

FIRST PRINCIPLES

By

J. C. CHOATE

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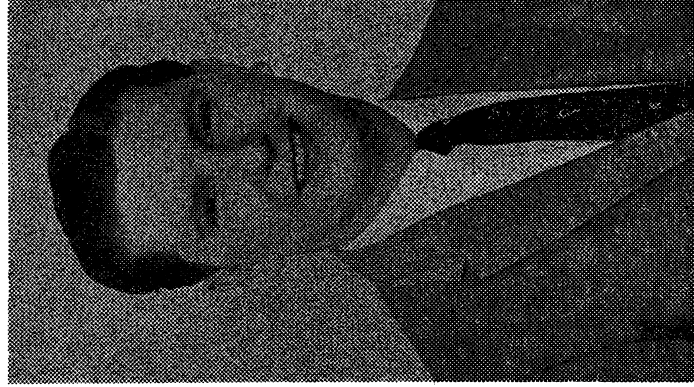
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DEDICATION

**To the one who has stood beside
me for the past five years — To
the one who has encouraged me
every step of the way — To the
mother of our own, Sheila Lynn
— To the one I owe so much —
To Betty, my wonderful wife**



J. C. CHOATE

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF J. C. CHOATE

J. C. Choate was born on Feb. 6, 1932 near the city of Corinth, Mississippi, and grew up in that vicinity. As a young boy he attended several denominational churches, but oddly enough, never became a member of any of them. At the age of sixteen, he visited a gospel meeting of the church of Christ, was convinced of the truth, and was baptized by Bro. J. A. Thornton. A few nights later his parents also obeyed the gospel.

The Lord's church in that area was very small and thus, almost immediately Bro. Choate began to wait on the table, lead in prayer, and assist in other ways. That same year he preached his first sermon, "A CHALLENGE TO YOU," to another small congregation called New Hope. Since that time he has missed preaching only five Lord's Days and that was because of an extended trip in 1955.

Bro. Choate started his college education in 1950 at Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee. From there he went to David Lipscomb in Nashville and Alabama Christian in Montgomery, graduating in the spring of 1955 with his B. A. degree.

That summer he went on a tour, conducted by Bro. J. T. Marlin, to the "Holy Land" and Europe, and upon returning home he married Miss Betty Burton of Winona, Mississippi on Aug. 6. They lived in Tupelo, Mississippi where he was preaching at the time,

until the first part of 1956 when they moved to Belzoni, Mississippi to begin work there.

From April 7, 1957 to May 11, 1958 he worked with the church in Shafter, California; then he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he has labored with the Central congregation for the past two years.

. . . A few "numbers" about Bro. Choate: he has published eleven books, founded a book club, edits a Quarterly, preached in twenty-five states and Canada, worked "full time" with six congregations, had several debates, preached in numerous gospel meetings, writes extensively through the brotherhood papers, appeared on the Harding College Lectureship, taught in the Wisconsin and Yellowstone Bible Encampments, helped to sell Minnesota on the idea of beginning a camp, and is presently working on plans to enter Bombay, India to preach the gospel.

FOREWORD

As the title of this little book suggests, it is composed of a series of simple lessons pertaining to certain fundamental truths of holy writ.

A number of the articles have appeared in different religious papers over the country and the one entitled **WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?** has been printed in tract form.

The purpose of these studies is to acquaint one and all alike with the first principles that are set forth in the word of God; to encourage the sinner to become a Christian and nothing more — to bring the erring one back to the fold before it is too late — to keep the Christian pressing on toward the mark that is set before him.

It is hoped that this work will be a blessing to all who come in contact with it; if so, may God have all the praise.

J. C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi

September 20, 1960

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I

THE WORD OF GOD

God truly blessed mankind with his gift of the scriptures. It would be well for every soul to realize this and express his appreciation of the same through a study of them and an earnest endeavour to abide by such. It matters not how smart a man may become he'll never outgrow his need for God's revelation.

The Bible is the greatest book the world has ever known, and there are many reasons for this. It is not just another book, but is unique and unusual. Here is a collection of writings which has been handed down through the years, and yet, remains the most timely and useful book ever penned. It has had many foes but has outlived all of them, being victorious in every battle. It still remains the best seller from year to year, although many popular books are being brought out continually.

One reason for the greatness of the scripture is due to the fact that it is all given by inspiration of God. Every word of it is of a divine nature. Therefore, man may read and believe it all without having to fear that portions of it may be spurious or uninspired. Along this line, Peter has said: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (1 Pet. 1:21). Paul echo's Peter's statement, and carries the thought further, as he says,

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Doubt not God’s word then, but believe it. To doubt one word of the Bible is but to deny all of it as far as the Lord is concerned.

Since all scripture is inspired of God, it is to be respected as such. Man has not been given the authority to add to it, subtract from it, or substitute for it in any way. As a matter of fact, God has warned against such. John informs us, **“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Rev. 22:18, 19).** Then Paul adds: **“As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:9).** It is a serious thing, then, to deal with the word of God. Moreover, it is a serious thing not to understand this fundamental truth.

The word of God is powerful; it has the power to save all who will believe and obey it. (John 8:32; 17:17). Not only will it save a soul, but it will keep him in the pathway of light, thus, perfecting his soul for the world to come. (Ps. 119:105; Rev. 22:14).

The Bible is an all purpose book; it will comfort one

in sorrow; encourage one who is in despair; strengthen one who is weak; give hope to the lost, etc. If a soul has a need, the book of all books can supply it; yea, if an individual has a question, the Bible will answer it. The scripture tells where man came from, his purpose here, and where he is going. Then too, the Bible serves as man's guidebook, his roadmap, etc.

The word of God is eternal in nature in that it will never pass away. Christ says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35). And finally, the Bible will judge us, for we read: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Friend of mine, believe the word of God; make it your daily companion; obey it and let it govern your life in all that you say or do, and it will bless you in this world and in the world to come. Just remember the word will stand forever, and one day, judge the world. Hence, the word can save, but it can also condemn.

II

BACK TO THE BIBLE

The religious world is where it is because God's word has been pushed aside and replaced with the doctrines and commandments of men. But it is a sad day indeed when an individual will bow to man before he will listen to the God of heaven. This should make all quiver and cry out in one voice: "God, forgive us for we know not what we do."

Man as a whole needs to return to the Bible for a "thus saith the Lord." Paul tells us why this should be done, when he says: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). If the scripture completely furnishes man unto all good works, why should anyone want to leave it for something new? The answer must be that such a soul does not have the love for the truth that he should have.

The church of Christ recognizes the Bible as being the complete source book for those things pertaining to spiritual matters. Consequently, this church endeavours to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent, doing Bible things in Bible ways. On this basis we plead with the religious people around about us to return to the Bible for ev-

everything that is said or done in the name of Christ. As long as one stays with the Bible he cannot go wrong, but when he departs from it his troubles begin to pile up.

If we believe the Bible like we say we do, then it's back to the Bible for the truth about the church. Christ says: "And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18). He promised to build his church and he kept that promise according to Acts 2. Now, are we members of that church?

Since the Bible is man's complete guide, then it is back to the Bible for the true gospel. You know, there are many perverted gospels being preached but upon turning to the scripture we learn that there is but one gospel which will save, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul says of it, "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." (Rom. 1:16). To believe and obey the gospel one must repent of his sins, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Have you obeyed this gospel?

The Bible being the book of God, then it's back to the Bible for true worship. We often hear that one may worship as he pleases just so long as he is honest and sincere, but this theory has no foundation as far as the scripture is concerned. Christ tells us: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24). True worship demands that the Christian assemble each

first day of the week to pray, study, sing, partake of the Lord's Supper, and give. (Lk. 18:1; 2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:16; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). In light of the truth, do we worship God in an acceptable way?

If we are going to obey God, it's back to the Bible for the truth about the Christian life. The inspired word no where says that if one is once saved he is always saved, but on the other hand, it tells us that if we are Christians we must remain faithful to the Lord in order to eventually and eternally be saved. We read: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10). To be a true Christian one must put the Lord first in all that he does, following him every day of his life. In view of this can we say that we are New Testament Christians?

Yes, it's back to the Bible for the things which have been mentioned; but not only so, if we sincerely believe God's word, it's back to the Bible for the name (1 Pet. 4:16), for the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), for the head of the church (Eph. 5:23), for saving faith (Eph. 4:5), for true baptism (Col. 2:12), for the way (John 14:6), and yea, for everything that pertains to truth and righteousness. (John 8:32; Tit. 2:11, 12).

