

# GOSPEL GEMS

Volume 2

by

**Bill Dillon**

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**Dedication**

Joey Dillon

May 23, 1971 - January 30, 1988

Jeff Dillon

February 22, 1975 - November 8, 1991

This book is dedicated to my two sons. They were brothers in life and are now companions in eternity. It is my fervent prayer that the messages in this book will help others also to inhabit heavenly bliss.

## **Preface**

I am indebted to many friends who have been a continual encouragement to me in my work. Chief among my encouragers are M.W. Kiser and John T. Polk. I thank God for friends who are closer than brothers.

I express special thanks to Marcella Crawford and Dorothy Henderson, who spent hours of time deciphering my handwriting into legible type.

Finally, to my wife, Kaye and son, Mark, for their love, patience and enthusiasm from the start.

My sincere appreciation is expressed for being able to write Gospel Gems Vol. 2. There is a tremendous need for more gospel literature throughout the world. "A drop of ink can make millions think!" It is hoped this volume will, at least, make some small contribution toward reaching the lost and edifying the saved.

Bill Dillon

September 1995

**A Statement from the Publisher**

I would like to introduce you to Bill Dillon, gospel preacher, who works with the College and North Streets Church of Christ in Mountain Home, AR. Bill has already distinguished himself by working with congregations in Kentucky and Georgia, making a dozen mission trips to Ghana, West Africa, and publishing a monthly magazine, *The Gospel Gleaner*.

Coming from Michigan, he received his education from Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, TN and Alabama School of Religion in Montgomery, AL. He has also worked with congregations mostly in Southern States. nevertheless, he is committed to that of proclaiming the gospel of Christ both here in the States, and throughout the world, evidenced by his numerous trips to Ghana.

We are most pleased to publish Bill's books and look forward to further association with him in the future, and especially since he is a staff writer for our quarterly magazine, *The Voice of Truth International*.

J.C. Choate  
Winona, MS 38967  
February 9, 1999

## About the Author:

After attending public schools in Detroit, Michigan, Bill Dillon graduated from Freed-Hardeman College, Henderson, Tennessee (1970) and Alabama School of Religion, Montgomery, Alabama (1982).

He has preached in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia and Arkansas. His foreign mission efforts include seven extensive evangelistic campaigns to Ghana, West Africa.

Dillon has been preaching the Gospel of Christ for 30 years. He is well experienced in radio and television broadcasting and co-edits a quarterly journal called "*Gospel Gleaner*." In addition he is a regular contributor to numerous religious publications.

He is the author of three other books: **A Debate with Mormons**, **Gospel Gems Vol. 1**, and **Gospel Truths Briefly Told**.

For ten years he was the local evangelist for the LaFayette Church of Christ in LaFayette, Georgia.

He presently preaches for the Mountain Home (College and North Streets) Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

# Table of Contents

The Bible.....	1
Good Books.....	3
True Religion.....	5
What is the Church of Christ?.....	7
Faith of Our Fathers.....	9
The Need for Faith.....	11
The Look of Faith.....	13
Alexander the Angry.....	14
Do We Care?.....	15
Words.....	16
Here and Now.....	17
How Much Are You Worth?.....	18
Saints in Unseemly Places.....	19
Doing the Best in the Worst of Times.....	20
Are You Still on the Bottle?.....	22
Humility.....	24
Brothers and Others.....	25
Courage.....	26
America the Religious?.....	28
Looking Unto Jesus.....	30
Believe and be Saved.....	31
Threefold Salvation.....	32
Be an Encourager.....	34
Paul's Victory.....	35
Failure and Success.....	36
Time, Time, Time.....	37
Heart Religion.....	38
Hope.....	39
The Captain of Our Salvation.....	41
Take Time to be Holy.....	43
A Good Sample.....	44
This Fleeting Life.....	46
Never Lose Heart.....	48
A Remarkable Woman.....	49
The Wizard of Oz Syndrome.....	50
Abraham and God.....	52
Failure to Thrive.....	54
Too Busy.....	56
Judas' Mistake.....	57
Lewd Literature.....	59
Humble Servants.....	60
Three Titanic Evils.....	62
Three Titanic Truths .....	64

# The Bible

A traveler was packing his suitcase in preparation for a long journey. He said to his friend, "In this small corner of my suitcase, I am going to put a lamp, a mirror, a telescope, a sharp sword and a small library." His friend inquired, "How are you going to manage that?" "Easily enough," came the response. "The Bible is all of these."

