophecies is very interesting. We often hear of people who claim that they can foretell the future. They make many claims, and a few of them come to pass. However, this is not the nature of Bible prophecy. Bible prophecy is specific! When a prophet of God told about the coming Messiah, his predictions were not so general that they could be applied to many different men and events. No one could mistake of whom the prophet spoke. The

prophecies could only describe one man at one point of time. The fact that there were abundant statements that all tie together, is significant. We are not just dealing with one random prediction but rather many specific statements. The time period for prophecies made about Christ covers hundreds of years. They were not made yesterday! They all fit together in perfect harmony to form one pattern of evidence that is irrefutable. No man could have possibly placed himself in the time, place, or circumstance to fake the evidence. The nature of Bible prophecy is so different from the guesses of so called prophets of the future that it is easy to see which ones were speaking for God.

Note just a few of the statements about Christ that clearly identify Him as the Son of God. His virgin birth was a matter of prophecy that proclaimed Him as the Son of God. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35). He was to be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2). He was to come from the tribe of Judah. (Gen. 49:9). He was to be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." (Zech. 11:12). These few prophecies highlight the many specific and direct references to Christ.

Peter did not hesitate to apply well known scriptures to Jesus. On the day of Pentecost he told an assembly of Jews that David did not fit the description given by the prophet of God but that Jesus did. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 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; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." (Acts 2:29-32). The Apostle Paul also attributed the fulfillment of scripture to Jesus.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Peter tells us that the prophets sought to know about the prophecies they made about Christ. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them

did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Let us now consider a few of the great prophecies that tell us of the Christ in Prophecy. Isaiah is frequently spoken of as the 'Messianic Prophet'. The reason for this is clear. He perhaps spoke more about the Messiah who was to come than any of the other prophets. Outstanding in our minds is the clear description of the Messiah who was to come given by Isaiah in Isaiah 53.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." (Isaiah 53:3-9).

Only one person could have met the vivid description given by Isaiah of the coming Messiah. This was Jesus, the Christ. Isaiah also told of His virgin birth. Only one person in the history of the world came into the world in the manner that Jesus did. No other person was born of a virgin. Isaiah said, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14). The inspired Matthew stated that what Isaiah was talking about was the virgin birth of Christ "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matthew 1:21-23). We do not need to hesitate in applying the statement of Isaiah to Christ and to Him alone because we have an inspired writer telling us that this is what Isaiah was talking about. The virgin birth of Christ is a strong evidence of His divinity.

There were many predictions both in the Old Testament and the New Testament of the death of Christ on the cross.

“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:44-47).

The suffering of Christ involved His death on the cross. He stated himself that He had to be lifted up. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” (John 12:32,33). Peter made reference to Christ’s death in his sermon on Pentecost and stated that this was all according to the plan of God.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:” (Acts 2:22,23).

It was also made clear that the Christ of Prophecy would arise from the dead in triumph over death. David stated that His soul would not be left in the grave. (Acts 2:27). Jesus explained to His disciples that when the temple of His body was torn down, He would raise it up again in three days. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.” (John 2:19-21). Even His enemies were aware of prophecies about His resurrection and took every precaution to keep it in the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-66). However, on the first day of the week Jesus came forth exactly as predicted. In this action He was declared to be God’s Son. “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:” (Romans 1:4).

Christ is the central theme of Bible prophecy. By this, He is proven to be God’s Son. He fulfilled every thing that was by inspiration spoken of Him. He is the promised Messiah.

HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH CHANGE?

Winford Claiborne

It is virtually impossible to read a book, a magazine or a newspaper, listen to a radio program, watch television or hear a sermon without being confronted with demands for change. Obviously, some of the changes are worthwhile and should be implemented by those who are concerned about the moral, spiritual, political, or economic conditions in the United States. Where crime prevails - as it does in most American cities - we must seek to change our laws, our court system, and any other aspect of society which will reduce violence, murder, theft and other crimes against God and against humanity. Where men and women fail to recognize and to honor the God of this universe, we should strive to teach them the great truths of God's holy book - the Bible. When political corruption exists, we have an obligation to speak out against such immorality and to vote for honorable men and women - regardless of party affiliation. Where economic conditions are oppressive and discriminatory, Christians should work to promote justice for all.

Every observant person knows that change is a fact of life - always has been and always will be. As individuals and as a society, we change every day. Our bodies begin to deteriorate from the day we are born. Our hair turns gray or it turns loose. We change our views about various matters because we learn more and become more mature. For example, I held views as a child and as a teenager which I can no longer hold. My formal education, my study of the scriptures, and my experience have opened my eyes to new ideas, new approaches to life, and to new understandings. If we do not grow intellectually, morally and spiritually, like the widows Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:6, we are dead while we live.

Some of the changes I have witnessed in my lifetime have been for the better - or at least - they had that potential. It is not unusual for a New York businessman to keep a ten o'clock appointment with a California Client and be back in New York with his family for the evening meal. He can travel four thousand miles to California and back to New York with less difficulty than his grandfather traveled to the next county. I remember the story of a man who traveled from Hazel, Kentucky, to Paducah - a distance of fifty to fifty-five miles. When he returned to his home at Hazel, he was asked about his impressions of traveling so far from home. He replied, "If the world is as large toward the south as it is toward the north, it surely is a big world."

Not only have we made enormous strides in transportation, we have made unbelievable changes in our communication system. But experts in the area of communication insist that the changes in the past fifty years will be nothing compared to the changes in the next fifty or even in the next twenty-five. We

have also witnessed vast changes in our public school system - many of which are destructive - and also in the health care system in the United States. We must be aware that change for the sake of change is not necessarily progress. Changes in the schools, for example, have meant that millions and millions of America's children and adults are functional illiterates. We know how to teach children to read and to write, why have we made changes which have intellectually crippled so many of America's children and young people?

One of the most destructive changes which has occurred in America is the change from biblically based moral values to humanistic ideals. One illustration will have to suffice. In 1880, there was one divorce in twenty marriages- or 5%. In 1980 - one hundred years later - there was one of two marriages ending in divorce - almost fifty percent. The raw figures may be even more startling. In 1880 there were approximately 5,000 divorces in the United States. In 1980 there were approximately 1,250,000 divorces. This one change alone has had devastating effects on the spouses involved and one the millions of children who have to live with just one parent. There are other changes which are almost as destructive.

Preachers and other leaders in Various religious groups - including the churches of Christ - are demanding many changes in the work and worship of the church. Dozens of books and hundreds of magazine articles are agitating for change in the song service, in the preaching of the Bible, in the plan of salvation, in church government and even in the moral values the church has preached since the day of Pentecost. Let me give you some examples.

Leith Anderson who calls himself the Senior Pastor of a church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, wrote a book in 1990 which he called *Dying for Change: An Arresting Look at the New Realities Confronting Churches and para-Church Ministries* (Minneapolis: Bethany House publishers). Two statements from Dr. Anderson should be enlightening.

"Churches and Christian organizations will not effectively reach baby boomers with 1950 methods and programs ... They will be attracted by modern nursery facilities, excellent pre-schools and attractive youth programs for their children" (p. 95).

"Yesterday's Church is the church that promotes denominationalism when it is perceived by many to be anachronistic (that is, out of step with the times). It is the Church of Christ that uses no musical instruments in an attempt to reconstruct the New Testament church in the twentieth century" (p. 142).

Is it illegitimate to want to "reconstruct the New Testament church in the twentieth century?"

Doug Murren's book, *The Baby Boomerang: Catching Baby Boomers as They Return to Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), lists seven suggestions for sermons which he believes will attract baby boomers.

"Visit those how-to sections in your local bookstores ... periodically, examine issues of *Time*, *Newsweek* and *USA Today*, as these publications tend to be on the cutting edge of the felt needs and fears that people are facing ... Limit your preaching to roughly 20 minutes, because boomers don't have too much time to spare. And don't forget to keep your messages light and informal, liberally sprinkling them with humor and personal anecdotes" (pp. 102-103).

I have a great number of questions regarding this excerpt from Doug Murren's book, but I shall have to confine them to just a few. Since when do books in the "how-to" section of our local bookstores have the right advice for preaching the gospel? I have a much better suggestion: Turn and read carefully the three great books in the Bible which were designed primarily for preachers: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. These powerful books on preaching would help all preachers to know what to preach and how to preach it - much better, may I add - than the books in any "how-to" section of any bookstore in the world.

What if the so-called "felt needs and fears" in our audiences are not the genuine needs of the people who listen to us preach? Many modern men and women have a real need to be forgiven of their sin and brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ. But, in too many cases, they do not admit to any sinful behavior and know precious little about coming to Jesus Christ to have their sins forgiven. If we preach the whole counsel of God - as Paul said he had done (Acts 20:26-27) - we know we are going to meet the real needs of all people and we are going to honor God in the process.

Murren urges preachers to limit their messages to 20 minutes. Why not fifteen or even ten minutes? What is magical about 20 minutes? If a preacher teaches the truth of God's word - carefully, effectively, honestly - who can say that thirty minute or even forty minute sermons are not appropriate? The diet provided by many preachers in modern churches is starving many of the people in those churches to death. The people in some of those churches are so poorly taught that cultic leaders have little difficulty leading them away from their theological roots. Why preachers do not understand that truth baffles the imagination.

Besides, how does one preach the death, the resurrection, and the return of Christ in messages which are light and informal and liberally sprinkled with humor and personal anecdotes or stories? I remember as a college student listening to Gus Nichols speak on the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. As he spoke, the big tears rolled down his cheeks. Can you imagine how out of place

a humorous story or a personal anecdote would have been on that occasion? There certainly can be a place for humor in some sermons and for personal anecdotes, but in modern times the humor and the stories seem to be the reason for many sermons. I remember hearing a prominent preacher who must have told at least fifteen or twenty humorous stories in one thirty-minute sermon. In fact, all I remember about the sermon was the great number of stories he told. What a waste of valuable time and what an affront to God almighty who called us to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

If modern preachers and other religious leaders were simply calling for changes in the order of service, the time of day the church meets for worship, the number of songs and such like, there probably would be very few objections. I am aware that those churches which have some kind of predictable order for their services are called "traditional" - and what could be a greater curse for many modern churches than to be "traditional" - even when the tradition is solidly rooted in the scriptures? Do you get the impression that many modern preachers and churches want to change just for the sake of changing - even when those changes constitute a blatant repudiation of the truth of the gospel?

We are permitted from a scriptural viewpoint to change the time of worship on the Lord's day, the order of worship and similar matters, but we are not allowed to change what we do in worship to God almighty. We are instructed as New Testament Christians to worship our Lord by observing the Lord's supper every Lord's day. We can take the Lord's supper in the middle of the worship services, at the end or on Sunday afternoon, but we cannot scripturally take it only one time a month or one time a quarter or one time a year. Nor can we substitute milk or water for the fruit of the vine. These changes in the Lord's supper are not ours to make. We can only bind and loose what the Lord has bound and loosed (Mt. 16:19).

Some denominational churches have added mechanical instruments with which to worship God, although the only music authorized in the New Testament church is singing. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). If we cannot subtract from or add to the Lord's supper, how can we add mechanical instruments to our singing praises to God? Incidentally, many of the founders and prominent leaders in the denominations, such as, John Calvin, John Wesley, Adam Clark, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, strongly opposed mechanical instruments in the worship of the church.

Prayer is both a personal responsibility and a corporate activity. Immediately after the church of our Lord was established in the city of Jerusalem, it met for worship to God almighty. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Public prayers are not rigidly regulated by the New Testament. We can pray at

the beginning of service, several times during the service and at the end. We can have one man to lead a prayer or several men to lead several prayers. The prayers can be primarily periods of thanksgiving, of petition, of confession. But public prayers are a very significant part of the church's devotion to God. We cannot substitute the burning of incense, the counting of beads and similar activities for the prayers of the church. We have no right or reason to change the Lord's way.

According to Paul, God's plan and purpose for the saving of men were in his mind before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:10-11). He knew Christ would come into the world to give himself a ransom for the sins of the world (Mt. 20:28). When Jesus did come, John the Baptist pointed to him on one occasion and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). With all our modern education and sophistication, we have not been able to deny the Lord's plan for saving men nor to improve on it. The gospel is still God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

The events on Pentecost furnish a simple and powerful example of the gospel plan of salvation. The great apostle Peter preached Jesus Christ to the Jews. They believed his preaching and cried out to him and to the other apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" By divine inspiration, Peter instructed the believing Jews: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). Let me speak very plainly but lovingly to you: God has no other plan for saving men. The commands of the gospel are not optional. They must be obeyed. We must believe in Christ (John 8:24); we must repent of our sins or perish (Lk. 13:3, 5); we must confess Christ before men so that he will confess us before our Father in heaven (Mt. 10:32-33); we must be baptized into Christ in order to have our sins forgiven (Acts 2:38).

Even if religious leaders were given the prerogative to change the Lord's plan for saving men - and they are not given that right - why would they want to change it? It worked on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand people were baptized on that day and added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41, 47). It also worked in the case of one of the church's bitterest enemies - Saul of Tarsus. When Saul had become a penitent believer, he was told: "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). The same man later wrote:

"Do you not know that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life....But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you

have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18).

The plan of salvation which saved the people on Pentecost, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and all others in the first century will save all men today. No other plan has been given; nor can there be any other.

Beginning early in the history of the church there were numerous radical changes in the government of the church. Dozens of offices which are not authorized by the scriptures were added - probably because the simple pattern of church government was thought to be inadequate for some groups. But we have no right to add offices and officers to what God has revealed in the New Testament. The church was led in the early church by elders or bishops or shepherds. All of these titles refer to the same office and responsibility. Elders were and are the God-appointed rulers or leaders of the Lord's church. Deacons and preachers work under the elders.