III

THE TWO COVENANTS

The Bible is composed of two main books — the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is commonly called the Old Covenant while the New Testament is called the New Covenant. The term covenant has reference to an agreement made between two parties. In the Old Covenant, God simply made an agreement with his people of long ago. Coming on down to the New Covenant, God made a new testament or new will and sealed it with the blood of his only begotten Son.

The Hebrew writer speaks of the first and second covenants and shows the difference in the two, explaining that the second is much greater than the first. We read: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men

are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9:13-17). According to these verses of scripture the first covenant has been replaced by a much better one; in this case it took the death of its author to seal it and put it into effect.

Christ lived under the first covenant and he expresses his attitude toward it in this manner: "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." (Matt. 5: 17, 18). Later, on the cross Christ said: "It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30). What was finished? The law, or the first covenant. We know this was the case because after the Lord's resurrection he said to his disciples: "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." (Lk. 24:44).

The apostle Paul explained unto the Colossians that Christ nailed the law to his cross. Listen to his statement: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." (Col. 2:14). Thus, when some trouble came up in the church over circumcision and keeping the law of Moses, the apostle Peter stood up in the midst of the elders and apostles and other brethren who were gathered in Jerusalem, and asked this question: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the

neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). Peter wanted to know why anyone should want to bind a law on the Gentiles which the Jews themselves were not able to keep. The law demanded perfection and they were not able to keep it, consequently, it was taken out of the way being replaced by a law of grace. (John 1:17).

Every soul should make it a practice to follow Paul's advice: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). We must study, but we must also learn to rightly divide the word as we study. Many have overlooked this important factor and as a result are striving to hold to the law of Moses with one hand and to the Lord with the other. But Paul informs us that if we go back to the law we are fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4).

We must believe the entire Bible but we must also remember that the Old Testament is no longer binding. The inspired writer tells us that the first covenant now serves as an example, that we should not sin as many of former days did, but rather we should obey God. (1 Cor. 10; Rom. 11:22). Hence, we are to look to the New Testament, or the New Covenant, as being the perfect law of liberty for it is that covenant which is binding.

IV

THE BROAD AND NARROW WAYS

There comes a time in one's life when he must make an important decision: He must determine which road he is going to take — the broad way or the narrow way. Christ laid down this truth in the sermon on the mount, when he said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13, 14). Now think seriously about what the Lord had to say, for such not only touched the lives of those present but it also involves each of us.

To begin with we should note that there are two roads, or two ways. How many are there now? Just two and no more. This means then that we are going to have to travel upon one or the other. There is just no way of getting around it. In other words, one cannot travel on the broad and narrow ways at the same time — there is no middle road in this case. If you are on the broad way then it means that you cannot be on the narrow road, and *visa versa*.

Next observe that one of these ways is broad and the other is narrow. No doubt about it, there is plenty of room on the broad road, but the other is quite the opposite. Also observe that there is nothing

said about the broad way being strait, but the Lord emphatically declares the narrow way to be strait. This suggests, then, that one is crooked, but the other is such that a person can tell where he is going.

The Lord now states that many shall be upon the broad way but only a few upon the narrow way. This indicates that one is popular and the other is not. Christ surely knew what he was talking about because history bears out such a truth. Not only so, but just look around you, and you can readily see what the Lord meant.

The sad part about all of this is that one of these ways leads to destruction, specifically, the broad way. Since the Lord said that the majority would travel upon the broad way, we know where the masses of the people are going. But what about the other way? Well, the Lord says the narrow way leads to life, but since he tells us that only a few will travel upon this way, we know by divine authority that only a few will eventually go home to heaven. Of course, many may be saved as far as we are concerned but in comparison with all the lost, it is even as the Lord has said: Only a few will be saved in the world to come.

Christ invites all to enter the strait gate; he doesn't force people to enter but he does invite them to. If one will enter, the Lord will surely bless him. However, if one so desires, he may travel upon the broad way. Again, it should be remembered that man is a free moral agent and has the power to make up his own mind about what he will, or will not, do.

To travel upon the narrow way is but to travel with

the Lord. On the other hand, in taking the broad way one is doing nothing more than following the Devil. Christ is always pleading with man to enter the strait gate, but the Devil works just as hard to keep man on his side. So you can see, there is a continual warfare going on between the Lord and Satan. Not only is that true, but when one makes up his mind about who he will stand with, he immediately takes up the fight.

My friend, if you have reached the age of accountability then cast your lots with the Lord. However, if you have been walking with the enemy for some time, why not reconsider and give your allegiance to him who died for you? Remember, every time you hear a gospel sermon or meditate upon the truth you have to decide who you will accept, and who you will reject.

You may enter the strait and narrow way through obedience to the gospel of Christ. Then if you will but travel upon that road, ever being faithful to the Lord, one day it will lead you through the gates into the heavenly city. Christ has said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6).

V

THE ALIEN SINNER

The alien sinner is that person who has reached the age of accountability but has not yet obeyed his creator. The word alien itself means strange, foreign; one who belongs to another country or kingdom. Thus, those who have not obeyed the gospel of God are citizens of Satan's kingdom, and consequently, are aliens as far as the Lord is concerned.

All people, whether considered good or bad, are classified as aliens until they accept the terms which make them citizens of the kingdom of God. The conditions which transfer one from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light are the same conditions that saves one from his alien or foreign sins. (Col. 1:13, 14).

When one enters the world he is without sin altogether, and should he die in such a state he would go home to be with God. (Matt. 18:3). However, as a child grows and develops he reaches the period of his life which is commonly called the age of accountability. That is, he knows right from wrong. Some reach this age sooner than others, depending upon the teaching which they have recieved, as well as other things. But if an individual is normal, has a good mind, he is going to grow up to know right from wrong. Hence, upon reaching such an age he automatically becomes a sinner, an alien sinner. Of such people Paul has

said, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23).

Now if all have sinned then it stands to reason that all stand in need of a saviour. Thus, God sent his Son into the world to save the lost. (John 3:16). Yes, Christ died on the cross to save the sinner. We read: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). Without Christ man would surely die in his sin, but with Christ there is hope. Of course, there are those who still die in their sin, but it is not the Lord's fault, but rather their own. God has provided salvation for all who want it.

Briefly now consider the conditions or terms which one must meet in order to become a citizen of the Lord's kingdom. And keep in mind that one must meet the Lord's conditions: man is not at liberty to draw up his own terms. The kingdom belongs to Christ, and therefore, he has a right to say who can enter and who cannot; and it all depends on a number of factors. But as we continue, please note that the alien sinner must first of all believe in God. The scripture reads: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). After faith one must repent of all his sins, for Paul has said: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30). Then after scripturally believing and repenting one must confess with the mouth that Christ is the Son of God. Listen again to Paul: "For

with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10). One is still not in the kingdom even though he believes, has repented, and has confessed Christ, for now he must be baptized to wash away his sins. The Lord himself tells us, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:16). But now consider this verse of scripture: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13). Thus, one must obey the gospel in order to enter the body of Christ. But the body of Christ is the church of Christ and the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ. (Eph. 1:22, 23; Matt. 16:18, 19). My friend, God's way is the only way.

Upon entering the church or kingdom, one is no longer counted as an alien sinner but rather a citizen of the kingdom of God, a child of the most high God. Furthermore, as a citizen of God's domain he is entitled to all of the privileges and blessings of the kingdom. As a child of God he is not only saved, but if he will remain a true and loyal citizen one day he will inherit that upper and better home, to live and dwell with God forever.

Dear sinner, leave Satan behind and obey God today.

VI

THINGS THAT SAVE

One cannot put his finger on any one certain thing which saves him from his past, or alien, sins. Some attempt to do it but they only make fools of themselves when their theories are placed beside the scriptures. You see, the Bible informs us that it is a combination of things which saves. With this in mind please consider the following:

1. Faith saves. Paul and Silas told the jailor: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31). Please observe that faith "only" was not mentioned.
2. Repentance saves. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. (2 Cor. 7:10). The Lord said upon one occasion that one must either repent or perish.
3. Confession saves. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10). The Lord promised that if we will confess him before men he will confess us before his Father.
4. Baptism saves. The apostle Peter says: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth

of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21). Some reject baptism, but regardless of what man says the Bible still teaches that one must be baptized to be saved.

5. Blood saves. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1: 18, 19).
6. Grace saves. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9). Observe that we are saved by grace through faith.
7. Mercy saves. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. 3:5).
8. Work saves. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12). To obey God's commands is to work out our salvation.
9. Love saves. Christ says: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). To love him is to obey him.
10. Hope saves. "And every man that hath this

hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3). Had it not been for hope man would have given up long ago.

11. Truth saves. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). The word of God is truth.
12. Christ saves. Paul says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of which I am chief." (1 Tim. 1:15).
13. God saves. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:3, 4).