The Bible is even more than that. It is:

1. **The traveler's map.** If you are in uncertain territory, a map will help you find your way. Ours is an age that has lost its bearings in a world of maddening confusion. But the Bible is the precious and accurate map we need to find our way safely through.

2. **The pilot's compass.** The pilot's compass is always true to north. To reach a certain destination we must head in a certain direction. The Bible contains the heaven inspired, distilled wisdom of the ages. Turn to the Bible for help and you will know the direction to take.

3. **The Christian's charter.** What kind of lives are we building? What kind of world are we making? Jesus spoke of a world where the gospel was preached to the poor; where healing was sent to the broken-hearted; where deliverance was preached to the captives; where recovering of sight was given to the blind and liberty was given to the bruised (Luke 4:18,19). Such a divine blueprint for all of society is as marvelous as it is matchless.

The Bible deserves to be read prayerfully and frequently. The Bible deserves to be lived purely and fervently.

## Good Books

What a blessing a good book is! Good books allow us to immeasurably expand our horizons and to push beyond the limitations of our own environment. Good books permit us to commune with the world's great thinkers and have the companionship of the world's most distinguished personalities. Edward Prager once wrote:

“Books will tell you how other men have met life's problems...Books will excite you, amuse you, rest you, inspire you. Books will give you courage, fortitude, patience, tolerance, wisdom, hope, insight, skill, perseverance, sympathy. Books will make you grow...deeper, broader, taller.”

Of all books, divinely inspired books are best. Do you remember Paul's urgent desire as he was imprisoned at Rome? He wrote to Timothy requesting his younger friend to hasten his visit and to bring with him some objects he treasured highly. He needed his cloak for protection against the harsh Italian winter, but most of all the intrepid apostle to the Gentiles wanted strength for his mind and soul. So, he wrote, “*The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments*” (2 Timothy 4:13). Contained in the scrolls of the Old Testament was the history of great men of faith who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness and faced death without flinching.

Books bring enlightenment and wisdom. If you need strength for life's many difficult and trying situations, good literature will help supply your need. John Wesley said, “Reading Christians are growing Christians. When Christians cease to read, they cease to grow.”

There can be no substitute for good books. An active citizen of the world of reading once wrote, “A man who buys a book is not only buying a few ounces of paper, string and printer's ink; he may be buying a whole new life.”

# True Religion

So many religions! Why are there so many religions and churches? How can we know which is right? These are questions weighing heavily on men's minds.

As long as man assumes that God will accept any worship, regardless of whether that particular kind of worship is what God Himself desires, there will continue to be a multiplicity of religions the Lord never intended. The modern religious world, with its denominationalism and "have it your way" mumbo-jumbo approach to Deity, is not what God ever purposed. Such a state of religious babble is not sensational — it is sinful.

The adapted versions of Christianity available today are humanistic in orientation and origination. They are religions of convenience, not conviction. And though multiplied millions sincerely believe a falsehood — it is a falsehood still.

Can all ways of worship lead to God? How can they when they all contradict each other? The Eternal God has not left us in doubt.

The question is, "How can we know which is true?" The answer is that true religion will be a revealed religion. True religion will not find its foundation in human desire, whim or caprice, but in the fact that it comes directly from God. A revealed religion does not come from a charismatic or dynamic religious leader, but directly from God.

The genuine (revealed) religion is the one where God speaks to mankind. This is exactly what the Bible claims to be. The Bible is the oldest and only credible religious message in the world.