The changes which have been introduced have wrought havoc among various churches. Paul indicates that radical changes regarding the leadership would arise in the first century church.

"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" (Acts 20:29-30).

The early church experienced many heartaches because of inadequate leadership. We cannot afford to change God's plan for the government of his church.

In the church at Jerusalem and in other first century churches, only men were allowed to preach, to serve as elders and deacons. 1 Timothy 2 forbids a woman to pray publicly in the presence of men (1 Tim. 2:8). The passage also forbids women from preaching and teaching over men (1 Tim. 2:11-12). The qualifications of elders listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 2 disqualify women from occupying the work of an elder. One of the qualifications of an elder was that he be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2). Until a woman can legitimately be the husband of one wife, she will be prohibited from being an elder.

Yet, tragically, in many churches women take leadership roles. Some churches allow women to preach; some allow them to be deacons or deaconesses and some permit them to be elders. How can a church pretend to be a New Testament church when it clearly violates the teaching of scripture on the role of women? Are we permitted to arrange the doctrine, the government,

and the worship of the church to suit our own preferences? What part do the Lord's wishes have in the church's work and worship?

When a church feels free to change the work and the worship of the church, in many cases it feels free to decide which moral values should be preached and practiced. Some churches apparently have decided which doctrines - if any - they will believe and preach. They have determined what form of government they will establish. When a church feels it has the right to make these changes in the structure and the teaching of the church, how long will it be before that church will make changes in the moral values of the Bible? Bishop John Shelby Spong does not consider fornication, homosexuality, divorce, and other evils to be serious breaches of God's moral code. He thinks there may even be some distinct advantages in some of these activities. Does his lack of faith in the Bible as God's inspired word explain his opposition to biblical moral values? I cannot see how there could be any doubt about it.

If the changes I have briefly discussed with you today have no scriptural warrant - if they are contrary to God's pattern for the church - what changes can the church make with God's approval or are there any? My friends, there are many changes the church can make and must make. If any particular church has strayed from any of God's provisions for his kingdom, that church must change or else. Please listen to these words from our Lord's revelation to John. The church at Ephesus had left its first love (Rev. 2:4). These are the Lord's instructions to the church at Ephesus.

"Remember therefore from whence you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly and remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent" (Rev. 2:5).

The word "repent" in Revelation 2:5 literally means "to change one's mind." The Lord was saying to the Ephesians: "You do not love me as you once did. Remember what you used to do and do that again. If you do not change your mind and change your lives, the church at Ephesus will no longer belong to me." That church was not permitted to change its worship or its work, but it needed to change. Like every church which has turned aside from God's will, the church at Ephesus needed to change.

The church at Laodicea was much farther away from God's will than the church at Ephesus. The Laodiceans were lukewarm, boastful, and materialistic. The Lord knew how desperately that church needed to change. These are the Lord's words to the church at Laodicea.

"I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may

see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent" (Rev. 3:18-19).

Are there any doubts about the changes God demanded of the Ephesians or of the Laodiceans?

When a church is indifferent about the lost, has ceased to give as the Lord has prospered that church, no longer worships in accordance with God's revealed will, does not oppose evil in every form, is not helping the widows and orphans in their afflictions, and fails to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, that church must repent or else. It must change from its old ways of serving Satan to the plan which God has ordained for his people. That is the kind of change God wants from all people. May God help his church to do his will.

THE VALUE OF LECTURESHIPS

Emmitt Channell

One of the bright spots in a troubled brotherhood has been the rise of a number of regular Bible Lectureships. In all parts of the country they have given hope and stability to many who have been shaken by the defections, teachings, and practices which we never thought we would see in the church in our lifetime.

Christian schools have always had Bible Lectureships. These have drawn thousands of brethren from all over the country, even in bad weather. When some of these schools began to use brethren who were questionable in their teachings and practices, many became disturbed. Men like Eddie Whitten and papers like the Firm Foundation, began to schedule Lectureships in local congregations. The idea caught on and the Lectureships have multiplied.

These Lectureships vary in some respects, especially in the number of speeches which are scheduled, but they all have one thing in common. Each one is committed to the truth. Sound men are invited to speak on topics which are vital to our existence as the people of God. All of these Lectureships with which I am acquainted are doing much good. I hope they will all continue and constantly seek to improve. I hope that faithful brethren will rally to support them in every way possible.

My assignment is Preaching Through Lectureships. From my experience and observation, I will try to describe in specific terms the good work being done in the Lectureships. I also want to try to encourage everyone to take full advantage of what is offered through them.

Bookstore displays. Some have never seen a bookstore run by our brethren. Enthusiastic new converts are eager to read material which will help them mature in Christ. Many run to the local "Christian Bookstore" to get books which are filled with error. On many occasions I have had a new Christian proudly bring to me a book which they had just read thinking that I would commend them for having read it. These people experience something like the man with an unclean spirit. When the spirit was cast out he returned to find the house empty. That gives him opportunity to take "with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Matthew 12:43-45)

If new Christians don't fill the empty spot with the right things, they will not be faithful. There are some books which have no place in the life of a Christian who wants to faithfully follow Christ. Like the new converts at Ephesus, they should dispose of these books (Acts 19:19). On the other hand, there are some

books which are just about indispensable to the Christian who wants to grow. Many of these are on display at the Lectureships.

Well known speakers. Members from local and area congregations are able to hear speakers which they would not otherwise. Actually, they have the opportunity to hear a whole list of speakers every year. Some of our greatest preachers live in the South. Lectureships in the Northeast bring them to our area. Some have come our way only to go back home and decide that they need to come to the large population areas.

Some brethren have done special studies. It is wonderful to bring them to an area where our local people can learn from their experience and study. It is also strengthening to new Christians to be able to hear some of the outstanding men in our brotherhood.

A focus for the congregation. There is probably much more work in planning and conducting a Lectureship than a Gospel meeting. A lectureship gives the host congregation something around which to rally all the members each year. It is often the case that people become involved in this work who are not involved in other things like teaching a class or leading singing, etc.

Not only do the members of the host congregation look forward to this kind of major annual event, but members in area congregations also have something to anticipate each year. They put it on their calendar a year in advance. Some schedule their vacation around the lectureship so they may attend. It is an exciting and stimulating event for many.

Fellowship with brethren locally and from around the country. Many Lectureships have become reunions. People who only see one another once a year gather with people of like precious faith and spend a few days together. The speakers seem to enjoy that part of it as much as anyone.

Is there anything any better than being with our brothers and sisters in Christ? It is, indeed, just a little taste of Heaven. The Psalmist said: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) The Bible commands us to love the brethren and a failure to do that brings serious consequences: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." (1 John 2:9-10) There is power in being together with brethren whom we love and with whom we have so much in common. We walk together because we agree on the truth on God's word (Amos 3:3). John said that he had great joy when he heard that his fellow Christians were walking in truth (3 John 4). Abraham expressed a great ideal when he said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren." (Genesis 45:23)

Isaiah 11:6-9 describes the peaceful nature of the kingdom of God under the figure of the wild animals and domesticated animals lying down together. He ends by saying "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." We need to demonstrate that to the world around us.

We preach unity to the religious world, and rightly so (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3-6), let us make sure we practice what we preach.

Jesus said "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35) He prayed that we may all be one "that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). If the world believes in proportion to our unity, will the Lord find faith on the earth when He returns? "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1) and abound through the lectureships.

Opportunity for congregations to work together. If we really love the Lord and each other as we claim, we should seek opportunities to work together scripturally for the cause of Christ. While there are unscriptural ways for congregations to work together, there are certainly many ways we can work together with God's approval. To join forces to hear and teach God's word is one of these ways.

Teaching opportunities. Teaching is what Christianity is all about. Jesus said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45) We are all under the marching orders of Christ to go into all the world and teach all nations (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-19).

A lectureship is like eight Gospel meetings rolled into one. Most Lectureships are built around a theme so that an exhaustive study is made of things related to that theme. In that way, we hear the subject explored in depth. Just think about the wealth of material which is created in a single year by the lectureships!

Lectureship books and tapes. Not only are there many subjects studied in the lectureships, but the lessons are also preserved for study by those who could not attend and by generations to come. In some ways, the most valuable and lasting products of a lectureship are the books and tapes. Every Christian can benefit from the study and preparation of the speakers. Read the books! Listen to the tapes! Give them to people who need them. Put them in the church library. They are a gold mine of Bible studies.

THE BIBLE EQUIPS GOD'S WOMAN FOR THE MARKETPLACE

Janie Gallagher

The Origin and Purpose of Work

From the beginning of time, God intended for man to work. One of the first commands given to Adam and Eve is found in Genesis 2:15, where God tells the first man and his wife, after placing them in the Garden of Eden, to “*dress it and to keep it.*” The Bible tells us that work is profitable (Proverbs 14:23) and that it is for our happiness (Psalm 128:2). We are also told in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that “...if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Stronger language is used in 2 Timothy 5:8 where Paul states, “*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*” From these verses one can see that work is an important and vital part of the Christian’s life.

Woman’s Primary Responsibility

Before discussing a Christian woman’s responsibility in the workplace, it is important to understand that work outside the home is to be a secondary endeavor for a Christian woman. It is clear from Titus 2:5 and 1 Timothy 5:14 that a woman’s primary responsibility is to her family. That is not to say that it is sinful for a woman to work outside her home. One can find examples from the Bible such as Lydia, Deborah, Huldah, and the Virtuous Woman (Proverbs 31), who pursued outside activities. One must remember, though, that these women are used as examples of *godly* women, and as such, would have been women who followed God’s word and who put their families first.

When reading through the long list of activities engaged in by the Virtuous Woman in Proverbs 31, one notes that the purpose behind all the activities revolves around caring for her family. The woman described in this passage is one who is industrious, caring, and an astute business woman – but her motivation for all is the love and concern she has for her household. Verses 11 and 12 talk of the devotion she has to her husband. “*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*” Verse 28 tells us “*Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*” Of all the things said about a woman at the end of her life, what could be more rewarding or more meaningful than the preceding words? The most important work a Christian woman will ever do is to care for her family, to be the kind of companion to her husband which will allow him “*to be known in the gates,*” and to be a mother whose children “*arise and call her blessed.*”

One of the most touching scenes found between a mother and child is the scene found in John 19:26-27 where Jesus is hanging on the cross about to die. He looks down from the cross, sees his mother and his beloved disciple John, and he says, “*Woman, behold thy son!*” He then turns to John and says, “*Behold thy mother!*” One can imagine the human side of Jesus agonizing over having to leave his mother, the woman who had cared for him while he was here on earth. The bond of love was there between Jesus and his mother. How blessed she must have felt to know that one of the last things her son did before dying was to make arrangements for her care!

Women should never underestimate the importance of their *God-given* responsibility to be “*keepers at home.*” Too many of our children today have no concept of what home life is about. From the time they are in diapers until the time they begin school, many children are placed in institutional settings. They do not know what it is like to stay at home during the day, “help” Mom clean the house, prepare a meal, bake cookies, visit with a neighbor, sing silly songs with their mother, or play in the back yard. School age children often come home to an empty house. There is no mother there to greet them with a smile, asking them about their day. One of the blessings I experienced in my life was having my mother home for me when I came home from school. I had such a secure feeling knowing that when I got home she would be there for me. I realize that not all mothers of young children have the luxury of staying home when their children are small, but all mothers should try to stay home during those formative preschool years, but, if they cannot, try to place their child in a home setting with a grandparent or trusted friend with values similar to their own.

Why Work Outside the Home?

Before accepting a job outside the home, a Christian woman should examine her motive behind seeking employment. Is she seeking a job as a result of peer pressure, to impress others, to acquire material possessions, because of dissatisfaction with home life, to pay bills, or for personal satisfaction? The Bible teaches us in Matthew 6:33 that if we “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us.*” “All these things” is a reference to the needs discussed in the previous verses. God has promised that every need will be provided for a person who puts Him first. Solomon saw the vanity of working for the purpose of accumulating wealth, or power. In Ecclesiastes 2:4-11, Solomon talks about all his work and the great wealth he had gathered. He then says in verses 10 and 11, “*And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.*” Solomon began to realize that without the correct

motive or purpose, work was of no real profit. In Ecclesiastes 12:13, Solomon tells us what the correct purpose is for our life. *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man.”* Would it not be sad to come to the end of our life, realizing we had spent those years working for things that are temporary and unimportant in relation to the “big picture”? Before taking a job, examine your motives and determine if working outside your home will be something you can do without sacrificing your family responsibilities.

In The Marketplace

Christian women should be the best employees any employer has ever hired. As an employee, one should be conscientious, honest, thorough, cheerful, and cooperative. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 9:10, *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might...”* Non-Christian employers should be able to see something unique about their Christian employees. Shortly after getting married, I was on a job interview. My husband had found a “help wanted” advertisement on the bulletin board at the graduate school. Surprisingly, the woman who interviewed me hired me on the spot. She told me one of the deciding factors in hiring me was that I was affiliated with the graduate school. She explained that they had hired numerous students or students’ wives from the school and they had never been disappointed. As a Christian woman, one should remember that her work ethic is a reflection on God (1 Timothy 6:1), and therefore should do her best.

The Bible gives us many directives on what kind of employee we should be. Let us consider the following scriptures.

- Give your employer a full day’s work for a full day’s pay. (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Romans 12:11, Psalm 102:23) Robert Half, president of an employment firm had this to say, “Theft of *time* is the biggest crime in America – arriving late, leaving early, socializing, taking coffee and smoking breaks, receiving personal calls, being inattentive – all cost the American economy \$70 billion a year.”
- Be a Christian example. (Matthew 5:13-16; Titus 2:10; Philippians 1:27)
- Be honest. (Romans 12:17; Titus 2:10; Psalm 15:1,2)
- Work diligently even when not being observed. (Proverbs 6:6-8)
- Give your best even to a harsh or unfair employer. (1 Peter 2:18; Ephesians 6:5-9) Your work should not be dependent on how you are treated. Paul commanded the servants of his time to “be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.”
- Pray for your job and your employer. (Mark 12:24) Your attitude toward your job will improve with prayer.