No, the Bible does not say that any one thing saves, but it lists a number of things which have to do with the saving of a soul. One cannot come along and accept part of the truth and be saved by it. But if a person wants to obtain the remission of his sins he must have a knowledge of the truth; he must believe the will of God; and finally, he must obey the law of God in order to be counted with the righteous.

VII

HEARING GOD'S WORD

At the transfiguration of Christ, God voiced his approval of his Son. The record reads: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5). Please note that God did not say that we are to hear Moses or one of the other greats of the Old Testament, but rather that we should hear Christ. Hence, that's exactly what we are to do. The Hebrew writer echoes this truth in affirming: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Heb. 2:1, 2). At one time God may have spoken through the prophets, etc., but now he speaks to us through his Son, and that means that Christ speaks to us through the word.

We are to hear Christ and in so doing we hear God and his word, for Christ has said: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 49, 50). It is imperative that we hear God's word,

for the word is truth and the truth makes free. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17). "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32).

The Bible nowhere says that we are to wait for some sign or miracle before putting forth an effort to obey God's will. The scripture nowhere hints to the fact that we should wait on a wee small voice, and so on. The God of heaven does not reveal his will to man through some miraculous medium; he does not endeavour to speak to man in a direct way; he does not send the Spirit upon a soul for the purpose of converting him. But the Bible teaches that we are to hear God's word, and if we will do this we may know fully what the Lord would have us to do to be saved. Therefore, in the words of the Lord: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. 11:15).

Some adhere to the doctrine that one can be saved apart from hearing God's word, but such is certainly foreign to the language of the apostle Paul, for he says: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:13-17). According to these verses

of scripture one must hear God's word before he can obey it. This is emphasized throughout the New Testament, and mind you, in every case of conversation which is recorded, there was always a preacher on hand to present the truth and then to assist the believers in obeying their maker.

There are two ways in which one may hear God's word: either by reading the scriptures or by the mouth of a faithful gospel preacher. Hence, it is not a matter of just hearing something. Many do this but are still lost. In order for a person to be saved he must hear the truth. But on the other hand, it is not enough just to hear the truth. If the truth is going to save one, he must of necessity obey it. James thus tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. (James 1:22).

Friend of mine, there are many reasons why we should want to hear God's word. Through such one is able to come to a knowledge of the truth, faith is produced in the heart, and through all of this, there is a desire to obey the will of God and to walk according to his precepts. Since this is so, every soul should be intently interested in hearing God's word, ever remembering that he will bless those who handle aright the truth; but on the other hand, those who refuse it will have to face it as their judge in the world to come. (John 12:48).

VIII

FAITH IN CHRIST

If the Bible teaches anything it teaches that one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Christ says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1). He continues: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:29). "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30, 31).

To believe in the Lord is but to do his works, for he states: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12). The saviour goes on to say: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14). Therefore, if an individual believes the Lord and his will he is going to obey him without a quibble. But you mark it down: When a person begins to back off on something which the Lord has said, you can say that he is an unbeliever. Remember then, to believe the Lord is to obey him.

The scriptures further reveal to us that faith is a condition of salvation. This faith is to come as a re-

sult of hearing God's word. (Rom. 10:17). Thus we read where the Lord commissioned the apostles to go into all the world for the purpose of preaching the gospel to every creature and, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:16). Other verses of scripture which convince us that one must believe in order to be saved are these: "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). "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31). No doubt about it then; one must believe and express his faith in the Lord to be saved.

A Bible faith will lead one to repent of his sins; it will lead him to confess Christ as being the Son of God; it will lead him to be baptized for the remission of sins. (Lk. 13:3; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38). If one understands what the Bible has to say on the subject of faith, he can truthfully say that faith saves, of course, understanding that obedience to the other commands of the gospel is involved. Thus, this kind of faith may be referred to as a Bible faith, a saving faith, a working faith, and so on. Now this is the use of faith in the broad sense of the word.

When it comes to faith as a command it should be understood that this is only one of the four commands of the gospel. Faith must of necessity come first, but after that comes repentance, confession, and baptism. Thinking of faith from this standpoint, the apostle Paul says that it is unto salvation. Listen to the man

of God: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10). Hence, faith is unto salvation, or going in the direction of the same. Think of the commands of the gospel in terms of four steps. The first step is faith; the second repentance; the third confession; and fourth and final step is baptism. Note, each step takes one a little closer to salvation, and yet, one is not saved until he has taken the final step. Thus, that step puts one into the house of God, the body of Christ. (Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:15).

Faith only will not save any more than baptism only will save. But faith plus obedience will save. In the long ago, James said: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24). Faith expresses itself in obedience, or in works. As stated earlier, faith itself is considered a work of God. Hence, man is saved in this sense by works.

Good friend, how much faith do you have? Is your faith dead or do you have a working faith? Is your faith strong enough to lead you to obey the gospel of Christ, and to live the Christian life? If it is, you have the kind of faith that will save you in this world and in the world to come. Yea, you have the kind of faith which pleases God. (Heb. 11:6).

IX

REPENT OR PERISH

As a basis for our study, please consider the following statement made by Christ himself: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Lk. 13:3). In order to emphasize this truth the Lord used the identical phraseology in the fifth verse. Now in connection with all of this, two cases were brought up where sinners had had to pay for their ungodliness, and the conclusion was that if such was true of them, then those present were in need of repenting of their sins lest one day they should have to reap the consequences. Thus, the Lord just made it plain and simple: You either repent or perish. They were given a choice. Such was not only true of them but the same warning and choice has come down to us.

Paul later said that God now requires all men every where to repent. He says specifically: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30). At one time God may have over looked certain things, but Paul assures us it is different now. The inspired apostle says that God now requires all men every where to repent, and you know, that includes you and me and everybody else. What about it? Why, God has commanded us to repent. What if we don't? We'll just have to answer for it. Remember one

thing: God has commanded us to repent and if we fail to, he won't be responsible.

The scripture further tells us that one must repent of his sins in order to obey the gospel of Christ. You remember after Peter had preached the first gospel sermon in fact, a group of people wanted to know what they should do to be saved, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). No doubt about it then; one must repent in order to obtain the remission of his sins. Leave off repentance and one could not be saved.

What is repentance? We know that it is more than just feeling sorry for what had happened. Repentance is more than just a confession of one's past sins, etc. True repentance involves a change of heart, a complete turning around. In other words, it means that if one is going in the direction of sin, he immediately turns and goes in the other direction. To illustrate further: It means that if one hates his neighbor he will now love him; that if he has been stealing, in the future he will give to the poor; that if he has been cursing, from now on he will praise God, etc. Yes, repentance is a complete change of life, disposition, outlook, feeling, attitude, and so on. To repent is to give up an old life in order to begin a new one, no longer to be a servant of the Devil but henceforth to be a servant of God. That is true repentance.

Paul expained to the Corinthians: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repent-

ed of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance is a condition of salvation but such does not mean that one is saved on the basis of repentance only. Repentance is unto salvation, going in the direction thereof. Repentance, scriptural repentance, must be preceded by genuine faith and followed by the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and finally result in baptism for the remission of sins. (Mk. 16:16; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; 22:16). So you can see that there are more conditions of salvation than one; that each is equally important, and must be dealt with with that thought in mind.

Peter tells us that the Lord is interested in the salvation of each soul, when he says: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9). Christ is anxious that every soul repent of his sins. Why does he desire that we take such a step? Because it is necessary to the saving of our souls. Sin, or those who have sinned, will not be able to enter the portals of heaven, so if we are allowed to go in we must repent of our sins and live holy lives before God.

Don't forget: the Lord has put it on this basis — repent or perish. Friend, repent of your sins and obey the gospel of Christ that you might be saved. Do it today.

X

CONFESSING UNTO SALVATION

We often refer to the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as being a good confession. This seems to be a fine definition because if there is any confession which can be called good, it would certainly be this one. The sweetest words that can fall from the lips of mortal man is that he believes that Christ is God's only begotten Son.

To confess is to acknowledge; to make a certain thing or things known; to declare a certain truth, or truths, etc. This is exactly what takes place when making the good confession. The Bible teaches that before one can be saved he must publicly state his faith in Christ.

The Lord says: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32, 33). Thus, the Lord has promised that if we will confess him before men he will confess us before the Father. On the other hand if we deny him before men he will deny us before the Father. Please note that the Lord assures us that **WHOSOEVER** shall confess him or deny him shall be confessed or denied before the Father in heaven. The decision is left up to man in either case, with the assurance that Christ's action will be based on the same.

Now listen to the words of the apostle Paul as he speaks on this same subject: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10). From this verse of scripture we learn that one must confess with the mouth, and in the next place, the confession is unto salvation. The last part is especially interesting since many claim that all a person must do to be saved is to confess faith in Christ. But Paul says here that the confession is unto salvation, in the direction thereof.