The message of genuine religion will not be to flatter us and tickle our religious fancies. True religion will not cater to human folly nor elevate human will to be supreme to the will of God. True religion will not be man-centered but God-oriented.

In a world of religious darkness the Bible shines as the clear light from above banishing the blackness of religious confusion. The Bible is true. The Bible is right. May it ever shine unto eternal day.



## What is the Church of Christ?

The church of the Bible cannot be any part of a denomination. It is not Catholic nor Protestant. It is the spiritual body of Christ. Wherever Christ is preached and men believe in Him, repent and are baptized into Christ, Christians are made (Acts 2:36-40). Wherever and whenever believers are obedient to the gospel of Christ, they become members of the church of Christ.

Individuals then work with a local group of fellow Christians and together they form a congregation of God's people. They are purely and simply Christians — nothing more, less or else!

It is our task today to reproduce the New Testament order of things. We appeal for a restoration of the early church and unity of all Christians.

The church of the Lord is the saved (Acts 2:47). The church, (the body of Christ) is the appointed place for all the saved. In the days of the patriarch Noah, God put salvation in the ark (Genesis 6:9). When the flood waters came, all human life not on the ark of safety was lost (1 Peter 3:20,21). Eight precious souls were delivered while the rest of the ungodly and disobedient multitudes were destroyed. In the time of the Great Deluge, salvation was in the ark. And more, there was only one ark.

In the days of the lawgiver Moses, God placed salvation under the blood of the Passover lamb. The Lord told the Israelites to put the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. The Lord's assurance was "*When I see the blood, I will passover you*" (Exodus 12:13). During the long night that followed in Egypt, the death of the first-born of each house took place where the blood was not found. God was clear in His meaning and true to His word in putting salvation on deliverance under the blood of the Lamb.

In the New Testament age of Bible time God has, as He has in the past, specified salvation in a certain place. Today, salvation is in the church. Acts 2:47, "*The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*"

Truly, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

## Faith of Our Fathers

The Christian religion demands supreme dedication. Down through the years mere handfuls of devoted disciples won great victories of faith. With hearts aflame for God and magnificently indifferent toward their own physical welfare, they preached and practiced the gospel of Christ. They sowed the seeds of faith across a heathen empire and burned their names into history. Neither heated flames nor dark dungeons, nor ravenous beasts in the arena could impede their progress. With courage and conviction they outlived, outfought and out-died their heathen contemporaries. Theirs was no superficial dedication; theirs was the victory that overcometh the world; the victory of faith (1 John 5:4)!

In the city of Rome is an ancient enclosure which descends into the dark, musty catacombs where lie the bones of the early Christian martyrs. Deep within the heart of the earth, mile upon mile of subterranean passages serves as a solemn reminder of the sterling devotion of those who "*counted not their lives dear unto themselves.*" Here and there are chiseled in stone the names of those who perished, along with some terms of endearment.

These saints of old time had an invincible faith as they were arrayed against the godless legions of Rome. They suffered. They bled. They died. Even today their blood cries out from the ground as an affirmation of the beauty of holiness and the strength that comes from living by faith.

Let brethren, today, in every place, be mindful of the faith of our fathers. Their lives still speak to us across centuries of time. J.B. Phillips wrote: "Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved."

The challenge of Christ echoes in every church of Christ today: "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Matthew 16:24). With our ears attuned to the call of dedication, let us answer as did Isaiah in the long ago: "*Here am I; send me.*"

# The Need of Faith

Faith is fundamental and foundational. Without faith, a good life, a good marriage, a good friendship, or any lasting thing, cannot be built. Faith turns in many directions.

**We need faith in ourselves.** We need faith in ourselves to believe God has something important for us to do. Life takes on new zest and vitality, to say nothing of depth, when we believe we are a significant part of some meaningful enterprise. In the scheme of things, God has a place, purpose and plan for each of His people. The poet wrote:

“God who wrought a universe of marvelous design  
Has a plan for everlife, even as small as mine.”