- Know the difference between doing a good job and being a workaholic. Dr. Samantha Ross, a manager of patient care for a dependency treatment hospital says that, “workaholism is an addiction rooted in inadequacy and insecurity.”

Remembering the words found in 1 Timothy 6:1 *“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed,”* should help us as Christian women to be the kind of employees whose work will glorify God.

God has given us the ideal setup for families and society. It is our responsibility to ensure that we fulfill the roles given to us to the best of our abilities. Women have many opportunities to work outside the home today. Many women can take advantage of those opportunities while still fulfilling their responsibility to their families. If you are one of those women, make sure to “let your light shine,” using your job to glorify God. If you choose not to work outside the home, rejoice in your role as a wife and mother, never doubting the importance of the task before you. Remember the words in Ecclesiastes 9:10, *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”*

PROMISES OF THE ABUNDANT LIFE THAT MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE

Edwin Floyd

Suppose I could offer you a life that is guaranteed to give you ... A "Joy" that is greater than any other, a "blessedness" that is happiness in its fullest measure, an "assurance" of entering the everlasting kingdom of our Lord, and a "peace" that surpasses understanding. Would you be interested?

Of course, I cannot offer such a life, but Jesus can and does! As He stated in John 10:10, "... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Jesus offers this "abundant life" not only by His sacrificial death on the cross, but also by His teachings recorded by His apostles. Notice John 15:11... "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Through His teachings, then, we can learn the "Promises of The Abundant Life that Make it Attractive." Many of these promises are found in John 15 where Jesus pictures Himself as the VINE and His disciples as the BRANCHES.

John 15:1-5 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.)

As "branches" we are to bear "fruit."

LOOK AT SOME OF THE FRUIT WE ARE TO PRODUCE.

We are to win souls to Christ and help them grow ...

Paul speaks of this kind of "fruit" in Romans 1:13, "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." One of the interesting characteristics of a branch bearing fruit is that it produces a product identical to itself. Therefore, one way a disciple bears fruit is by producing another disciple!

We are to share with those in need ...

Paul speaks of contributing to the poor as a "fruit" in Romans 15: 25-28.

"But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain."

In His own way, Jesus certainly did this.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

So if the "Vine" did this, we should expect His "branches" to do the same.

We are to develop a Christ-like character ...

Notice that the "fruit" of the Spirit is the development of certain graces.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

One who abounds in such qualities is growing in the "knowledge of Jesus Christ"

2 Peter 1:5-8 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6 And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; 7 And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to always be praising God and giving thanks ...

The author of Hebrews describes such activities as a sort of "fruit."

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.

Again, the "Vine" was known for such behavior. Should His "branches" do any less?

NOW LET'S NOTICE SOME BLESSINGS WE RECEIVE FOR BEARING SUCH FRUIT.

There is great "joy" for those who win souls ...

3 Jn 3-4 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

There is great "happiness" for those who share their possessions ...

Acts 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

There is great "assurance" for those who develop Christ-like character ...

Those in whom "the fruit of the Spirit" is produced are free from any condemnation of law. Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Those who abound in the "knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" have the assurance of an "abundant entrance" into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord.

2 Pet. 1:8-11 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Finally there is great "peace" for those given to thanksgiving ...

For those with the "attitude of gratitude," there is the "peace of God," and, as such, we become God's own "special" person.

Ph 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

GOD'S SPECIAL PERSON (CHRISTIAN) IS A PERSON (CHRISTIAN) WHO HAS ALL THE ABOVE AS WELL AS THESE OTHER THOUGHTS.

Christians are now God's own special people ...

Note how Peter describes them in 1 Peter 2:9-10.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Christians are a special people, with special responsibilities ...

To proclaim the praises of God (1 Peter 2:9-10) because He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, because He showed mercy, and made us the people of God to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to make our calling and election (as God's people) sure, to have an abundance entrance into the everlasting kingdom. A Christian is truly "a special person" because he belongs to the Lord. He can rejoice in knowing that he is one of God's "beloved" (Romans 1:7).

God's love for the Christian is made even more evident by noting ...

As God's beloved child, Christians are blessed to be his children.

In one sense, all people are God's children.

(Acts 17:26-29 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 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 mans device.)

In another sense, many do not have God as their Father.

(John 8:42-44 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning,

and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.)

Yet Christians are the children of God in a very special way because of their faith, and having put on Christ in baptism, (Galatians 3:26-27 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.), and redeemed and adopted by God, they have received His Spirit into their hearts.

(Gal 4:4-6 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.)

Because Christians do the Father's will, Jesus considers us His family. (Matthew 12:48-50 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren 50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.)

As God's children, we have blessings and responsibilities ...

We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.) This is an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade, and is reserved for us in heaven. (1 Peter 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.)

As heirs, we must be thankful for the inheritance we have. (Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:) We must abstain from the works of the flesh.

(Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,)

We must perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

(2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.)

(I wish to thank the many great preachers who have helped me develop this lesson from theirs.)

GIVE ME THE BIBLE: FOR I NEED TO PREPARE TO DIE

Clarence McDowell

This lectureship has focused our thinking on the relevance of the Bible to all of life; but it is no less pertinent to death. Try to imagine how one could face death if God had not revealed Himself to us through the Bible. What could be said to comfort loved ones at a graveside if we knew nothing more than the sum of all human experience? Perhaps the suicide rate among young people is evidence of what a world without a Bible would be like, for secular humanism has convinced so many that mankind is the product of mindless evolution that some choose death rather than life without hope, and we should not be surprised. Thankfully, we have a book recognized as being unique, because the fingerprints of God are on every page! Its distinctive place among the volumes in the libraries of the world is recognized, for to it alone is reserved the title "the Book."

Countless people have experienced blessings that came from permitting the Bible to teach them how to live, but I am most impressed by the way the Bible demonstrates the genius of God by revealing how one who has sinned and come short of the glory of God can prepare to die and live with God in glory. Consider that, in addition to declaring "*all have sinned*" (Romans 3:23), inspiration has told us: "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*" (Hebrews 12:14). Recall that in Mark 10:26 the disciples responded to Jesus' statement about how it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God by asking "*Who then can be saved?*" Jesus answered: "*With men, it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27). The God of the Bible can change things. In John chapter 9, Jesus healed a man blind from his birth, and the change was so dramatic that his neighbors were not sure they recognized him (John 9:8-9). Countless times during the course of human history, people have been changed no less dramatically. Remarkably, God affects that change through the written word, as Paul observed in 2 Corinthians 3:18 "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"

What should we set out to do to prepare for death?

In view of the favor God has shown us by giving us this inspired book, what must we do with it as good stewards, to prepare for that common enemy - death?

One might logically begin with the well-known passage from the pen of Paul: “*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*” (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Those who are fond of the textual form might easily develop a sermon around the necessity of fighting the good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith. Not only would the lesson have three points, but it would be based on what one of the foremost soldiers of the cross had done to prepare to die.

In Numbers chapter 23, where Balaam the soothsayer was forced to set aside his vision of whatever he hoped to buy with the rewards of divination, God put the following words into his mouth: “*How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*” (Numbers 23:8-10). Those words give us what Jehovah said about our topic, and for that reason I would conclude that unless one is prepared to die the death of the righteous, he is not prepared to die.

Righteousness is not achieved by human performance¹

After proclaiming that Jew and Gentile are both under sin, Paul cited the fourteenth Psalm, saying: “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10). Then, in the ninth chapter of the Roman letter, Paul asked: “*What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*” (Romans 9:30-33). The Jews made the mistake of thinking that they could attain righteousness by meticulously keeping every commandment of the law. Inevitably, their course led them to elevate the keeping of one commandment - the Sabbath day commandment - until it became their litmus test of faithfulness. Ultimately, that is what seeking righteousness by human achievement always leads to - something attainable by human effort is looked upon as the measure of one’s faithfulness, while weightier things are overlooked.

¹ This important truth does not eliminate the necessity of our obedience to the commands to be baptized into Christ and to abide in Him, as brother McDowell emphasizes on pp. 76, 77. –Editor.

Thankfully, Jesus made it clear at the outset of His ministry that the quest for righteousness would not be futile. The fourth beatitude promises: "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*" (Matthew 5:6). Add to that the wonderful pronouncement at the conclusion of the judgment scene described in Matthew 25: "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*" (Matthew 25:46), and the conclusion is inescapable. There is an attainable righteousness that leads to eternal life.

Paul revealed the way to righteousness

In the third chapter of Philippians, Paul recounted how he had sought after righteousness by the deeds of the law. After listing those vain efforts, he went on to say: "*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*" (Philippians 3:7-9). Unfortunately, the modern speech translations all give the wrong sense of verse 9 by rendering it "*faith in Christ*" rather than "*faith of Christ*." The difference hinges on the opinion of the translators concerning whether the Greek phrase should be regarded as objective genitive or subjective genitive. Obviously the modern view is that it is objective genitive, that is, it has to do with the Christian's faith. In my view, this is the most significant error of the modern versions. The King James translators viewed the phrase as subjective genitive, seeing it as the faith (faithfulness) demonstrated by Christ in 33 ½ years of sinless living. The awesome genius of God is appreciated when we see how He developed a scheme of redemption that enables a sinner like me to be immersed into Christ, enabling God to count the penalty for my sin to be marked "paid in full by Christ" and because of that, allow me to be raised from the grave of baptism righteous, because in that forgiven state one is as blameless before God as Christ Himself.

This is not an isolated case of this terminology. Paul writes from the same perspective in Romans 3, declaring in verses 21-22 "*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.*" Again, in using the phrase "*faith of Jesus Christ*" Paul means the faithfulness Christ demonstrated by His sinless life. In verse 12 of that same chapter, Paul writes of "*that faith of our father Abraham.*" Naturally, he doesn't mean faith in Abraham, but the faith demonstrated by Abraham. He reasoned on the same basis when penning Galatians 2:16: "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we*

might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Notice again that the sense of the passage is missed completely if we study from any of the modern translations.

Failing to understand this is the tap root of insecurity

I regret that it took me so long to understand that the grounds of my redemption was the faith of Jesus Christ and not my feeble, imperfect faith. Several years ago I was unable to help a young woman who was about to do something she knew was not right, because she confided, "My faith is so weak that I don't think I can make it anyway." Another regret that I have is the memory of failing to help an aged brother who had served as an elder in the Lord's church. He confessed that he did not think he could know if he was going to make it to heaven, arguing that we have eternal life only in prospect. In spite of his admission that we could know we were in Christ, and that eternal life is in Christ (1 John 5:11), he doubted his salvation. In our conversation, it was obvious that his concern was fueled by the knowledge that his faith in Christ was so imperfect. Understanding what James Burton Coffman said in his commentary on Romans might have helped him: "*The true scriptural justification 'by faith' has no reference at all to the faith of stinking sinners, but to the faith of the Son of God*" (A.C.U. Press: Abilene, Texas, 1984. p 109). He explains: "*That the grounds of justification cannot ever be in a million years the faith of fallible, sinful men, would appear to be axiomatic. How could it be? The very notion that God could impute justification to an evil man, merely upon the basis of anything that such a foul soul might believe or do, is a delusion. Justification in any true sense requires that the justified be accounted as righteous and undeserving of any penalty whatever; and no man's faith is sufficient grounds for such an imputation. On the other hand, the faith of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the scriptures, is indeed a legitimate ground of justification, because Christ's faith was perfect. 'Faithful is he that called you' (1 Thess. 5:24); and, in the absolute sense, only Christ is faithful*" (Coffman 110).

Why is knowing this essential if we are to prepare for death?

Recall what Paul wrote in Philippians 3:9: "*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*" The simple truth is that to be prepared to die, I must be in Christ. The familiar passage in Galatians 3:26-27 helps us appreciate why being in Christ is so important: "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" When we are immersed into the death of Christ for the remission of sins, God marks our debt of sin "Paid in full by

Jesus Christ.” We arise from the baptismal grave as blameless as if we were the sinless Christ.

To be prepared to die, I must remain in Christ

Since every believer who is immersed into Christ is saved (Mark 16:16), and we are told in Acts 2:47 that they are added to the church by the Lord at that moment, finding that the church is called the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23) is exactly what we should have expected. Jesus described the tragic consequences associated with turning away from Him in the parable of the vine and the branches. John 15:6 warns: *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”* In Christ, the believer enjoys the security of the continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7). I John was addressed to Christians, as demonstrated by 1 John 3:1: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ...”* My own blood protects my body from the germs that might cause death in a way that illustrates how Christ’s blood protects those in His body from the deadly germs of sin. At the moment of attack, the immune system sends antibodies through my blood to ward off any harm. In recent years, we have learned that a person can live a life of debauchery resulting in the blood's no longer cleansing. The same thing is true of the one who turns from Christ and returns to the world. Only those who remain in Christ are prepared to die!

Those who die in Christ will wear a crown

It is entirely possible that when Paul wrote to Timothy about the crown of righteousness that was laid up for all the faithful, he simply meant that he knew he would stand before Christ robed in the righteousness of his Lord - wearing a crown provided by his Judge! Surely all those who appreciate the redemptive work of Christ will love His appearing, for they will have prepared to die!

I NEED TO LEAVE A LEGACY

Donald R. Cooper

My assigned topic at this session is “Give Me The Bible ... I Need To Leave A Legacy.”