On turning to the book of Acts we have an example of one confessing Christ. The record says that Philip joined himself to the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot and after having conversed over certain religious matters: "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:35-39). Please observe that upon learning the truth, the eunuch desired to obey it, but before his baptism he had to confess Christ as being the Son of God. This was not an exception: it was

the rule, and if this man had to confess Christ then all others who desire to obey the Lord must do likewise.

The confession is a condition of salvation. It must be preceded by scriptural faith and repentance but followed by baptism for the remission of sins. (Heb. 11:6; Acts 2:38). If one left off the confession it would be impossible to obey the gospel of Christ, but upon making the good confession one is in position to complete his obedience to the truth through the act of baptism. Every condition, or every step in relation to the gospel, is important.

Now to the big question: Have you made the good confession? Won't you confess your faith in Christ in order that you might continue your obedience and be saved? If you have made that confession, may the Lord help you to live faithful to it all the days of your life; but on the other hand, if you have not as yet confessed Christ before men then may you soon realize your duty before God and determine within your heart to do that which he had commanded. Yes, confess the Lord and if you will, one day he will confess you. Dear one, you'll never regret it and I beseech you to own the Christ before it is too late.

XI

BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS

On the day of Pentecost Peter preached the gospel of Christ for the first time in fact. Upon hearing the truth the question was asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Now note the answer given: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37, 38). In substance Peter was saying: If you want to be saved you must repent of your sins and be baptized to have the remission of those sins; and as a result of this, you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The record goes on to say that around three thousand of them obeyed the Lord and were added to the church.

In every example of conversion to be found within the book of Acts, one particular act stands out, and that is baptism. Aside from the example already given consider the conversion of the eunuch, the conversion of Saul, the conversion of Cornelius, etc. (Acts 8, 9, 10). If people of New Testament times had to be baptized in order to be saved, it stands to reason that if we are going to be saved we must be baptized. But somebody says: "I think one can be saved without being baptized." It is not a matter of what you think, it is a matter of what the Bible teaches.

There are those who teach that on repenting of

one's sins, a person receives the remission of his sins and then may be baptized to express such. But according to Acts 2:38 one must repent of his sins and then be baptized to have the remission of his sins. Now who is right on the matter? Friend, I don't know about you, but I'll take the Bible any time. It matters not what man may say about baptism, my New Testament tells me that one must be baptized to please the Lord.

To further emphasize the importance of baptism, go with me to some other passages of scripture. Christ commissioned the apostles: "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." (Mk. 16:15, 16). To believe and be baptized is to be saved but to believe not is to be damned. It's just that simple.

Next consider another statement made by the apostle Peter: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21). The writer here says emphatically that baptism saves. Who will be the first one to deny Peter's statement? Friend, if you say that one can be saved without baptism you are calling this apostle a liar, and God as well. Think this over and ask yourself the question: "Do I believe the scripture?"

These verses also suggest the importance of baptism: Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptized. (Acts 10:48). Saul was asked to arise

and be baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). The sinner is to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 28: 19, 20). Now in the light of these truths, and others, a person would be a fool to think for a minute that baptism is unimportant.

True baptism is a burial or immersion in water. An example of this may be found in Acts 8. Then Paul definitely says: "Buried with him by baptism." (Col. 2:12). Anything short of a burial in water cannot be scriptural baptism. This is further stated in Rom. 6:3, 4). Also, he says that this act puts one into Christ, and the church. (Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Cor. 12:13). But how many baptisms are there? There is only one true baptism. (Eph. 4:5).

Baptism alone will not save anyone. Yes, the scriptures say that baptism saves but they no where say that baptism only saves. When does baptism save? Only after one has scripturally believed, repented of his sins, and confessed Christ as the Son of God. Also remember that baptism does not assure eternal salvation. That is, after one has been baptized for the remission of sins he must live the faithful Christian life to go home to heaven. Baptism is a test; God wants to see if you believe his word to the extent that you will go down into the water to be immersed. Those who pass this test are saved but those who fail aren't fit for the kingdom of God.

XII

WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

No doubt you have been wondering about the group of people near you who refer to themselves as being members of the church of Christ. You have probably asked yourself: Who are these people? What do they believe and practice? What is the church of Christ? Well, that is the thing we want to talk about at this time.

First, the church of Christ is non-denominational and non-sectarian. This church is neither Protestant, Jewish, nor Catholic; it endeavours to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Neither does it substitute in any form, shape, or fashion. (Rev. 22:18, 19; Gal. 1:7-9).

Second, the church of Christ is the church which Christ promised to build. Christ spake these words unto Peter: "That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18).

Third, the church of Christ is that church which was established on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 33. The record reveals that Peter preached the gospel for the first time and around three thousand obeyed the Lord and were added to the church. (Acts 2). That same church has been in existence ever since.

Fourth, the church of Christ is the spiritual body

of Christ. The apostle Paul, in speaking to the members of the church at Corinth, has this to say: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12:27).

Fifth, the church of Christ is the one body of the scriptures. This is the truth about the matter inasmuch as the Bible speaks of but one body. "There is one body." (Eph. 4:4). But the body is the church. (Eph. 1:22, 23). Therefore, there is one church — one, and only one.

Sixth, the church of Christ recognizes Christ as its head. "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18). Christ is the supreme one.

Seventh, the church of Christ acknowledges Christ as its saviour. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23).

Eighth, the church of Christ is a blood bought institution. Christ purchased it with his own blood. (Acts 20:28). The church then is important.

Ninth, the church of Christ is composed of Christians who have obeyed the Lord's will and have been added to the church. (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13). One cannot join the Lord's church.

Tenth, the church of Christ honors the name of Christ. The church itself wears the name of Christ. Not only so, but each member likewise wears his name. (Rom. 16:16; 1 Pet. 4:16). Man made names and titles are rejected.

Eleventh, the church of Christ accepts the Lord's plan of scriptural organization. (1 Tim. 3). Elders, etc.

Twelfth, the church of Christ engages in the greatest work on earth, that of carrying the gospel to the lost. (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 2:10).

Thirteenth, the church of Christ worships God in spirit and in truth. This is done each first day of the week through praying, studying, singing, giving, and partaking of the Lord's Supper. (John 4:24; Acts 20:7).

Fourteenth, the church of Christ practices Christianity. Each member of the church must be faithful unto death. (Rev. 2:10; 22:14).

Dear friend, consider the church of Christ in light of these statements, and above all, in light of what the Bible teaches. Attend the services of the church of Christ and you will be considered an honored guest, and at the same time, be scripturally taught.

You can be a member of the Lord's church by believing in Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized for the remission of sins. (Mk. 16: 15, 16). The truth will make nothing but New Testament Christians.

XIII

“IS CHRIST DIVIDED?”

Upon one occasion division reared its ugly head in the church at Corinth. As a result, Paul wrote: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? and were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” (1 Cor. 1: 10-17). Thus, Paul condemns division and makes a plea for unity.

There were those at Corinth who wanted to follow Paul; others wanted to follow Apollos, etc. Evidently these brethren had completely lost their reasoning power, and to get them to think the apostle asked a

few questions. His first question was: "Is Christ divided?" They knew that he was not, and therefore not justified in the steps they were taking. Next, he asked them: "Was Paul crucified for you?" Their answer had to be in the negative, and since Paul was not crucified for them, he was not to be recognized as their leader inasmuch as he was not the Saviour. The same applied to the others who were pointing to certain individuals as their masters. Then the final question was: "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" They knew that they had not been baptized in the name of Paul, but rather in the name of Christ. Neither had the others been baptized in the name of some human being but had all been baptized in the name of the Son of God. Hence, Paul was merely showing them the absurdity of dividing up into little groups in order to honor certain men like themselves, when truly, they should honor Christ, their saviour.

Since division had entered the church at Corinth, Paul was glad that he had baptized only a few of them lest they should wear his name. On this basis Paul explained that the Lord had sent him to preach the gospel, not just to baptize. In other words, he was saying that the Lord had sent him to preach, but it is to be understood that when the gospel is preached, baptizing will always follow if there are those who believe and desire to obey the truth. Also, may it be understood that the gospel has never made anything but true Christians, members of the body of Christ. As surely, then, as the gospel is preached and accepted in obedience, it will make nothing but children of God. The gospel will not make this kind of a Christian,

and that kind of a Christian; it never has and it never will. The truth brings people together instead of driving them apart. The church in Corinth was divided, not over what the Lord had taught them, but over their opinions and ideas. The same is true today: people are divided religiously, not over what the Bible teaches, but over their opinions and ideas. The church in Corinth stood condemned and the religious world now stands condemned.

Division is an awful thing. It causes heartaches, sorrows, hatred, and above all, it will cause millions of souls to be lost. Such is of the Devil and it is thus sinful to the core. The Lord hates division and in the shadow of the cross he prayed that we might be one. (John 17). Paul later gave a plan for unity when he said there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. (Eph. 4:1-6). Christ is not divided and he doesn't want us to be divided, but rather he wants us to be one, even as he and the Father are one. When a person upholds denominationalism, etc., he is upholding the Devil's work; when a person says that we can't be one he is denying God's word. Hence, the church of Christ is pleading with people everywhere to return to the Bible for all that they say or do; to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent; to do Bible things in Bible ways. Yes, let us ever strive for unity.

XIV

A CHRISTIAN ONLY

Yes, my friend, you can be a Christian and a Christian only. Such is no exaggeration. Of course, you may find it hard to believe since all the people around you are members of one denomination or another, and you yourself may belong to such a human organization, but nevertheless, it is true, you can be a Christian only.

By now you probably want to know: "How could I be just a Christian?" Well, that question is easy to answer. You may be a Christian by simply obeying the gospel of Christ, or in other words, by obeying the truth of God's will. Now you may reason: "I have obeyed the gospel, or the truth." My friend, have you? Now be honest with yourself, and be honest with God. No doubt about it; you are honest and sincere but sometimes even honest and sincere people are mistaken.

Just now it should be observed that in New Testament times the truth made Christians only. No, the truth did not make one kind of a Christian and then another kind of a Christian, etc., If you know anything at all about the New Testament you will have to admit that such is fact.

The scriptures mention the name Christian only three times, but please note, each time it is spoken of

it is specifically Christian, and furthermore, no other name is mentioned or specified in regard to the name or title of a follower of Christ. But now to the verses of scripture which give us the name Christian. First, please observe Luke's statement: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26). They were first called Christians there, and followers of Christ have been called Christians ever since. Second, Paul pleads with King Agrippa to obey the gospel and his reply is: "Almost thou persuaded me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28). Why didn't King Agrippa specify the kind of Christian he was almost persuaded to become? Simply because he could not have become anything but a Christian. Why Paul didn't preach to that man that he could be this kind of a Christian or that kind of a Christian, but he preached the truth only, and therefore, it would make nothing more than a Christian, and evidently King Agrippa understood this. And third, Peter speaks of the Christian in this manner: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16). Hence, if one must suffer as a Christian, or for wearing the name Christian, then he should not be ashamed of it, but rather, he should thank God that he is counted worthy of the name of Christ and that he has the privilege of suffering for the name of Christ. As a result, God should be glorified through the same. But look again, the writer speaks of the name Christian and the name Christian only. He did not tack a man-made name on the end of it, and neither should we.

And now please observe these simple facts: (1) To

be a Christian then one must accept the truth without addition, subtraction or substitutions to it in any way. (Rev. 22: 18, 19). (2) To be a Christian one must obey the gospel, believing in Christ, repenting of his sins, confessing the name of Christ, and being baptized to be saved. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). (3) To be a Christian then one must be a member of the church which Christ established. (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16). (4) To be a Christian one must wear the name of Christ. (1 Pet. 4:1). (5) To be a Christian one must worship God in spirit and in truth on each first day of the week. (John 4:24; Acts 20:7). (6) To be a Christian one must live faithful to God. (Rev. 2:10; James 1:12). Please review these points over and over again and each time ask yourself: "Am I a Christian in view of what the Bible teaches?"

Dear one, life is slipping away; you will soon be gone. Hence, prepare today for the judgment and the beyond. Obey the truth — be just a Christian, a member of the Lord's church; live faithful to God unto death and heaven will be yours.

Yes, you can be just a Christian, no more and no less.

XV

“IN CHRIST”

The Bible tells us that all spiritual blessings are in Christ — not out of Christ but in Christ. Paul proclaimed in the long ago: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3).

Since all spiritual blessings are in Christ it stands to reason that one must be in Christ to enjoy those blessings. But the question immediately arises: “How can one enter Christ?” And the scriptures answer this question. The same writer who says all spiritual blessings are in Christ also informs us that one may enter him through the act of baptism. Thus, he writes: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). Please note that Paul only would have us know that it takes baptism to put one into Christ, but at the same time, he includes himself as being one of many who had been baptized into him. Again he says: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:27). To put on something is to be in it. For instance, if one puts on a coat then he is in it. Thus, for one to put on Christ simply means that he is in Christ. Again, keep in mind that it is baptism which puts one into the Lord.

There are multitudes of people who frown on baptism. Many laugh and scoff at the idea of going down into the water for the purpose of being immersed. But a question: Unless one is baptized how does he think he can enter Christ? It just so happens that the word of God tells us it is through baptism that one puts on Christ. In light of such it would seem foolish to belittle an act which is so necessary to the welfare of one's soul.

It is said by some that faith is sufficient to salvation, and consequently, faith puts one into Christ. But where does the Bible say that one must believe into Christ? Where is the verse of scripture for such? If there is such a statement in all of God's word it has never been brought to this writer's attention. No doubt about it; faith is important, but the scripture says that one must believe unto salvation, not into it. (Rom. 10:10). Hence, one must believe unto Christ, faith carries one in the direction of Christ, but it alone is not enough to put one into him. The same is true of repentance and confession. (2 Cor. 7:10; Rom. 10:10). One must repent unto salvation, and confess unto salvation. But mind you, one cannot repent into salvation or repent into Christ; neither can one confess into salvation or confess into Christ. But by believing unto salvation, repenting unto salvation, confessing unto salvation, one may scripturally be baptized into salvation. That is, through scripturally believing, repenting, and confessing one may be baptized into Christ, but not until.

Then there is always someone ready to say: "Well,

I am saved but I have never been baptized.” Is that so? Mister, if you are saved, and yet you have never been baptized, then you are saved apart from Christ: for the word of God says that one must be baptized in order to enter Christ. Now look at the mess you are in. Somebody is mistaken about the matter, and I rather suspect you, inasmuch as the Bible contradicts that which you are saying — I’ll take the word of God any day over what puny man has said. My friend, you had better leave the Devil’s doctrine and get back to the truth.

We have learned, then, that all spiritual blessings are in Christ and that the only way to enter him is through the act of baptism. It might also be pointed out that the same act which puts one into Christ puts one into his body. (1 Cor. 12:13). But what does it mean to be in Christ where all spiritual blessings are? It means that one is saved, that he may pray, that he has the gift of the Holy Spirit, and above all, may look to a better world with hope through Christ. Yes, it means all this and much, much more.

Friend, if you are not in Christ then enter him to-day through the act of baptism and the Lord will surely bless you for it. Remember, you cannot be saved until you put on Christ by baptism.

XVI

TRUE WORSHIP

In New Testament times the people of God assembled on the first day of the week for the purpose of worshipping God. We have an example of this in Acts 20:7. Thus, we are to come together on the Lord's day for the same reason. As a matter of fact, we are exhorted to attend all of the assemblies. (Heb. 10:25). If a Christian fails to do this it means that he has sinned before God. Now you may ask: "Is it all that important?" Yes, it is.

The Bible speaks of three kinds of worship. Paul came across a group of people who were worshipping, but there was something wrong. What was it? Well, Paul explained that their worship was in ignorance. (Acts 17:23). Have times changed much? No, because many worship God throughout the world, but much of it is nothing more than ignorant worship. Hence, it is not enough just to worship. Again, the Lord informed a group of people of his day that their worship was in vain. (Matt. 15:9). Well, why? Because, as he spake, their worship was after the doctrines and commandments of men. Finally, the scripture outlines a plan for true worship. Christ says: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24). If one is going to worship God in an acceptable way then it must be in spirit and in truth, for after all, why

should one bother to worship if it is not going to be acceptable?

Now to this question: What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth? Simply that one must worship, understanding that which he is doing, and at the same time, according to the Lord's will. Paul said: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (1 Cor. 14:15). As to the truth, Christ has said: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17).

True worship consists of what is commonly referred to as five items, or acts, of worship. They simply are: Bible study, prayer, singing, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and giving. Each one must be done in spirit and in truth for God to acknowledge it.

First, the Lord's people are expected to assemble to study God's word. (2 Tim. 2:15). This must be done in spirit, or with understanding. In other words, one must lay aside everything and fasten, or center, his mind upon the word of truth. He must also study according to the truth, or will, of God. That is, he must be willing to lay man's thoughts and conceptions down and simply take God at his word, of course, rightly dividing the word of truth at all times.