Basically, according to Webster’s Dictionary, a legacy refers to something handed down by ancestors or predecessors. In the legal community it usually refers to a gift of property by will, a bequest. As I prepared for this occasion I came across several helpful articles written by brethren which I wish to share with you. Time will permit me only to cite a couple of them.

The first one is excerpts from an article from the pen of John Gipson (Little Rock, Arkansas), entitled “*A Father’s Advice*.” He asks, “What fatherly advice would you offer your son when it comes your time to die?” Then, he reminds us of the great Bible character, David, as he reached that time in his life. David knew that Solomon, his son, would succeed him as king over God’s people. David’s advice is recorded in 1 Kings 2:2,3. Please notice that David’s concern for his son dealt with spiritual matters, not material. Bible students will recall that Solomon followed that advice, and, as king, he asked God not for wealth and worldly gain, but for wisdom to rule God’s people and to discern between good and evil. God not only granted his request but blessed him far beyond all he asked for and expected (1 Kings 3:5-14). We who are fathers would do well to so advise our sons as did David. Mothers, too, should so teach their daughters.

Perhaps of more particular interest to women are two great books entitled, “*How Shall I Be Remembered?*”, Volumes I and II, printed by Sain Publications in Pulaski, Tennessee, for the Freed-Hardeman (College) University Associates several years ago. I would highly recommend them to both men and women. In the forward of Volume II are these words: “What do people remember us for: our age, our worth, our ideas, or our accomplishments?” Twenty six lessons are taught dealing with important subjects which emphasize the importance of living lives that will influence others for good and put us in good stead with our heavenly Father when we leave this world and stand before Him on the judgment day.

When I was assigned this subject I thought immediately of a hymn we sing so often, **What Will I Leave Behind?** It reads,

“After I leave for worlds unknown, Over the border line;
Never again on earth to roam, What will I leave behind?” (vs. 1)

“Will I be missed by those I leave, Or have I been unkind?

Have I been true to God above, What will I leave behind?" (vs. 2)

"This is my prayer, O Lord, today, Let me be wholly Thine;
When I am called from earth away, Let heaven then be mine." (vs. 3)

"Leave behind, yes leave behind, What will I leave behind?
After I leave for worlds unknown, What will I leave behind?" (chorus).

Those who truly sing with the "spirit and understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15) will surely be moved to walk this life's journey in such a way as to leave a rich legacy to all whose lives they have touched whether it be family, friends and associates, co-workers, or even those who watch us from afar whom we might not even know personally. Songs like the one cited remind us of the Lord's exhortation, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

If I take seriously the need to leave the right legacy to those whom I leave behind, I must first consider the legacy I have received. Hopefully, it is the kind of legacy that has served me well and will help me reach heaven when I depart this world.

Some of us are grateful for the Christian legacy left to us by godly ancestors, parents, close friends and leaders in the church. How thankful I am that all of my life I have been influenced by those who put God first in their lives and who served Christ and the church. They were truly the "Davids" in my life. I haven't achieved the wisdom of Solomon, but I am persuaded that my faithfulness to the Lord is the result of having been taught from the time I was a child the words that provide salvation in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15).

Those responsible for leaving such a rich legacy received theirs from an even greater source, one that we can all have a close spiritual relationship with if we desire. You know that I am referring to Christ. Peter said, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth ..." (1 Peter 2:21-24). If you want to leave a legacy to others that is really worthwhile imitate the **One** who left the perfect example. The best and shortest biography is the one recorded in Acts 10:38. It says that Christ "... went about doing good."

The young evangelist, Timothy, serves as an example of one who profited much by legacies he received, first from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (1 Timothy 1:5). And, we must not forget Timothy's father in the faith, the apostle Paul, who wrote diligently to him reminding him to remember the things he had learned and to remember from whom he had learned them (2 Timothy 2:2). Further, Timothy was to pass them on (*Ibid.*) to faithful men who would then pass them on to others who would pass them on ...! He was told

not to give occasion for others to despise him but to be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Like David, the apostle Paul realized that his time on this earth was short, that he would soon depart. He wrote to his beloved son in the faith concerning this and said, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

Dear friend, fellow Christian, be assured that we shall all come to the end of life’s journey. We don’t know when, we don’t know how. But, like David and Paul we must “go the way of all the earth.” And, the time of departure might be closer than we wish to think. Thus, it behooves us all to ask, **“What Will I Leave Behind?”** and **“How Will I Be Remembered?”** Will my legacy be only material or will I leave a rich spiritual heritage? Hopefully, it will be the latter, and we will impress upon our families and friends the importance of putting God first and setting our affections on things above (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:2). To do this we must diligently study God’s word so that we may stand approved by Him (2 Timothy 2:15), and be able to guide others to the “Lamb of God” who takes away our sins and offers us the gift of eternal life (John 1:29; 6:68).

May we not be obsessed with leaving a huge inheritance consisting of gold and silver and neglecting that which is eternal. May we strive to make a life (eternal) as well as a living.

A GREAT BOOK ABOUT A GREAT MAN

David R. Kenney

The Enchanted Knight: The Life Story of Hugo McCord
by Earl I. West

This writer's first opportunity to hear Hugo McCord was in 1987 in which McCord presented his translation of the New Testament to Freed-Hardeman College, now University. The translation was funded by the Atwood, TN, congregation and printed by Freed-Hardeman College in 1988. The name of the translation, "*The Everlasting Gospel*," was supplied by Franklin Camp.

The first personal interaction with brother Hugo began in May of 1997 when we began a written correspondence that led to a visit to their home in Portland, OR during the summer of 1998. I wrote to Hugo based on a statement in the 1994 issue of *The Spiritual Sword* in which he referenced holding a gospel meeting in Martinsburg, WV in the 1937-1941 time frame. My father currently serves as full time evangelist in Martinsburg. We also had a mutual admiration of one of the people whom he admired and dubbed "the personification of courage" - Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

Hugo McCord has authored the following books:

Disciples Prayer
Happiness Guaranteed
From Heaven or From Men?
Getting Acquainted with God
Messianic Prophecy
The Christian Family
Credibility of Creation
Bible Lands and Sacred History
The Royal Route of Revelation
These Things Speak
The H. Leo Boles' Lectures on Preaching
Fifty Years of Lectures, Vol. 1
Fifty Years of Lectures, Vol. 2
The Everlasting Gospel

He holds the following degrees: A.A., B.A., M.A., B.D., and Th.D. He has been a world traveler to preach the gospel and conduct research including trips to the British Museum and Palestine. He has done full-time located preacher work in Urbana, IL; Indianapolis, IN; Washington D.C.; Dallas, TX; Alexandria, VA; Louisville, KY; Bartlesville, OK; New Orleans, LA; and Midwest City, OK.

Dr. McCord moved to Bartlesville, OK, in 1951 to work with the Central Christian College, which would eventually become Oklahoma Christian College. He has been the recipient of many honors from the brotherhood and is highly respected in and out of the brotherhood. He also has a delightful sense of humor and cherishes the humorous awards he has received. He displayed both types of awards on the same wall of his study during the writer's visit to Portland, OR.

Lois Henderson McCord (1910-2000) received the following dedication of the Enchanted Knight by Hugo: "Lois is my first, current, last, and favorite wife." She was born in a cabin in Mississippi. Hugo and Lois met at Freed-Hardeman as students and were married in 1932. Her life was filled with adversities that she used to make her stronger rather than bitter. My visit with her was during the decline of her health both physically and mentally. But even at 88 years of age she was very keen, hospitable, and delightful. Wayne Jackson commented that after our mental capacity declines that sometimes our true character is revealed. As Lois' mental capacities were fading she dressed up for worship every day as if it was Sunday. She was always prepared for worship. Brother Jackson commented further:

...this was a vivid commentary on the quality of her soul. Whereas some of us have known loved ones who've skipped into a dream world where they constantly rehearsed former jobs, or recreational pleasures, Lois relived, over and over, what had been the greatest treasure to her. She delighted so in serving God that every day became the Lord's day.

Lois McCord passed on to receive her reward on July 12, 2000. Hugo wrote an article after her death containing praises for her virtuous life. Included in the article was this comment from her husband:

God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper (*ezer*) for him, one meeting his needs" (Genesis 2:18). Lois was Hugo's helper for 67 years, day and night, and her 89 year old body showed the strain.

Hugo McCord's conversion is an example of the influence of the individual for the cause of Christ. B. B. Goodman, who was a traveling salesman who noticed Caruthersville, MS, did not have a church of Christ, permanently altered the course of Hugo's life. This man contacted the only known member of the church in the area to secure a lot for a tent meeting in an attempt to establish a congregation. Arrangements were made to have L. L. Brigance come and hold a gospel tent meeting. There was one response, a twelve-year old boy who was the son of the member who secured the lot. The boy was Hugo McCord. Brigance baptized him in the city's swimming pool. He left the Methodist Church and would eventually persuade his mother do the same two years later. If it were not for the efforts of one man—B. B. Goodman, then

Hugo McCord may have never heard and obeyed the gospel. Only God would be able to calculate the influence the life of Hugo McCord has had for the cause of Christ.

Brother McCord is truly a life-long student of the Scriptures. If we think we have exhausted the Bible in our studies, then we have fallen into ignorant arrogance. We, as finite beings, cannot possibly exhaust the revelation of an infinite God. Hugo wrote his experience of this lesson by discussing a comment made by H. Leo Boles in 1944. Boles had read the Bible each year for over 25 years. Since Boles was a preacher, he made an effort to read the epistles to evangelists (1, 2 Timothy and Titus) each month. But what impressed McCord was Boles' statement after a lifetime of study—"I know very little of the Divine Mind."

Hugo McCord's translating of the New Testament showed his resolve to listen to input and make changes (even from this writer's suggestion on one occasion) but to stand firm when he had studied the matter thoroughly. One example is his defense of "Unique" as a translation rather than "Only Begotten" in John 3:16. He defended his translation even in the face of opposition from friends. I have watched the videos of the Preacher's Forum at Freed-Hardeman when he defended his translation. One can readily see that the arguments were in favor of brother McCord especially when one studies the handout from the forum. This writer is convinced based on his limited relationship with brother McCord that if "Only Begotten" were a suitable alternative then that would have been used in his translation in order to avoid quarreling. He did not seek to quarrel for the sake of quarreling or notoriety, but he would state the truth at all costs. Another example of Hugo's defense of the truth regardless of personalities is his disagreement with Foy E. Wallace, Jr. on the question of whether or not Cornelius received Holy Spirit baptism. Speaking of brother Wallace, Hugo wrote to the author:

No human being have I loved and respected more than Foy E. Wallace, Jr. I was just one of hundreds of preachers who drove many miles to hear him preach. Thousands of sparkling book, chapter and verse sermons he preached from coast to coast. His last car had over 300,000 miles on its speedometer when he had to get off the road and retire.

This illustrates a great lesson we all need to be reminded of - to avoid clinging to personalities as a substitute for the word of God. Some people are infected with what Hugo would call "preacheritis" where they would listen to a man more than they would check the facts to prove whether what the man said was true or not. Now the difference between McCord and Wallace was a matter of opinion, but it illustrates the importance for each of us to study the Scriptures and not rest on another man's understanding of the Scriptures. Wallace offered to print Hugo's article on the subject if he would send him a copy. Hugo refused stating that Wallace would not print it. Wallace assured

him that he would print the article; so Hugo submitted the article, and it was printed.

In 2002, Freed-Hardeman University published the fourth edition of Hugo McCord's translation that includes several books from the Old Testament. Unfortunately, his declining health will most likely prevent him from completing the entire Old Testament. The Appendix in the copy of his translations should be read and studied by each member interested in translation of the Scriptures. According to the book, at the age of 88, Hugo McCord distributes 130 copies of his articles (90 of which are sent via regular mail at the McCord's expense). This writer has been the benefactor of many of these articles and at this writing is still receiving articles written by Hugo McCord who is now 91 years of age. Some of these articles are reproduced in the Appendix of *The Enchanted Knight* including articles relating to the eldership, baptism, the tongue, Promise Keepers, hand clapping in worship, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ in you, the eternal purpose - the church, and the word of Truth.

Someone once said, "True courage is not the brutal force of vulgar heroes, but the firm resolve of virtue and reason." This is very fitting of the courage of Hugo McCord. We need to be cognizant of who our children's heroes are. We live in a day where some refuse to be held up as models based on their immorality and rightfully so. However, Hugo McCord would resist being held up as a model because of his godly humility. But even the apostle Paul wrote and Hugo translated "*Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.*" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Hugo rightly stated to this author (referring to brother Wallace) that the lives of great men help us live better lives. Truly, Hugo McCord has left us a legacy worthy of study and imitation.

This writer would also like to call attention to the love and dedication of the McCord's son and daughter-in-law, Charles and La Vera. They have personally cared for the elderly Hugo and Lois since 1989 including selling their houses to purchase a house large enough for all in order to provide the care needed by their parents. This is truly a great example of what God must have meant by "*Honor your father and mother.*"

JESUS IS COME!

Frank Higginbotham

There are some people who are looking for the birth of the promised Messiah. Even though it is quite evident to Bible students that Jesus did come and that He is the promised one, some still have not recognized Him and the results of His coming to the earth.

The book of John begins with the affirmation that Jesus is the Christ and that He has come to the earth in the form of man. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). Jesus is God and He is divine. John next affirms that He came to earth. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). It is later stated by John the Baptist that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29). It was His choice to come as a man to better aid men in their deliverance from sin. "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." (Hebrews 2:17).

When Jesus asked His disciples who men said He was, they replied that He was compared with several great men, but this was not enough. Read this discussion in Matthew 16:13-18.

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

To say that He was a great man was not enough. He is more than that. He is the Son of God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). In a discussion with the Jews, Jesus spoke of His divinity when He made an observation about Abraham.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and

hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." (John 8:56-59).