Second, the people of God are to meet for the purpose of engaging in prayer. (1 Thess. 5:17). This too, must be entered into with the spirit and the understanding. Prayer is a wonderful medium, and a wonderful blessing which God has bestowed upon man. But this privilege can be abused. Many enter prayer with their minds upon the things of the world, and so

on. Be it remembered then, that if one is going to pray in such a way as to be heard of God he is going to have to be in the right frame of mind to do so. Likewise, prayer must be according to truth. One's prayer must be in harmony with the will of God to be answered.

Third, the Lord's disciples are to come together to sing. (Eph. 5:19). This must be done also in spirit and understanding. The words of a song should truly come to life as one puts his mind to his task. Furthermore, as one sings according to the truth, the melody is made in his heart instead of on some instrument of music.

Fourth, God's people are to assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper. In this case, one is to remember that the Lord was nailed to the cross, and thus, shed his blood for the sins of the world. This supper is a memorial. Then too, the truth would require that one do this each first day of the week. (Acts 20:7).

Fifth, Christians are to meet on the Lord's day to give. (1 Cor. 16:2). In spirit, one is to recognize the importance of such giving; in truth, he is to do it as he has been prospered, being true to himself, and to God.

Now, what about you? Do you worship God in an acceptable way? Think on these things.

XVII

HOLY THINGS

In the long ago, Paul said: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable services." (Rom. 12:1). Please ponder this verse of scripture very carefully with emphasis on the latter part. Note that the people of God are to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, and the writer adds, "which is your reasonable service." Consider especially the little word "holy." The entire verse is simply a plea for holiness.

Another apostle wrote: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14-16). Thus, Peter calls upon the people of his time to be holy in all that they do, realizing that the Lord is holy. Such has ever been his desire and there is no danger of it changing.

Since the verses of scripture cited, and others that could be, speak of the word "holy" it might be good that we define that term before continuing. The term holy refers to that which is sanctified, or set apart; that which is godly and pure. In connection with this it should be pointed out that the word holy is a

good, scriptural term. This truth is submitted inasmuch as many people are afraid to mention the word holy or the word holiness, in that a group of religious people call themselves "Holiness." Of course, we know that such people are unscriptural in other ways but they are right in emphasizing holiness. The point is, those of us who claim to be the people of God, the true church of Christ, should be the ones setting forth the beauty of holiness. No, we should not be ashamed of the word, but rather we should be holy even as the Lord is holy, that is, we should ever strive toward perfection. Actually to be holy, as it relates to man, means that one must be climbing the ladder of perfection, not that he is perfect, but that he is striving to be perfect. Then one day the faithful will be made perfect and will dwell forever with the Lord.

Consider now those individuals, things, or places which are holy:

1. **GOD IS HOLY.** (John 17:11). He has no beginning or ending, reigns in heaven, creator of all things. His Son calls upon him as "Holy Father."
2. **CHRIST IS HOLY.** (1 Pet. 1:15). He is the Son of God, came from heaven, lived a perfect life, and after his death, burial, and resurrection ascended to his Father to reign as king of kings and lord of lords.
3. **THE SPIRIT IS HOLY.** (Matt. 28:19). Christ sent the Spirit upon the apostles; he directed the men of God to pen the scriptures, and is pre-

sented to every soul who obeys God. He is also spoken of as being holy.

4. **THE CHURCH IS HOLY.** (Heb. 3:1). Christ established it; purchased it with his blood; he is its head and saviour.
5. **THE GOSPEL IS HOLY.** (Rom. 1:16). Based on the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection; the lost are called by the gospel; it has power to save.
6. **THE BLOOD IS HOLY.** (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). The blood of Christ; it redeems or forgives; it remits or washes away sin.
7. **THE NAME IS HOLY.** (Acts 4:12). The name of Christ; the Lord's people are to wear it individually and collectively; salvation is in it.
8. **THE WORD IS HOLY.** (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The word of God, and thus, all inspired of him; it has the power to save.
9. **HEAVEN IS HOLY.** God and Christ dwell there; only the righteous will inherit it, and it will stand forever.

Since all of these things are holy let's ask a few questions: How in this world does a sinner think he can be saved unless he obeys God and lives faithful unto death? How on earth can an erring Christian think for one minute that he can be saved if he dies in such a condition? How can we that are Christians think we can be saved unless we live holy lives for God? The point is, if the things mentioned are holy, we are going to have to be holy in order to have fel-

lowship with them. All that is of God is holy and if we are going to belong to him we must be holy too. May the Lord help us then, to **"TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY."**

XVIII

DAILY RELIGION

The Bible speaks of different kinds of religions, but sets forth one as being a pure religion, the religion of Christ. (James 1:27). Not only does God's word refer to a number of kinds of religion but such is seen on every hand in the form of Catholicism, denominationalism, etc. But speaking only of the body of Christ, it can be truthfully said that there are those of our number who practice one type of religion or another. For instance, there are certain members of the church who practice a "summer" religion; others who believe in "big meeting" religion; and still others who have only a "Sunday" religion.

It is wonderful to see people attending the various assemblies, as well as expressing their religion in other ways, but it is not enough just to be religious during the summer months. Continuing, it is thrilling to see people attending a gospel meeting; backing up every service with their presence, as well as encouraging others to attend, and so on. But again, it is not enough just to be religious during a series of gospel meetings. And in connection with these thoughts, it is indeed heart warming to see members of the church getting out on Sunday morning and evening to the worship services, but as before, it is not enough just to worship God on the Lord's day, thus practicing a Sunday religion only. The Bible says that if one is going to practice the religion of

Christ it must be a daily affair. Christ himself says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Lk. 9:23). Now consider carefully what the Lord had to say. In the first place, he invites all to follow him. In the second place, he says that if we would follow him we must deny ourselves, or give up the things of the world. And finally, in the third place, he says that if we are going to follow him we must take up his cross, or his work, daily. So you can see, the religion of Christ is a daily religion.

Now for a person to practice the religion of Christ he must understand that it will be a full time job, a daily routine. He must understand further that a daily religion demands certain things. For instance, daily religion demands daily faith. It takes faith to practice the religion of Christ. Paul informs us: "The just shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:17). To add to that, he says: "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23). Then don't forget that the Hebrew writer says without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6). It takes daily faith to accomplish that which the Lord would have us do.

Daily religion demands daily love. We must love God above everything else. And the Lord adds that the next command to that is to, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:37-39). We must also love one another according to the apostle John: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God." (1 John 4:7). Christians cannot serve God apart from love. Such is an impossibility. But keep this in mind: It

is not enough to talk about love, one must prove it, in his actions.

Daily religion demands daily prayer. Paul says: "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17). The Christian must pray at every opportunity. He should pray for himself, for his friends, for the church, etc. One can't drift off from God if he communes with him as he should.

Daily religion demands daily Bible study. Paul says that we are to study to shew ourselves approved to God. (2 Tim. 2:15). It takes spiritual food for spiritual living. This is where Bible study enters the picture. So many fall down on the job here, and such is evident by their actions.

Daily religion demands daily work, daily giving, daily exhortations, a daily example, and so on. And here is something that all should remember: Daily religion brings daily results. This will always be the case. Every soul who practices this kind of religion will be helped, and consequently, will help others, either directly or indirectly. Never underestimate the power that is to be found in this type of religion.

What about your religion? Are you just playing at the job, or is it a serious matter with you? Do you work at it seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day? If not, then try it, and look at the results.

XIX

"I LOVE GOD"

How many times have you said: "I love God"? No doubt you have uttered such hundreds and even thousands of times. But the question is: Do you love God? Now you may think that you love him and you may even convince others that you love him, but do you? It is one thing to say "I love God" and it is another thing to express your love. You may love God as far as you are concerned but do you love him when it comes to the Lord's understanding of love?

If you love God ask yourself these questions: Have I obeyed God? Am I a member of the Lord's church? Do I worship God each first day of the week? Am I living the Christian life? If your answer is in the negative, then in God's sight you do not love him. On the other hand, if you can answer in the affirmative you can not only tell the world that you love God, but you have done more than that, you have proven it.

The average person will tell you readily that he loves God, but in reality he doesn't. It matters not how much one may say that he loves the Lord; if he refuses to obey Christ's will that is proof enough that he doesn't love God. Bible love expresses itself in obedience. As a matter of fact, the Lord tests man's love through this medium. In light of this, there aren't too many who are able to pass such a test.

Now the Lord speaks on this subject in this man-

ner: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:23, 24). Again, Jesus said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). The Lord makes it very plain that if a person loves him he will obey his commands, and yet, if a soul does not love him he will not obey his word. Another way of putting it: A person will obey the Lord if he truly loves him, but the individual who fails to submit himself to the Lord's will is the person who does not love God.

To love the Lord is to keep his commandments just like if one loves his parents, he is going to obey them. If true love is involved in these matters there won't be any problem when it comes to the matter of obedience. Scriptural love will lead one to do many things, as was the case with God in relation to his Son. We are told that: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16, 17). As God looked down upon man in his sinful condition he was moved with compassion. Hence, he decided to send his own Son into the world for the purpose of saving man from eternal ruin. In purposing this he promised man that such would become a reality. But get this: God didn't just talk about his love for man without doing something about it. He not only expressed his love for

man in words but proved that love with the sending of his Son into this low land of sin and sorrow to die on the cross. Yes, God proved his love for man.

He not only proved his love in the giving of his Son but he has proven it in many other ways as well. At the same time, the Lord would have us to prove our love for him — not just talk about it — but actually prove it by obedience and devotion to his cause.

Now in view of the things that have been said, do you still think you love God? Do you love God in keeping with what the Lord has said on this subject? I hope you can truthfully say that you love him, but if not, it is my prayer that you will bow yourself before God and express your love for him in simple obedience. Don't be hypocritical about the matter. Don't tell everyone that you love God but at the same time refuse to obey him. Don't tell God that you love him and rebel before him. If you want to prove your love for God then put it into action, for after all, as the old saying goes, "action speaks louder than words." Remember: Your love for God is based on your actions, more than on what you say.

XX

YOUR TEMPERATURE

Say you have obeyed the gospel; you are a member of the Lord's church; you are a Christian, a child of God? All of that is good, but the big question is: Are you faithful to your calling? Now there's one way of finding out and that is by taking your temperature, spiritually speaking. Upon one occasion Christ spake unto the church of the Laodiceans in this manner: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Rev. 3:15, 16). What the Lord had to say to the Laodiceans not only applied to them but it would be well for you to consider that statement.

The Lord knew the condition of the Laodiceans, As stated, he knew their works, whether good or bad. In such a case Christ had the power to look upon the hearts of those involved that he might know their thoughts as well as their works. This suggests that they could not hide their state from the Lord even though they may have wanted to. It should also teach you that it is impossible for anyone to hide from him. All that you say or do is open before the Lord.

In the next place, Christ knew that the Laodiceans were neither hot nor cold. This congregation was made up of an indifferent group of people. They were

not necessarily for the Lord and neither were they necessarily opposed to him. In other words, they seemed to have the idea that they could stay in the middle of the road. Now my friend, the Lord knows whether you are hot or cold. Yes, he knows if you are walking along holding to him with one hand and holding the Devil with the other. I tell you, he knows you.

We now observe that the Lord knew the Laodiceans to be a lukewarm people. And the very fact, they were neither hot nor cold meant only one thing — lukewarmness. The same is true with water. If it is neither hot nor cold it can be only one thing — lukewarm. Well, my friend, if you are neither hot nor cold you must be lukewarm.

If the Lord had had his way about the people of Laodicea he would have had them to be hot or cold. Christ then, by his own acknowledgement, had rather have a person altogether for him or altogether against him, for he hates hypocrisy. But these people were neither, thus leaving them lukewarm. Lukewarmness is very distasteful even when it comes to drinking water. In the case of water, it is always better cold or hot. However, if one takes a mouthful of lukewarm water it makes him want to spit it out. The same is true with the Lord when it comes to lukewarm Christians. Therefore, he said unto those who were lukewarm, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." My friend, if you are lukewarm the Lord will treat you in like manner. As stated, there is hardly anything more distasteful than lukewarmness.

The Lord took the temperature of the Laodiceans and found them to be lukewarm. What about your temperature? Have you taken it lately? Why not do it right now by beginning with:

1. Cold. Friend, have you drifted away from the Lord altogether? If you have grown cold you need to return to the saviour and resolve ever to stay by his side.
2. Lukewarm. Dear one, have you become indifferent with your duties and responsibilities? You should realize that if you are in this state the Lord will spue you out of his mouth. To be lukewarm is to be lost. Repent, confess your faults, and pray to God that you may be forgiven.
3. Hot. Beloved, are you daily serving the Lord? If you are, more power to you. Always remain on the Lord's side and he'll reward you with life, and life everlasting.

Now I trust you have taken your temperature according to God's thermometer — the Holy Bible. If you have, where do you stand? If your temperature is not what it should be, correct it scripturally. And yet, if it is where it should be according to the will of God, then do all that is within you to keep it that way. Remember, God's thermometer never lies.

XXI

THE ERRING CHRISTIAN

It is wonderful to know that God has provided man, the alien sinner, with a way of escape. But sometimes, after a soul has obeyed the first principles of the gospel, there is a falling away. Hence, we refer to such an individual as being an erring Christian, or erring child of God.

Someone is ready to ask: "If a person falls from grace is there any chance of restoring him?" "What must a person do in order to return to his first love?" "Can a person be eternally saved if he remains in that state until he dies?" These questions, and many others, have been asked time and time again, but they are very simple for the Bible readily answers them.

It is sad to see a person drift away from God, but it is even sadder to see that soul remain in such a condition. Thus, it should be understood that if one strays away from the fold it is possible for him to return, even as the prodigal son returned to his father in the long ago. (Lk. 15). Of course, this takes faith in God's will and humility to carry it out.

As suggested, one must have faith in God's word in order to return to his first love. In other words, one must acknowledge God's plan for the erring Christian and follow it step by step. Such would mean that one would have to repent of his sins, humbly confess his faults, and pray that God might have mercy and for-

give him. James says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16). Then in Acts 8 we have an example of where Simon had sinned and Peter asked him to do the very thing which James submits. According to the scriptures he was forgiven inasmuch as he returned to the will of God.

Yes, God has promised to forgive every erring one who will return. But be it known, that God has no where, and at no time, promised to forgive those who refuse to meet his terms of pardon. Such people will not only be lost, but will at the same time, drag others down to hell with them. What a terrible way to depart from this world.

Who must confess his faults? Why, every one who has sinned. But whether a person should make a public confession or not all depends on his sin. Hence, keep this in mind: A person's confession should be made just as public as his sin. Therefore, if an individual has sinned in his heart he should repent and ask God to forgive him. But if a person has sinned against his neighbor he should take it to that neighbor and scripturally settle it. On the other hand, if a child of God has so sinned that the community knows about it, and that sin has brought shame and disgrace on the Lord's name and the Lord's people (and it certainly has if the sin is of a public nature), that soul should take the matter before the church, and with a penitent spirit, confess his faults, and ask the congregation, and God to forgive him. Now that's the Bible way.

Some brethren do not attend the assemblies. Still others attend but will not partake of the Lord's Supper. Well, this, and other things, is an indication that such people need to go before the church and confess their faults. One cannot scripturally serve God until all matters have been straightened out with him.

Of course, there are always those who feel that they are too good to go before a congregation and confess their faults. Some have too much pride; still others love the world too much. But when a person fails to do God's will it means condemnation.

All should want to become Christians and remain Christians. But if one has drifted away for one reason or another, he should return and resolve to ever be true to the Saviour; for Peter has said: "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." (2 Pet. 2:21, 22).

XXII

THE DEAD

To be dead is to be lifeless; this term defined not only describes the masses of people who have crossed the great divide, but also thousands and even millions of people who are still on this side of eternity. On this basis it is suggested that there are at least three classes of dead people, and they are:

1. Those who are dead to sin. Upon reaching the age of accountability one automatically becomes a sinner. (Rom. 3:23). It is necessary then for the soul to obey the gospel of Christ to be saved. To do this he must die to his sins, be buried with the Lord through baptism, and then be resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. This is in harmony with what Paul wrote the Romans: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed

from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:3-11). For one to die to his sins in this case, simply means that he must repent or turn away from all that is of the Devil. Truly then when one dies with Christ it assures him that he will live with the Lord. Also involved in this is the new birth. (John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17).

2. Those who are dead spiritually. Multitudes of people have spurned the Lord's invitation, and because of this, remain spiritually dead. Then too, scores and scores of souls have accepted the first principles of the gospel, but because of one thing or another, have drifted back into the world. Such people are thought of as being those who are spiritually dead. But get this: Whether one is dead as a result of having not obeyed the gospel or dead due to being led back to the Devil's path, it all amounts to the same as far as those individuals who are involved are concerned; that is, if one is dead he is dead, and unless drastic steps are taken it will spell eternal condemnation. However, those who obey God and then fall from grace do more damage than those who never obey the truth, in that they will

not only be lost but will drag others down to torment with them. (2 Pet. 2:20-22). But Paul had this to say to such people: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. 5:14).