The evidence that Jesus is the Christ who was to come is abundant. It is so strong that Jesus stated that we must believe in Him or be lost. "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." (John 8:21). "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24). Previously Jesus had explained that there were many who bore evidence that He was who He said He was. It was not just his lone claim but the backing of others that supported His claim. The list of supporters began with John the Baptist. Jesus' works proved His claim. Many great works accompanied Him. His Father in Heaven also stated that He was God's Son. Remember at His baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration? The silence of Heaven was broken with the proclamation of His divinity. The scriptures bear witness to His divinity. (John 5:39). Jesus also calls on Moses to back up His claim. He is indeed the Son of God who came to the earth.

It is very important for us to understand why He came. John the Baptist explained that He came to take away the sin of the world. Man was hopelessly lost without Christ. He could not save himself, and no man was qualified to bring salvation to him. The only answer came from God. (John 1:29). Jesus discussed the reason for His coming in Luke 19:10. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." His blood was shed for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28). In Romans 6 Paul explains the process by which we obtain the remission of sins. We must contact the blood of Jesus for the remission of sins.

The comparison between Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and our obedience to the gospel is made.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" (Romans 6:3-5).

It is then explained that when we obeyed that form of doctrine, we obtained the remission of sins.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the

servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Romans 6:16-18).

In the light of these verses, it would be folly to argue that salvation does not include baptism for the remission of past sins. Christ came to make salvation possible for us.

Christ also came to prepare for being our High Priest. He did not take upon Himself the form of an angel but became a man.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it 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." (Hebrews 2:14-18).

It is later explained in the Hebrew letter that since He came as a man He also was tempted like we are but was able to overcome sin.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:14,15).

He thus became a perfect High Priest for us.

Jesus' advent in the world was a time of preparation for His kingdom that was to come. He made His disciples ready by spending His time teaching them about the coming kingdom. This preaching about the kingdom was also a part of the message of John the Baptist. His kingdom is His church. Jesus used these terms interchangeably in referring to the same people.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18,19).

Also it should be noted that the prophecies of the Old Testament that had reference to the kingdom find their fulfillment in the establishment of the church. The kingdom was to come during the lifetime of some of the disciples and it did come in this time period with the beginning of the church. "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That 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." (Mark 9:1).

Some today have mistakenly come to the conclusion that Christ will set up His Kingdom when He comes the second time. They are looking for the kingdom and have not been able to see it in His church. Christ is now on His throne and is now reigning over His kingdom or church.

"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; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2:30,31).

He began His reign when the church was begun on Pentecost as we read in Acts 2. His reign will end when He returns the second time at the end of time.

"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, 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." (1 Corinthians 15:24-27).

Christ will deliver the kingdom up to His Father. Until that time He remains on the throne of David as he rules over His church.

Another reason for Christ's first coming was to set an example for us to follow. "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:" (1 Peter 2:21,22).

We should be very thankful that God did send His only begotten Son into the world. He came, and we reap the benefits of His work.

ARE THE JEWS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE TODAY?

Winford Claiborne

If you know much about the Middle East - either from secular history or from the Bible - you know that the Jews and the Arabs have been fussing, fuming, and fighting for almost four thousand years. The Arab nations in the past few decades have approved constitutions which called for the total elimination of the nation of Israel. The Jews are now demanding that Arabs rescind their laws calling for the destruction of Israel. What the final outcome of these negotiations will be only God in heaven knows.

I know many of you are praying and will continue to pray during the coming months that changes in the Middle East will relieve the tensions among Jews and Arabs which have existed for thousands of years. We are hoping that commonsense and fair play will prevail and that these two warring parties will achieve genuine and lasting peace. Whether or not that will happen remains to be seen. Even if it does happen, there likely will be unpleasant and dangerous incidents for years to come. But what a blessing it will be for the whole of humanity if the Jews and the Arabs can work out some kind of peaceful settlement of their long-standing disputes.

Ray Waddle, Religion News Editor for *The Tennessean*, wrote an article, "Mideast Peace Through a Religious Prism," which was published on Sunday, September 5, 1993. Waddle mentions the confusion and furor which have characterized the Middle East for centuries. Then he adds:

"Complicating the picture further is the expectation of many Christians around the world that Israel has a major role in God's scheme for the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ. The formation of Israel and the return of the Jews to the Holy Land seems to these Christians to fulfill biblical prophecies about 'these latter days.'"

Waddle quotes Don Finto, a former gospel preacher who has turned charismatic, as saying, "Israel is the only piece of property in the world where God has the title deed" (p. 1-D). That last statement by Don Finto makes absolutely no sense. God has the title deed to the entire universe - not just to Israel. Don Finto continued his unscriptural observations:

"It may take centuries, but the deed will stick: It belongs to the Jews no matter what compromises are worked out now. Apparently, there are people in the government of Israel who don't understand that. This peace proposal sends a perhaps confusing signal, a countersignal. But we live by faith, not sight: God has his scheme for everyone" (p. 1-D)

There are thousands of religious leaders in the United States and around the world - primarily dispensationalists and other premillennialists - who believe the Jews are still God's chosen people, that they have a special role in the end of the Christian era, and that Gentiles will have a subordinate role in the millennial kingdom, that is, in the thousand year earthly reign of Jesus Christ. But is that the truth of God's word? Does it make any difference whether or not it is the truth? Our question for today's discussion is: "Are the Jews God's Chosen People Today?" "Do the Jews have a special role in the last days of the last days?"

My friends, there is no questioning the Jews' special place in the Old Testament era. They were God's chosen people, as the Bible makes abundantly clear. In the first place, God chose a man - Abraham - through whom the whole world would be blessed. God said to Abraham:

"Get out of your country, and from your kindred and from your father's house, unto a land which I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

It is almost universally recognized by Bible believing scholars that God chose a special man - Abraham - for a special purpose. That special purpose was continued through Abraham's son, Isaac, through his grandson, Jacob, and on through the nation of Israel. So often in both the Old Testament and the New, God is referred to as the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob (Ex. 4:5; Mt. 22:32, to give just two examples). Through Jacob, Abraham became the progenitor of a great nation - Israel. The Old Testament makes it very plain that God chose Israel to accomplish his purposes on this earth.

The book of Deuteronomy speaks at length of God's choosing Israel.

"Out of heaven he made you to hear his voice, that he might instruct you: and upon earth he showed you his great fire; and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved your fathers, therefore he chose their seeds after them, and brought you out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; to drive out nations from before you greater and mightier than you are, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day" (Dt. 4:36-38).

Please listen again to Deuteronomy.

"For you are an holy people unto the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you,

nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Dt. 7:6-8).

But God's choosing Israel for his special purposes did not guarantee their eternal salvation or their continued faithfulness to him. God instructed his people to be faithful to him. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live" (Dt. 30:19). When the Israelites disobeyed their Lord they were punished. The Old Testament is filled with examples of the Israelites' rebellion and God's punishment for their sins. Paul affirmed that with many of the Jews God was not well pleased (1 Cor. 10:5). They lusted after evil; they became idolaters; they committed fornication and they tempted Christ (1 Cor. 10:6-9). Then Paul said to the Corinthians: "Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

The Hebrew writer speaks of the same sinful conduct of which Paul spoke and then he says:

"Harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with their generation and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:8-12).

The Jews under the Old Testament period were saved just like you are I are saved - faith in God and obedience to his word. Their acts of obedience were different from those under the new covenant, but the principles of salvation are the same.

When the Jews rebelled against God, did he reject them as being his chosen people? The answer is both yes and no. He rejected the Jews as a nation, but he did not reject them individually. Paul prayed for his own people - the Jews:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1-3).

Romans 11 raises this question: "Has God cast away his people?" Paul answers: "God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1). God no longer recognizes the Jews as his chosen people, but individual Jews can come to God through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to his word. Paul himself had chosen to follow Jesus Christ and not to rest on his righteousness based on the law of Moses (Phil. 3:8-9). Jews are not rejected because they are Jews. But neither are they saved because they are Jews.

Romans 11 discusses at length the reasons the Jews were rejected as a chosen nation.

"Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:20-23).

The truth of the matter is, dear friends, the Jews today have no special place in God's scheme of human redemption. There is not one promise God has made to them which has not been fulfilled. There is nothing in the future for the Jews which is not available to every other person on God's earth. In other words, the Jews have no special blessings or promises in the so-called "last days." I am aware of the controversial nature of these last remarks, but there is no doubt in my mind that they are true. God has nothing special in mind for the Jews that he does not also have in mind for the Gentiles.

But will not all the Jews be converted *en masse* in the days preceding our Lord's second coming? The answer is an unequivocal NO. But what about Romans 11:26 which reads: "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion a Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"? Does this verse teach that the Jews as a nation will be converted? Actually, the key to understanding Romans 11:26 is the little adverb "so." "So" is an adverb of manner. Romans 11:26 should read: "And in this manner all Israel shall be saved." In what manner? In the same manner as the Gentiles were being saved. There is no promise that all the Jews - or even a substantial portion of them - will be converted to Christ before the second coming and the end of the age.

If the Jews have been rejected as God's chosen people - and there is absolutely no doubt about it - who are God's chosen people today? Paul shows conclusively that Jews are not saved just because they are Jews.

"Not as though the word of God has taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. 9:6-8).

If these verses mean anything at all, they show that men are not God's children just because they are Israelites - physical sons and daughters of Abraham. If Jews are God's children under the Christian dispensation, it is because they have believed in the Son of God and have rendered obedience to the gospel. All who are God's sons and daughters today are the children of promise, that is, the promise that the world would be blessed through Jesus Christ.

Paul explains in very simple terms the truth I am discussing with you.

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:15-16)

The purpose of the Galatian letter was to prove that men are not living under the law of Moses and cannot be justified by that law.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:1-4)

The church of our Lord Jesus Christ is God's chosen nation today - not ancient Israel. The apostle Peter speaks of members of the church of our Lord as being "elect (or chosen) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:2). The same apostle speaks of God's people under the new covenant as a "spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). Then he adds:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The expression translated "a peculiar people" literally means "a people for God's own possession," a phrase incidentally which was used in the Old Testament of the Israelites (Exodus 19:5). How can anyone doubt that the Israel of God today is the church of the living God? Paul prayed that peace might be on those who walk according to the gospel of Christ and upon the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

There is one final question which must be asked today before our time expires. How do men and women get to be among God's chosen people in our generation? They do not become God's chosen people by physical birth. Paul said to the Galatians: "Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:7-9). Please listen to Paul's conclusion to that great chapter.

"For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

In his famous discussion with the Jewish leader, Nicodemus, Jesus made it clear that one is not among the chosen because of generation - but regeneration. He said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Nicodemus could not understand how one could be born when he is old. "Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus clarified for Nicodemus and for us exactly what the new birth is: "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:3-6). We become children of our earthly parents when we are born physically. We become children of our heavenly Father when we are born spiritually - that is, when we believe on Jesus Christ and are baptized in water for the remission of sins. Paul explained it this way: "For by one Spirit are you 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" (1 Cor. 12:13).

Let us turn briefly to the book of Acts to learn exactly how the new birth worked - both among Jews and among Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost there were only Jews and proselytes. The proselytes were men and women who had committed themselves to the Law of Moses. Peter strongly condemned the Jews for their complicity in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He concluded his sermon by saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that

God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Thousands of Jews on Pentecost were convicted of their sins and asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer is a model of power and simplicity.

"Repent, and be baptized ... for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39).

Jesus taught Nicodemus that men must be born again. Is there any difference in what Jesus taught in John 3 and what Peter taught on the day of Pentecost? Was not Peter putting in very simple terms what our Lord had said to Nicodemus? When one is born again or born from above, does he not have to believe, repent and be baptized - like the Jews on Pentecost? When we talk with men and women today, can we tell them something different from what Peter commanded by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost? The Jews had belonged to God's chosen nation before Pentecost. But had they refused to repent and to be baptized, they would not have been his chosen people after that.

The apostle Peter, who preached the first gospel sermon ever recorded (Acts 2), also preached the first gospel sermon to the Gentiles. Apparently, Cornelius belonged to a class of people called "God-fearers." Luke describes Cornelius as follows: "A devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). Peter preached to Cornelius and his house in these words:

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believes in him shall receive the remission of sins" (Acts 10:38-43).

When Cornelius and his household heard the message God had sent Peter to preach, how did they respond? They believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. When men and women believe on the Lord what must they do in order to be saved? Please listen to Peter. "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. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days" (Acts 10:47-48). Should anybody be surprised at Peter's

command to Cornelius and his household? Was he not requiring of the Gentiles exactly what he had preached to the Jews on Pentecost? He told the Jews: "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). If the Jews had to be baptized to be counted among God's chosen people, would not the Gentiles have to do the same? Do you remember what I read to you a few minutes ago: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12)? God did not have one plan of salvation for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. He commands all men everywhere to repent and to be baptized for the remission of sins.

My friends, if you want to be among God's elect nation, you must obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to you, that is, you must believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead; you must confess your faith before God and before men and be baptized for the remission of sins. No one can be among God's chosen people who has not obeyed the gospel.

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

If you have not obeyed the gospel, will you not do it today?

PREACHING THROUGH THE INTERNET AND THE PRINTED PAGE

Tim Nichols

The Gospel has been delivered to our generation via the written word. We trust the inspired, credible testimony of those who saw our Lord in the flesh, heard His words, observed His life, and went forth from Him to reveal His will to all of mankind. That the Gospel has been transmitted in this way is powerful testimony concerning the power of written words.

The value of preaching and teaching in person, using the voice, is not diminished by recognizing the value of the printed word. Bible classes and public preaching deserve our careful attention. Radio and television are efficient ways to transmit the message. Personal work has worth that is not lessened by acknowledging the power of words. Anyone who would suggest that there is only one way, or that there is one best way, to teach eternal truths to men and women is probably unreasonably biased.