3. Those who are dead physically. Regardless of whether one is dead or alive spiritually, one day he will have to depart from this old world, going the way of all the flesh. Ever since Adam, man has had to say goodbye to life by passing through death's door. Such is the rule then, and man need not look for the exception. Paul has said, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27). We know that death is coming. In a way it is a sad thing to think about, but on the other hand it has its advantages. For instance, one can prepare to meet God, and in so doing, he no longer thinks of death from the standpoint of what it can do, but rather, what it will bring to pass — heaven and all of its joys. (John 14:1-3).

Good friend, where do you stand on these matters? Are you dead or are you alive in Christ? Remember those who live for Christ in this world will live with him in the world to come.

XXIII

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

In the long ago a prophet of God said: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." (Amos 4:12). Although this statement was made hundreds of years ago the truth in it is still applicable to the present world. God warned his people through his servant of the necessity of preparing for the beyond. Likewise, the Lord continues to warn us through the medium of his word of the importance of preparing for the future. This truth is exemplified in view of the fact that death, judgment, and eternity will soon be upon all of us.

It is sad to know that multitudes of people believe that they are preparing to meet God, but in reality are doing nothing more than playing into the hands of the Devil himself. Such is true of those who feel that their good moral deeds will take them home to heaven; of those who are associated with the various religious organizations of man and have placed their hope in such; of those who feel that since they are members of the church all is well with their souls, and so on. These people, and others in similar situations, need to realize that if they are going to prepare to meet God they will have to lay down every thing that is of man and turn to the Lord completely.

It is needful that man prepare inasmuch as he is a sinner. Paul assures us that all have sinned. (Rom. 3:23). All who reach the age of accountability be-

come sinners and consequently stand in need of a saviour. (Rom. 5:8). Still another reason why man must prepare is that those who die in their sins will not be able to enter heaven. Hence, man must purify himself in obedience to God and live holy before him so that when he dies he may be able to enter that holy city. (Rev. 22:14).

It has been said that this world is a testing ground. Someone else has said that this life is really for the purpose of getting ready for the life that is to come. Hence, God is testing, trying, or proving us in this world; he wants to see what kind of people we are. If we pass the test, if we are found worthy of him, we shall be saved in the world to come. However, if we fail to prepare ourselves we will be cast out to destruction.

The alien sinner is to prepare through hearing God's word, believing the Lord, repenting of his sins, confessing his faith in Christ, and being baptized. (Mk. 16:15, 16; Matt. 10:32; Acts 2:38). This is the only way that he can be saved. Now if one has obeyed the gospel and has drifted away he must return through repenting of his sins, confessing his faults, and asking for forgiveness. (James 5:16). If one is in this condition he must of necessity take these steps if he expects to live one day with the Lord. Coming on down to the Christian, he must remain faithful to the Lord if he expects to receive a crown of life. (Rev. 2:10). So you can see, the God of heaven has something for each class of people to do. One cannot prepare to meet God by just sitting around on the stool

of do nothing, but such matters demand one's serious attention, and moreover, his immediate action.

As stated in the beginning, all should prepare for the future since certain things are going to take place. To begin with, man's death is certain. (Heb. 9:27). After death the judgment will take place and all will be judged according to their works, whether they be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10). Finally, eternity will be ushered in, and the Lord tells us that all will spend eternity somewhere — in heaven or in hell. (Matt. 25:46). In view of these solemn truths we should want to use every minute to make ready for the things which are certain to take place.

Christ invites all to come. (Matt. 11:28-30). Paul exhorts: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2). The Lord has further invited: "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17). Sinner friend, hear the Lord's invitation and prepare to meet God; erring Christian, don't let your pride and sin send you to hell, but return to your first love that you might prepare for the great beyond; dear Christian, remain true to the Lord all the days of your life and heaven one day will be your eternal home. God pleads with man to get ready; let's prepare now because heaven is worth preparing for.

XXIV

THE GREAT JUDGMENT DAY

There is a great day coming; a day like no man has ever seen before; a day of reckoning. This day will involve both the divine and human elements. God will be on the one hand while man will be on the other; one will be the judge and the other will be the judged. On this day of all days the judgment will take place. The Bible speaks of this event time and time again; man has been warned to prepare for it and only that day will reveal the results.

Now please observe a few facts in relation to the judgment which is to come:

1. There will be a judgment. The apostle Paul says: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10). Some may doubt that there will be a judgment, and there are those who publicly and intentionally denounce such a truth, but all such people will be brought down to their knees one day. The apostle says: "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Rom. 14:11). Yes, there will be a judgment whether you believe it or not.
2. All will be there. The Hebrew writer proclaims,

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Heb. 9:27). Since the judgment will take place after death, and death has been pronounced upon every man, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that all will appear on the day of judgment. All will be there on that great day: The great and small, the rich and poor, the educated and uneducated, the healthy and sick, the saved and unsaved. Yes, all the world who have lived, who are living now, and who will live, shall be there. Not one soul will be allowed to escape.

- 3. Each will be judged according to his works. We read: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10). All works will be open before the Lord; he’ll know the hearts of all; not one thing will be allowed to pass by unnoticed. Righteous works will be accepted, but evil works will be condemned.**
- 4. Christ will be the judge. The record reads: “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31). So Christ will be the judge, the righteous judge. We shall have nothing to fear inasmuch as the Lord will not be a respecter of persons, but will**

judge us according to our works. Man might not be as fair.

5. The judgment will be final. Christ, in picturing it, said: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46). When the judgment comes it will be too late to prepare. Moreover, after man has been sentenced it will be permanent: Both those who are saved and those who are lost will spend eternity according to God's decree.
6. All will be rewarded. Peter states, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17, 18). Those who obey the Lord will be blessed with a crown of life but those who refuse to obey him will be cast into the lake of fire. There are only two classes — no place in between.

The judgment is sure and eternity is certain. With this in mind, what will you do about it? Friend, life is too short, heaven is too wonderful, and hell is too hot for you to take a chance. Obey God now.

XXV

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?

Life is short and one day before long we'll have to cross the chilly river of death. This is a reality that we must face sooner or later. Someone has said that death is the great equalizer for all must depart from this world and go the way of the flesh. It matters not whether one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, and so on, he must die. This is a truth which is impressed upon the heart of man every day that he lives. The inspired writer has affirmed, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27).

Life is like a vapor
And soon will pass away;
Nought of works, but those of God
Will count that final day.

After this life has passed away God shall gather us around him for the purpose of judging our works whether they be good or bad. The apostle Paul explained this very truth to the Corinthians in the long ago. (2 Cor. 5:10). And way back before that, Solomon had said: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccl. 12:14). On this day man will be sentenced to life, or damnation.

But after death and judgment, then what? We'll

be thrust out into a never ending eternity. If our works in the flesh were of a righteous nature we'll be eternally saved, but if our works were evil we'll be cast into the lake of fire. How wonderful it will be to be able to live with the Lord forever and forever, but on the other hand, how terrible it would be to have to spend eternity in a devil's hell. In that eternal city we'll have access to the tree of life but hell is that place where the evil "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 22:14; 20:10).

What will heaven be like? It will be a place of beauty and splendor. John received a vision of it but it was so glorious that he was not able to express what he saw in words that man could understand, and therefore was forced to compare it with those things that we are familiar with — a city with streets of gold, precious jewels, etc. God will dwell there along with his Son and the many, many angels. Beautiful singing will be going on at all times, praising him who brought such to pass. Speaking of this holy city, the man of God says: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4). So all will be filled with joy and happiness; the tree of life will ever be present, and the righteous will dwell in the New Jerusalem.

What will hell be like? It will be a horrible place in which to live. The Devil and all of his angels will be there, along with all of the sinful and ungodly of all the ages. Each soul will be tortured and tormented

continually. It is a place from which there will be no way to escape; a place of utter darkness, since the light of the world will not be there.

Every soul must spend eternity somewhere — either in heaven or hell. There is no middle ground to take. Moreover, all may choose where they will spend eternity. If one will obey the Lord's will he may go home one day to be with God, but if one chooses to serve the Devil he'll have to live with him in the world to come. So it is all up to the individual, but mind you, the Lord pleads with every soul to accept the way of truth and the promise of eternal bliss. (Matt. 11:28-30).

Eternity is a hard word to define. It is a place without end, and because of that the human mind cannot grasp the real meaning. We must simply think of it as a place which will go on for ever and ever, and even then it is only started. With this in mind every soul should tremble in his tracks and consider his position in life. Friend, life is a serious business, especially considering the vast eternity ahead. Man cannot afford to make a mistake.

Where will you spend eternity? In heaven or in hell? If you want to go to heaven you must obey the Lord in this life. Prepare to meet God — spend your life preparing for that future life. I beseech you to take no chances.