As I look back upon my own experience, limited as it is, I suspect that most of those men of God who have had the greatest influence upon my life had died long before I was ever born. Their words have taught. Their recorded examples have encouraged me. Their struggles, communicated by symbols of ink on paper, have helped me to cope with my own challenges. From inspired words, to the use other men have made of inspired words; from Divine principles, to bold actions prompted by those principles and written in books; words have had a profound influence upon my life. "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself... for your sakes." They are true for you just as they are true for me. Even if you are not an avid reader, you benefit from the reading that your teachers and preachers (if they are feeding you useful material) have done.

We cannot help but compare our ability to transfer words from one mind to large numbers of readers with the ability of men in former generations to do that. To think of great men such as Alexander Campbell and their accomplishments staggers the mind. When you read their words, think of the time spent penning those words on paper. Make yourself think of the aching fingers that placed each metal letter in place for the press and the labor required to apply the ink and crank the press. They produced world-changing works of words by that process. Volumes of them. Now look at the opportunities that we have. The keyboard, the word-processor, the laser printer, the spell-checker, the electronic thesaurus, the grammar-checker are all available to the one who will take the time to find ways to transmit the message of God through written words.

Paper journals, such as the *WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN*, are powerful tools. For relatively small amounts of money these can be delivered into the homes of thousands of men and women hungry to read, learn, and contemplate eternal truths. These can, sometimes are, and always should be shared with as many of our friends and neighbors as possible. Those who write for such papers can be pleased to know of the good that they are doing in their own time, and of the potential good that will come to those who read long after they have left this earth.

The Internet provides us with yet another "place" and means to distribute the written word. It has advantages that perhaps no other method can offer. Articles placed on a Web page are available twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. "Seek and ye shall find" was written before the search engine came into being, but the truth of it is illustrated and shown to be a current truth. Men and women who might never come into contact with Gospel preaching in any other place, visit such pages. My own counter is able to track the countries from which men and women visit my own page. It is amazing to read the reports revealing that visitors come from the most remote regions of the globe. E-mail permits them to ask questions, express their displeasure, or seek clarification. Thousands use the Internet as their main source of information, even in place of traditional reference materials. This resource, like radio, television, and telephones, is worthy of our attention.

As with every other means of distributing material that is right and good, both paper journals and electronic media can be tools for publishing error and evil. Let us use what resources are available to us to do what is good, and to combat what is evil.

THE BIBLE EQUIPS GOD'S WOMAN FOR THE CHURCH

Janie Gallagher

THE CHURCH

The word church as used in the Bible comes from a Greek word, meaning “the called out.” When referring to “the church” in this lesson, the reference will be to the local group of Christians. It is important to note that the church is described as a body in which the different members of that body contribute to its well being (1 Cor.12:12-31; Rom. 12:4, 5). We also find in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) that the Lord expects each member of the body to use the talents with which he/she has been blessed. As Christian women, God has given us responsibilities in relation to the work of the local church. In order for us to know what those responsibilities are, let us examine, in general, the work or purpose of the church.

THE WORK/PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The church has been given many purposes or responsibilities through commands in the Bible. These purposes or work include **worship** (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 20:7, Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2), **evangelism** (Matt. 28:18-20), **edification** (Rom. 14:19; 2 Cor. 12:19), **exhortation** (Heb. 10:24, 25), and **benevolence** (Gal. 6:10; James 1:27). As joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17) and equal in God’s eyes (Galatians 3:27-29), we, as women, can be participants in all areas of the work of the church as long as we abide by the restrictions that God has placed upon us.

WOMEN'S ROLE

Too often the world focuses on what a woman is not permitted to do within the church, and unfortunately, now we have many in the church who have also become disgruntled with the restrictions placed upon women and are trying to change the teachings of the Bible. Whether one likes it or not, the Bible has limited women in their role within the public worship. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 states, *“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”* These words are plain and completely understandable. Women cannot preach, lead singing, pray, or take a leadership role in any way within a worship setting with men present. If there is any question as to whether this is a cultural issue, continue reading verses 13-15 which explain the reasoning behind this directive that originated with Adam and Eve. That being said - the purpose of this lesson is not to dwell on the negatives, but to look at the positive impact a

Christian woman can have on the church. The public worship is a relatively small part of the work that is to be done by the church.

The New Testament contains many examples of women who were active workers for the kingdom. We find in Acts 1:14 that women were in attendance in the upper room while the apostles waited and prayed. We find Saul including women in his persecution of the early church (Acts 8:3). Dorcas is mentioned as a woman who was known for her “*good works and almsdeeds*” (Acts 9:36). Lydia is mentioned in Acts 16. Priscilla, working with her husband, taught Apollos “*the way of the Lord more perfectly.*” Paul alone lists many women whom he considered his fellow workers for Christ in Romans 16.

Women have also had an active role in the work of the church. Let us examine the works of the church previously mentioned, in light of what we as women can do.

WORSHIP

Women are commanded, just as men are, to worship God. Though we have already noted that women are restricted from taking a leadership role in public worship, women are not excluded from the acts of worship. We can participate through song, we can silently pray with our fellow Christians, we can commune with the Lord and each other, we can give of our means, and we can certainly teach a Bible class of children or other women. Besides participating in worship, women have an important responsibility to teach others, through example, how to worship God. Our children, our friends and neighbors watch us while we worship. They should see a woman who is singing from the heart, quietly praying to God, and reverently listening to the Word of God being taught.

Instead of questioning and trying to change God’s directive on this issue, Christian women should willingly submit to God’s will and do what they can to make their worship pleasing to God.

EVANGELISM

One of the most important tasks given to the church is to take the gospel to those outside of Christ. The Great Commission was given to us by Jesus to “*teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (*Matthew 28:19*). Women have wonderful opportunities each day. Some activities women can be involved in to help evangelize are:

- Pray for the lost.
- Teach her own children

- Have a neighborhood Bible class for the children in the neighborhood
- Start a pre-school “Bible Story Hour” at your church building (similar to “story hour” at the library)
- Set up Bible studies in your home for non-Christians
- Talk to those with whom you work
- Send care packages to missionaries/ help support financially
- Coordinate Bible correspondence courses for your congregation

EDIFICATION

Edification carries with it the idea of intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement. Paul in Romans 14:19 urges the Roman Christians to “*follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*” Ephesians 4:11, 12 mentions that some Christians were to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the purpose of “*edifying the body of Christ.*” It is interesting to note that in Romans 14 making peace and edification are spoken of together. It is vitally important for a congregation of saints to work peacefully together. Edification is not going to occur where Christians are not working together. Women have the ability to set the tone for a congregation. You have probably heard the expression, “If Mama isn’t happy, nobody is happy!” How true that can be! Proverbs 6:19 reminds us of how important unity is to the Lord when “*sowing discord among brethren,*” is listed as an *abomination* to God. Women will learn to work together without jealousy or envy when they realize that the work they are doing is being done for God’s glory and not for their own glory. Some activities a woman can be involved in for the edification of the church are:

- Pray for the elders, preacher, and deacons
- Pray for fellow Christians who are struggling
- Host a devotional in her home
- Teach or assist in a Bible class
- Conduct a training workshop for teachers
- Invite struggling Christians in your home for fellowship and Bible study
- Take an interest in new Christians with phone calls, prayer, fellowship, etc.

EXHORTATION

The word exhortation denotes the idea of encouraging others to commendable conduct. The Bible gives us the great example of Barnabas, who was called “The Son of Exhortation.” (Acts 4:36) Barnabas was one who encouraged others through example (Acts 4:36-37). We do not always know when someone is watching us and what our example does for that person. I teach a ladies

class at the congregation with which I worship. The women in my class probably have no idea how much their examples affect my own life. Some of the women are new Christians, others have recently been restored, and others are strong mature Christians. Each of them, in her own way, has inspired me to be a better Bible student and Christian. Do not underestimate the power of example.

Barnabas was also an encouragement to Saul by standing by him when Saul first came to Jerusalem. Barnabas believed in Saul and convinced the disciples in Jerusalem to give him a chance. Can you imagine how encouraged Saul must have been to have a man like Barnabas vouch for him? He also stood by John Mark when Paul did not want to include him on his third missionary trip. John Mark may have made some kind of mistake, but Barnabas believed in him and was willing to give him another chance. Christian women have only to look at the seat in front of them or behind them to find someone who needs encouragement. It might be a young mother, a new Christian, a young man who feels awkward about his public service, a teenage girl who is struggling to do what is right, the preacher or elders, a Bible class teacher who feels unappreciated. The list could go on and on. Make it a weekly activity to find someone within your congregation to encourage.

BENEVOLENCE

Benevolence carries with it the idea of rendering any good work for the benefit of another. Galatians 6:10 tells us, "*As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*" There is no doubt that benevolence is commanded of us and is an important work of the church. If one studies the ministry of Jesus, one will note that Jesus willingly took care of people's physical needs before addressing their spiritual needs. Early church growth was often mentioned in connection with helping the needy (Acts 2:47; 4:4, 9, 21; 5:14; 6:1-7).

The following are some areas of benevolence with which Christian women can help.

- Pray for those in need.
- Set up a food and clothing pantry.
- Prepare food for sick or funerals.
- Take elderly shopping.
- Gather supplies needed for missionaries.
- Visit and provide needs for a widow or widower.
- Take in foster children.

Women have a tremendous work to be done for the church. It is up to each individual to examine her talents and to use those talents so that she will be

able to hear the words spoken to the faithful servant in Matthew 25:23, “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*”

IT CHEERS ME WHEN I AM SAD

Terry G. Jones

It is truly a marvelous theme that has been chosen for this series of studies. The Bible is a book like no other. Its author is no less than the God of Heaven. The Bible reveals the will of the Lord and the way of life. It contains God's scheme of redemption for fallen man through Jesus Christ His Son who died for all our sin. Without the Bible, man would know nothing of his origin, have no idea of his purpose for living, and be absolutely clueless about what happens beyond the grave. But, thankfully, God delivered to us the inspired Scriptures and through them, "has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Sadly, many reject the Bible. Of them, Jesus said, "Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall" (Matthew 7:26-27). To reject the Bible is to reject God's standard for living and dying. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Those who reject the Bible rob themselves of the greatest source of help and comfort available.

The Bible is the precious word of God, the sweetest story ever told, a faithful guide for all of life. The psalmist expressed it well when he said, "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:103-105).

Give me the Bible! There are a number of reasons why. The topic chosen for this study is, "Give me the Bible because it cheers me when I am sad." We sing, "Give me the Bible, star of gladness gleaming, to cheer the wand'rer lone and tempest tossed." Let us use the word CHEER as an acrostic to show that when I am sad the Bible gives me Comfort, Hope, Enlightenment, Eternal life and Redemption.

When I am sad the Bible gives me COMFORT. One of the amazing things about the Bible is the wonderful way in which it touches the multitudinous aspects of life. Through His word the God of all comfort will guide us and keep us in all of life's miseries and misfortunes (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). When we read the gospels, we see how Jesus provided comfort to all who knew Him.

Christ's comforting presence and consoling words and works permeate the Gospels, where He is found breaking up funerals, drying tears, raising the dead, healing lepers, casting out devils, dying for a world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall. What a divine Comforter He was – and ever is! [Herbert Lockyer, *All God's Comfort*, p. 6].

The Bible gives comfort in sorrow. Our Lord is the great comforter because He understands our sorrows. "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ... Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3-4). "When sorrows like sea billows roll" give me the Bible!

The Bible gives comfort in sickness. The Bible says that, "the prayer of faith will save the sick" (James 5:15). When Lazarus was sick Mary and Martha sought Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" (John 11:3). They knew that Jesus would heal and comfort.

The Bible gives comfort in suffering. We learn from the prophet Job that even the righteous sometimes suffer in this life. Though he didn't understand it all he maintained his faith in God and was ultimately rewarded for his perseverance and so shall we. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

When I am sad the Bible gives me HOPE. The Bible gives me hope in the Savior. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

The Bible gives me hope in the Scriptures. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

The Bible gives me hope in Salvation. "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

When I am sad the Bible gives me ENLIGHTENMENT. During those gloomy times in life when the soul is drowning in pity and misery, the Bible illuminates the pathway to peace. It provides enlightenment from Darkness. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The Bible provides enlightenment from Death. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). The Bible provides enlightenment from Deception. “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

When I am sad the Bible gives me ETERNAL LIFE. When Satan and sin reign in our life, the future is frightful, and our soul is mired in the gloomy sea of eternal damnation (1 Peter 5:8). However, when we turn to the Bible it dispels that fear with the hope of eternal life. The Bible provides eternal life through Faith. “That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:15). The Bible provides eternal life through Freedom from sin. “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18). The Bible provides eternal life through Fellowship. “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3-4).

When I am sad the Bible gives me REDEMPTION. Our hearts ought to be overwhelmed with sadness at the thought of being separated from God because of sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). However, “There’s a call comes ringing o’er the restless wave” as the Bible brings glad tidings of redemption’s sweet song. From Genesis to Revelation the grand theme of the Bible is God’s plan to redeem fallen man. As such, we learn that we have been redeemed by the Son of God. “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). We have been redeemed by the shedding of blood. “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). We have been redeemed because our Sins are forgiven. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Many try to overcome their sadness by drowning their sorrows with alcohol, drugs, or a number of other forms of loose living. In so doing they only add sorrow to sorrow. What we really need is a friend and there is no friend like Jesus.

Jesus is all the world to me, My life, my joy, my all;
He is my strength from day to day – Without Him I would fall.
When I am sad to Him I go; No other one can cheer me so;
When I am sad He makes me glad: He's my Friend.

THE BIBLE WARNS ME WHEN I AM BAD

Steve Snider

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12) "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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) These two passages tell us that the word of God is living, active, and powerful. By this it is meant that God's word is full of power and is able to accomplish what God intended for it to accomplish. As you look at these two passages you learn that part of that which the word is to accomplish is to convict men of their sins, reprove men of their sins, and hopefully lead them to the forgiveness that can be found only in Jesus Christ.

My topic is "The Bible Warns Me When I Am Bad." I want us to consider this subject by looking at three areas: 1) The Bible warns me by teaching me about the reality of sin; 2) The Bible warns me by teaching me how I am tempted to sin; and, 3) the Bible warns me by teaching what the consequences of unforgiven sin will be.

When a person comes to the word of God with an honest heart, that word will allow them to see themselves as they really are. Do you remember the words of James 1:21-24? This passage teaches us that the word of God is a mirror on our soul. James warns us that it is important that we look honestly and not quickly forget what it is we see. But what is it we see when we look into this mirror of the soul?

We see, first, that sin is a reality. Paul taught in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." John, writing to Christians, stated in 1 John 1:7-10 that if we claim to have no sin that we lie and the truth is not in us, and we also make God a liar. This is very important because we are living in a time when many would have us believe that there are no absolutes, especially when it comes to matters of morality. But the word of God tells us that sin is a reality and that we are all guilty! When we look into God's word, we are confronted by this truth: sin is real and I am guilty. In this way the Bible warns me. It warns me that I can live a life that is displeasing to God.

But not only does it tell me that sin is real, it also tells me what sin is. John said in 1 John 3:4 that sin "is a transgression of God's law." John also tells us that all unrighteousness is sin. (1 John 5:17) Any time we violate the will of

God (the law of God) or do that which contradicts the nature or righteousness of God, then we have sinned.

But once again, the Bible goes a step further and tells us specifically many things that can keep us out of heaven. Take time to look at the list of sins mentioned in Romans 1:26-32, Galatians 5:19-21, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. We are clearly told that those involved in these sins cannot inherit the kingdom of God - cannot be pleasing to God. Sometimes there are those who will point out that some particular thing is not mentioned in these lists. (Example: Drug use, gambling, etc.) But we should study these lists carefully, (and the various words such as licentiousness or revelries) because we will learn that there is a lifestyle that is described here that would cover all of these areas.

In the second place, the Bible warns me by showing me how one can be led into those activities or attitudes that are sinful in the eyes of God.

Again from the book of 1 John we are warned, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but it is of the world. And the world is passing away and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

We have a clear example of this in the opening pages of the Bible. In the book of Genesis we see God creating man and woman and placing them in the Garden of Eden. They were in perfect fellowship with God and had everything they needed for life and happiness. But then we see Satan enter the picture and man and woman sin against God. It is valuable to study this passage carefully and learn how Satan was able to lead them away from God. Let me suggest that Satan did several things in tempting Adam and Eve.

Satan, **first**, convinced them that God was lying to them. He told them that they would not die if they ate the fruit of that forbidden tree. **Second**, he convinced them that God was holding out on them. Satan convinced them that God didn't want them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because He knew they would then become like Him. **Third**, Satan did exactly what John warns us about! He appealed to the flesh, to the eyes, and to the pride of life.

You can also turn to Matthew 4 and see how it is that Satan attempted to get Christ to do that which would have been displeasing to God. Again, notice carefully how Satan works. Satan attacked Christ at His weakest point, (an appeal to the flesh). Next, Satan challenged Jesus to test God, (an appeal to the pride). Finally, Satan tried to convince Christ that He could side-step God's will and still have what God promised. (He showed Him the kingdoms of the world—an appeal to the eyes)

Nothing has changed in Satan's tactics today. Satan would still have you believe that God is not good and that God is holding out on you. Satan still appeals to the flesh, and to our eyes and to our pride. The Bible, however, warns me about these tactics and will help me overcome them when I am tempted to do wrong. Understanding the tactics of the enemy is an important matter in any battle, and this is certainly true in that spiritual warfare that we are engaged in.

Finally, the Bible warns me when I am bad by showing me the consequences of my actions. Once again, this is so important because we are living in a time when so many refuse to accept or believe that there are consequences for their actions. There are many who could be blamed for this. Our society can be blamed; because we have made excuses for virtually everything anyone does in an attempt to keep them from having to accept responsibility. Parents many times, can be blamed for not teaching and then allowing their children to suffer the consequences for their actions. As a result they become adults who refuse to accept responsibility. But the Bible plainly teaches that we are going to be held accountable.

When we come to the Bible and read its pages we find many examples of those who chose to ignore God and the will of God, and we also see the terrible consequences that followed. We read of the flood that God brought upon the world because man's thoughts were on evil continually. (Genesis 6:5) We can read of cities like Sodom and Gomorrah that were destroyed by God because of their wickedness. (Genesis 19) But we also read of individuals who had to suffer the consequences of their sins. And it must be remembered that these sins were varied in nature. Some (like Nadab and Abihu) suffered because they ignored God's law concerning worship. Others (like David) suffered because they ignored God's moral law. We can read about the prodigal son and what he endured because he chose to ignore his fathers will and went away and became involved in sinful living. The list could go on and on, but the lesson is clear. The Bible sends me a strong warning when I am tempted to do wrong; and that warning is that "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

David said that he stored up the word of God in his heart that he might not sin against God. (Psalm 119:11) We need to spend time with God's word, store it up in our hearts so that its message can be a constant reminder when we are tempted to do that which is wrong.

GOD'S WORD SUSTAINS AND GUIDES ME

David A. Paher

Introduction:

Christians often enjoy singing *Give Me the Bible*. Therein lays the fundamental teaching of Bible authority and the coined phrase, “Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.” It also shares principles for daily living and growing. Paul said, “*Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work*” (2 Tim. 3:16).²

Throughout Scripture, God’s Word is called, Book (Ps. 40:7; Rev. 22:19), Book of the Lord (Is. 34:16), Book of the Law (Neh. 8:3; Gal. 3:10), Good Word of God (Heb. 6:5), Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15), Law of the Lord (Ps. 1:2; Is. 30:9), Oracles of God (Rom. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:11), Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3), Scriptures of Truth (Dan. 10:21), Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), The Word (Jam. 1:21-23; 1 Pet. 2:2), Word of God (Lk. 11:28; Heb. 4:12), Word of Christ (Col. 3:16), Word of Life (Phil. 2:16), Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15; Jam. 1:18).³ Looking through many of these references, it can be seen how the role of God’s Word is essential to the sustenance and guidance of life, i.e., the Bible is the Book of the Law, the Good Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, Oracles of God, the Sword of the Spirit, etc.

There are many reasons, specifically found in the 119th Psalm, describing how God’s word sustains and guides the child of God.

THE WORD OF GOD SUSTAINS AND GUIDES ME BECAUSE OF...

I. Its direction away from evil.

- A. God’s Word cleanses the way of a young man (v. 9). *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed (thereto) according to thy word.*
- B. God’s Word encourages the weakness of a struggling man (v. 11). *Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.*
- C. God’s Word uplifts the sorrow of a troubled man (v. 67). *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe thy word.*

² All Bible verses will be taken from the American Standard Version of 1901 unless otherwise noted.

³ Nave's Topical Bible.

D. God's Word hinders the temptation of a godly man (v. 101). *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might observe thy word.*

II. Its guidance unto hope.

- A. Men hope by delighting in God's Word (v. 16). *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*
- B. Men hope by living on God's Word (v. 43). *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thine ordinances.*
- C. Men hope by taking desire in God's Word (v. 49). *Remember the word unto thy servant, because thou hast made me to hope.*
- D. Men hope by seeing God through His Word (v. 74). *They that fear thee shall see me and be glad, because I have hoped in thy word.*
- E. Men hope by a longing for God's Word (v. 81). *My soul fainteth for thy salvation; (but) I hope in thy word.*
- F. Men hope by hiding in God's Word (v. 114). *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

III. Its ability to nourish.

- A. Men are nourished from worldly thoughts through God's Word (v. 25). *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*
- B. Men are nourished from worldly sorrows through God's Word (v. 107). *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Jehovah, according unto thy word.*
- C. Men are nourished from worldly troubles through God's Word (v. 154) *Plead thou my cause, and redeem me: quicken me according to thy word.*

IV. Its display of God's characteristics.

- A. God's Word illustrates His Lovingkindness (v. 41). *Let thy lovingkindness also come unto me, O Jehovah, even thy salvation, according to thy word; (v. 76). Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.*
- B. God's Word illustrates that He is Merciful (v. 58). *I entreated thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.*

- C. God's Word illustrates that He is Strength (v. 116). *Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope.*
- D. God's Word illustrates that He is Righteous (v. 123). *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for thy righteous word;* (v. 172). *Let my tongue sing of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness.*
- E. God's Word illustrates that He is Purity (v. 140). *Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it.*

V. Its support of comfort.

- A. God's Word gives comfort to the troubled man (v. 50). *This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me.*
- B. God's Word gives comfort to the blind man (v. 82). *Mine eyes fail for thy word, while I say, when wilt thou comfort me?*

VI. Its teaching for positive change in life.

- A. God's Word explains how a man should live (v. 17). *Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live; so will I observe thy word.*
- B. God's Word explains how a man should be strengthened (v. 28). *My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*
- C. God's Word explains how a man of God should have reverential fear (v. 38). *Confirm unto thy servant thy word, which (is in order) unto the fear of thee.*
- D. God's Word explains how a sorrowed man should find help (v. 42). *So shall I have an answer for him that reproacheth me; for I trust in thy word.*
- E. God's Word explains how God blesses his people (v. 65). *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Jehovah, according unto thy word.*
- F. God's Word explains how a man is established (v. 133). *Establish my footsteps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*
- G. God's Word explains how a man can meditate (v. 148). *Mine eyes anticipated the night-watches, that I might meditate on thy word.*
- H. God's Word explains the means by which a man rejoices (v. 162). *I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*

- I. God's Word explains the way a man grows (v. 169). *Let my cry come near before thee, O Jehovah: give me understanding according to thy word.*
- J. God's Word explains the road that leads a man to salvation (v. 170). *Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.*

VII. Its authority.

- A. God's Word is serious (v. 158). *I beheld the treacherous, and was grieved, because they observe not thy word.*
- B. God's Word is final (v. 89). *For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven.*
- C. God's Word is objective (v. 105). *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.*
- D. God's Word is total (v. 160). *The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances (endureth) for ever.*

Conclusion:

The Scriptures are the absolute final authority for man to live, work, and serve Him. God's Word keeps one from sin, helps to look unto eternal life, feeds daily bread, illustrates godly qualities to follow, comforts in time of trouble, encourages to transform to a better life, and is all that is needed for this life.

Give me the Bible for it sustains me and guides me.

THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

Frank Higginbotham

Many people today are anxiously looking for the Lord's return. Some even think this return is eminent. While it is right to look forward to Jesus' return, it must be remembered that no one knows just when that will be. Peter encouraged us to look for the Lord's return. "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:12). Our reason for expecting Him to return is that there are promises of this event given in the Word of God.

The Bible speaks of various 'comings' of the Lord. There was His first coming when He was born of a virgin named Mary. The account of this is given in Matthew 1:21-25. This is the time that John was speaking about in John 1:14. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." There is entirely too much evidence that Jesus lived among men for a person to deny it.

The Bible also refers to Christ's coming in judgment on the disobedient. He came in judgment against the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in particular as we read in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. This occurred in 70 AD. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:27).

The church at Ephesus was warned that Christ will come in judgment against them. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Revelation 2:5).

Another coming of Christ and the one that most people are speaking about today is His coming at the end of the world. The Hebrew writer makes reference to this in this way. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:27,28). It is with reference to this coming that this article is directed.

There are many promises that cause us to expect the Lord to return some day. At the time of His ascension, a promise was given to the human family about this event.

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11).

The promise of His second coming is affirmed by the Lord in John 14:1-3.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Paul makes a serious charge for Timothy and calls on two witnesses to that charge. The first one is God, and the other is the Lord Jesus who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:1). Thus we are made aware that the Lord will appear again.

In Matthew 25 we have the judgment scene described to us. Verse 31 gives us a clear promise of the Lord's return. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:" Yes, Jesus will return in His glory.

Some in Peter's day had become impatient in regard to this promise.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:3-9).

God is not governed by our time schedule. Jesus will return when the time is right.

Just what will be the nature of His coming? Will it be a figurative coming? Will it be secret? Will only a few see Him? The Bible gives us the answer to these questions. He will return in like manner as He left. (Acts 1:11). He left literally, and He will return literally in the clouds. It will not be in secret because every eye shall see him. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Revelation 1:7.

In view of the clear promises of his return, we are made to wonder about the purpose of it. Why will He be returning? This question finds its answer in a statement made to the church at Thessalonica. This congregation had several questions about the Lord's return that Paul answered in his two letters to them.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

A second purpose for his return is to deliver up his kingdom to his Father. "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." (1 Corinthians 15:24). He will not be starting His kingdom but delivering that kingdom up at the end of His reign.

The time of His return has been kept secret. No man knows when it will be. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36). It would seem in view of this very plain statement that men would be wiser than to try to predict the time of this event. This is not the case. Many have tried to tell others what the Lord said no man knows. It will come as a thief in the night. A thief wanting to be successful, would not give signs that would alert others of his coming. Jesus did not give signs for His coming because He wants us to be ready always to meet Him.

The signs that are usually referred to when trying to show the nearness of the return are signs that Jesus gave to the Jews concerning the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Note the instruction of Matthew 24. If you are in the housetop do not go down into the house. If you are in the field, do not turn back again. They were told that it would be harder if a woman were with a child. They were to pray that their flight would not be in the winter. These instructions make no sense at all when applied to the second coming of Christ. To flee would be folly. Where would you go? If He is talking

about the destruction of Jerusalem, they indeed could flee the city, and this is exactly what they did in 70 AD. The Lord discusses the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:3-35. He next discusses His coming in Matthew 24:36 - 25:46. Signs are given for the destruction of Jerusalem so that Christians could flee the destruction of that city.

No signs are given for the Lord's return. We are only exhorted to be always ready.

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

A second example of being prepared is used by the Lord as He told about the servants with five talents, with two talents and with one talent. (Matthew 25:14-30). Both examples teach the Lord's disciples to be ready for His return.

The Bible gives us the strong assurance that Christ will return. It does not tell us the time for the Lord wants us to live a life of preparation for His return and for Heaven.

WAS JESUS TOLERANT?

Winford Claiborne

Like many preachers in our world, I have spent countless hundreds of hours in my preaching life reading and analyzing books on the life of Jesus Christ. Many of these books are really helpful. For example, I have just completed reading Robert Stein's book, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996). Except for a few of Dr. Stein's observations, I profited greatly by reading and thinking about the mission and message of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, some books about Christ are a total disaster. They are based almost entirely on someone's imagination. Those men who organized the so-called "Jesus Seminar" belong in this latter category. They have ignored the very best in American and European scholarship and painted a picture of Jesus that no serious Bible student could recognize. They will have to give an account to God almighty for perverting the truth of the gospel and for turning men's minds away from our Lord and Savior.

One of the strangest views of modernistic theologians is that Jesus was extremely tolerant of doctrines which were contrary to the truth he was teaching and to the moral values he espoused. Theology has been greatly influenced by academics, by the media and by other radical elements in society, such as, the Women's Liberation Movement, the Gay Liberation Front and liberal politics. All of these movements and philosophies oppose any religion or world view which takes a firm stand on truth. In Dennis McCallum's book, *The Death of Truth: What's Wrong with Multiculturalism, the Rejection of Reason and the New Postmodern Diversity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), there is a chapter entitled "Postmodern Impact: Religion." In that chapter by Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum, they quote these words from "Dear Abby": "In my view, the height of arrogance is to attempt to show people the 'errors' in the religion of their choice" (p. 200). I wonder how "Dear Abby" would react to a religion which practiced human sacrifice. Would she object to babies being offered to Moloch? Would it be arrogant to "attempt to show people the 'errors' in the religion of their choice" if their religion promoted anti-Semitic beliefs, as some cultic and sectarian groups unquestionably do? Do "Dear Abby's" columns support tolerance or intolerance among Americans?

The late Dr. Joseph Campbell, one of the nation's most respected experts on myth, did not accept any truth as being objective and ultimate. He insisted that all truth is subjective and experiential. Campbell explained:

"The person who thinks he has found the ultimate truth is wrong. There is an often-quoted verse in Sanskrit, which appears in the Chinese Tao-

te Ching as well: 'He who thinks he knows, doesn't know. He who knows that he doesn't know, knows. For in this context, to know is not to know. And not to know is to know" (p. 220).

Dr. Campbell probably believed that this concept was profound, but it is the essence of foolishness. Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum wisely observe about modern religion: "The only remaining absolute truth is that we cannot know truth" (p. 220). One may be tempted to think that the men who deny the existence of truth are more tolerant than others, but that would be an incorrect conclusion. These people are among the most intolerant in any society. In fact, when such people are in charge of colleges and universities, they refuse to hire or to grant tenure to faculty members who do not agree with them. They are not going to tolerate any dissent from the politically correct view. Anyone who thinks otherwise has not done his homework.

These are the people in American society who want to pass laws forbidding anyone - including preachers of various churches - from speaking out against homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, and similar topics. I have been accused of engaging in "hate speech" because I have addressed all of these topics. Tragically, many American colleges and universities have passed regulations forbidding students or faculty members from opposing what the administrations of those schools have decided were politically correct ideas. Some schools have suspended students because they condemned homosexuality and abortion. How tolerant are the so-called "intellectuals" in such colleges and universities? They tolerate only what they consider to be good, but not what they do not like.

Since Jesus Christ is the great example for Christians, we must ask how tolerant he was of religious teachings and practices which departed from God's pattern for human conduct in work and in worship. Did Jesus endorse or tolerate departures from God's will as revealed in the Old Testament - the book by which Jesus lived and worshipped? On one occasion, some scribes and Pharisees wanted to know why Christ's disciples transgressed the traditions of the elders. They apparently were not too concerned about the law of God but the traditions of the Jewish leaders. Jesus asked the Jewish scribes and Pharisees: "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition" (Mt. 15:1-4). If Jesus were so tolerant as liberal theologians make him out to be, why would he be troubled because the Jews were violating God's law? Will you please pay special attention these words? "This people draws near unto me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15:8-9). If liberal theologians have read these words from Matthew 15, how do they arrive at the conclusion that Jesus was tolerant of those who taught false doctrine and practiced whatever they chose.

I shall not take time today to read long excerpts from Matthew 23, but all students of the word know that his is one of the strongest condemnations of hypocrisy to be found anywhere. Just four verses from this chapter will have to suffice today. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done (that is, tithing mint, anise and cummin) and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within are full of extortion and excess. You blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Mt. 23:23-26). How could anyone be less tolerant of hypocrisy and other kinds of evil than Jesus was?

Our Lord's meeting with the Samaritan at Jacob's well in Sychar, Samaria, has to be one of the most revealing, challenging and significant events in the life of Jesus Christ. The conversation in John four was between the sinless Son of God, a strict Jew, and an immoral Samaritan woman. The woman was deeply puzzled when Jesus spoke to her of the living water that will spring up in a human being and be in him a well of water unto everlasting life (John 4:14). She knew she was meeting with an unusual prophet. So she asked him about the difference between the worship of the Jews and that of the Samaritan. She said to Jesus: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; but you say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship God" (John 4:20). If Jesus had been as tolerant as some modern teachers and their followers believe, he would have said to the woman: "My people have always worshipped in Jerusalem, but it really does not matter where you worship so long as you are honest and sincere. I am not going to be so narrow-minded as to condemn worship of another religion. After all, there are many ways to God." That is the way many New Agers and many liberal theologians discuss religious questions, but that is not what Jesus said. He told the Samaritan woman: "Woman, believe me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:21-22).

Can you imagine a more intolerant attitude than that manifested by Jesus Christ in his meeting with a woman of another religion? Surely, Jesus was not so narrow-minded that he believed there was only one way to God. Could he not have been a little less harsh by simply saying, "Our religion is the best, but you are alright. I would like for you to come to God through his revealed will, but I am not going to be so arrogant as to 'attempt to show you the 'errors' of the religion of your choice.'" You know Jesus did not answer in that way and could not. Later in the book of John, the Son of God put the plan of God on the line by saying, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). These words breathe the spirit of intolerance,

at least, so far as modernistic theologians and radical academicians are concerned. But they are the very essence of New Testament Christianity.

Our Lord's contacts with the Pharisees were many and often very intense, but he seldom had confrontations with the Sadducees. The Sadducees were more influential because they were wealthier than the Pharisees, but there were not so many of them as there were of the Pharisees. Luke records an incident involving Christ's meeting with some Sadducees. The Sadducees were ancient religious liberals, rejecting the realm of the supernatural. They asked Jesus about a man who had been involved in levirate marriage. A man married and then died. His widow married his brother and then the brother died. She kept on marrying the brothers until all seven of the men died. Finally, the woman died. The Sadducees then asked the Lord: "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven, seeing they all had her" (Mt. 22:23-28)? Liberal theologians would be angered by such questions. They almost certainly would ask: "What difference does all of this make? If we are going to be tolerant, broad-minded and understanding, we must not allow our petty differences to separate us. Jesus knew, and we ought to know from his teaching, that this was a very vital issue which had to be resolved. He said to the Sadducees:

"You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt. 22:29-32).

If Jesus were so tolerant as modern theologians and others pretend, why would he ever use the word "err" in speaking of another religious view? The word "err" (*plano* in the Greek) means to cause to wander, to lead astray, to deceive. How absolutely intolerant to tell a man that his religion leads men astray, that it will cause them to be lost.

While Jesus may not have tolerated doctrines which were contrary to the law of Moses, he surely was tolerant of the moral transgressions of the law of God. After all, it was the Son of God who prayed for those who placed him on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). If you think our Lord's graciousness toward those who crucified him indicates he could pass over moral misconduct, you need to look a little more carefully at his sermons and conversations. In his great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to his own disciples: "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mt. 5:27-28). The Jews fully understood, as we ought to, that Jesus condemned the act of adultery, but he also condemned thinking about

adultery. Would such condemnation include such acts as reading pornography, looking at salacious movies and television programs, listening to sexy talk on telephones and viewing certain activities on the Internet? Do you honestly think Jesus would tolerate any of these demeaning and degrading acts? "Oh, but he was so tolerant." Was he really? Where do you find that in the word of God?

One other example from the Sermon on the Mount should show our Lord's intolerance of immorality.

"You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so" (Mt. 5:43-47)?

Jesus Christ spent his life teaching men about loving God and one another. How could he tolerate mistreatment or misuse of others?

I have shown conclusively from the scriptures that Jesus Christ did not and could not tolerate false doctrine, hypocritical behavior and neglect of one's duties to God and to our fellowmen. Anyone who reads the Bible with an open mind cannot come to any other conclusion. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are literally filled with our Lord's opposition to every kind of evil the devil can throw at human beings. That was our Lord's reason for teaching his disciples: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). That was also our Lord's reason for giving us the Golden Rule. "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mt. 7:12).

The Son of God vigorously opposed and condemned false teaching and ungodly conduct, but he was tolerant of people. Why else would he leave the very presence of God, suffer and die on the cross - if he did not love us - all of us? No one taught that truth more beautifully and powerfully than the apostle Paul. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus Christ did not approve of any sin - even the sins committed by his inner circle - but he loved and tolerated the sinner. If he had not done so, he would simply have wiped all sinners from the very face of the earth.

Let us return briefly to our Lord's meeting with the Samaritan woman. Please remember: He was a man; she was a woman. He was a Jew; she was a Samaritan. He was the spotless Son of God; she was an adulteress. She had had five husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. Could you bring yourself to talk and associate with such a woman right out in public? What would the neighbors say when they witness Jesus the great prophet who knows all men's hearts speaking with a notoriously promiscuous woman? Our Lord apparently was not too concerned about what others might say. He wanted to point the Samaritan woman to the kingdom of God. He did not tolerate her worship or her life, but he tolerated her. In fact, he went beyond toleration. He embraced the opportunity to instruct the woman about God's revelation and to point to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

One of the major criticisms the Pharisees directed against Jesus was his association with what they considered "low life." One notable example appears in Matthew's gospel.

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? And when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They who are whole do not need a physician, but they who are sick. But go and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mt. 9:10-13).

Our Lord's love for all people - publicans and sinners and all others - led him to sacrifice time and effort in order to teach them and bring them to God almighty. Many of the Jewish leaders objected to his association with the publicans, prostitutes, thieves and other sinners, but he did it because he knew it was the will of God. Can we not learn from our Savior's example?

The apostle Peter was not very tolerant with the Gentiles; neither were most of the early Christians. The Holy Spirit knew Peter would have difficulty going to the house of a Gentile to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter was visiting in Joppa when some men were sent from Cornelius to invite Peter to preach to Cornelius and his household. Peter was given a vision which showed a vessel descending unto him. It was knit at the corners, and let down to the earth. In the vessel were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things and fowls of the air. A voice commanded Peter: "Rise, kill and eat." Peter's Jewish upbringing would not allow him to obey the command. He said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything which is common or unclean." The vision was repeated three times, almost certainly to convince a biased Jew.

While Peter was contemplating the meaning of the vision, some men came from Cornelius and made inquiry for Simon Peter at Simon the tanner's house. Peter was urged to arise and go with the men who had come from Cornelius. Because Simon Peter obeyed the Lord, he was privileged to preach the very first sermon to Gentiles. As a result of his preaching, Cornelius and his household believed on the Lord and were baptized into Christ. Peter learned a very valuable lesson. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is accepted of him" (Acts 10:34-35). Without the vision, it is unlikely Peter would have tolerated any association with Gentiles. Even after this vision, Peter had difficulty tolerating Gentiles, especially in the presence of Jews. The apostle Paul had to rebuke Peter because of the latter's conduct at Antioch. Learning to love people of all races, colors, nations and stations in life is not always easy. But God demands it of his people. Jesus is our great example in this respect, as in all other respects.

The books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus were written to preachers. If we want to know if we are supposed to tolerate sin, these books should be of great help to us. Paul told Timothy that the law was good, if a man use it lawfully; "knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them who defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing which is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:8-10). No Christian can tolerate these evils. In addition, we must speak out against them.

Let me read without comment a few passages from these three books.

- "Those who sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 6:10).
- "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers" (2 Tim. 2:14).
- "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:2-5).
- Paul commanded Titus: "Speak the things which become sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1).

If one can find tolerance for sin in any of these verses, he has seen in them what most others have not. They are given so that we can help others to be saved by getting rid of the sin in their lives - not tolerating their sin. Unless men and women repent of their sins, they cannot inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Because of America's toleration of many gross sins, such as, abortion, homosexuality, greed, drunkenness and such like, our nation faces some very tough times. As a nation, we are not going to begin improvement of our moral values until homes, churches and other institutions take a stand against evil - all evils. We may think we are being open-minded and generous when we fail to oppose immorality, but we are just being morally insensitive and unholy. It is time - in fact, it is way past time - that the good people of America stand up and be heard. Oh, we will be accused of being intolerant, but that is nothing compared to what the Lord will say to us if we fail to preach and promote the moral values he has revealed in his word.

May God help us to be a light in this world of darkness.