A life that is built on godly confidence is linked to the inexhaustible resources of God. Paul’s trust in spiritual power led him to say: *“I can do all things through Him which strengtheneth me”* (Philippians 4:13).

**We need faith in others.** Faith is as necessary to friendship as food is to growth. Jesus had every reason to doubt and distrust men. He suffered tremendously at the hands of misguided men. The Lord nevertheless squarely placed earth-wide responsibilities on the shoulders of His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

**We need faith in God.** This is needed above all things. We need to trust deeply in God’s goodness and greatness and in His providence and purpose.

The list of man’s fears is endless. But faith conquers fear. Jesus said: *“Let not your heart be troubled...believe...”* (John 14:1). When the Lord observed the anxiety-ridden disciples, His soothing words were *“seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33).

Faith gives us stability in the storms. A life anchored in the Rock of Ages will not fall nor falter in time of upheaval. Lashing winds, crushing hail nor relentless heat can avail the life that is hid with Christ in God. Let your roots sink deep into everlasting truth. *“Even as trees send roots to grip the sod, Men, too find quiet anchorage in God.”*

## The Look of Faith

Harold Dye has pointed out that Greek word for man, anthropos, means “one who looks up.” It is this upward looking quality which distinguishes man from all the rest of creation. Dye went on to say, “It is when man belies his heritage and refuses to look up that he wrecks his own life and brings the lives of others to shambles at his feet.”

There are times when life looms darkly before us. The routine of daily deeds becomes the rut of drudgery and despair. At such times we need to look up in faith.

The Psalmist said, *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help”* (Psalm 121:1).

Moses, the grand old man of faith and great lawgiver, looked up with the eyes of faith and *“endured, as seeing Him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:27).

Jesus said, *“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest”* (John 4:35).

The ability to see brings responsibility. Helen Keller was asked, on one occasion, if blindness was life’s greatest tragedy. “No,” replied the great woman, “Life’s greatest tragedy is to have eyes and see not.” But to see and not do is also tragic!

Let us be doers of the word and not seers only.

## Alexander the Angry

Alexander the Great was one of the mightiest conquerors of history. He conquered not only Greece but Egypt and Persia as well and even travelled as far as distant India. At 33 years of age he was the undisputed ruler of the known world. Though Alexander mastered the world, he could not conquer himself.

Alexander's dearest friend was Cletus. From childhood they had played and grown together. More than that, they had fought side by side in numerous battles and campaigns. Even more, on one occasion Cletus had heroically saved Alexander's life.

In an unguarded moment during a drunken feast, Cletus offended Alexander by an untimely remark. Alexander was enraged and took a javelin and hurled it at Cletus and in an instant Cletus was dead. Alexander wept bitter tears and was remorseful, but even the mighty Alexander could not bring back the dead. Alexander had conquered the world but could not control himself. He could command battalions but he failed to restrain his own emotions. He could discipline legions but he could not discipline his temper.

**No bond of friendship is powerful enough to hold friends together in the face of drunken outbursts and moods of rage. It is a sadness that Alexander the Great did not learn in time the prevailing truth of Proverbs 16:32, *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”***

## Do We Care

A group of children were crying at a street corner. A man came by and asked what was the matter. One little lad tearfully replied, "We've got a pain in Billy's stomach!" What a beautiful statement of children's ability to be compassionate. Wherever there is sorrow and suffering in the world; wherever there is spiritual darkness and despair, God's people must extend arms of sympathy.

It was a sympathizing Jesus who beckoned, "*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden...and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28-30). Also the Lord said, he that "*cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37).

When one member of the body of Christ suffers, all feel the pain. Truly, Paul wrote that we "*should have the same care one for another*" (1 Corinthians 12:25). To be casual or lukewarm in our devotion to others, in particular to fellow disciples, is to be casual and lukewarm in our devotion to the Lord (Matthew 25:40).

How far out does the circle of your concern extend? To you and your family? To a few more? Should you redraw the line and include all for whom Christ died?

To the world, the most appealing quality of Jesus is His care and compassion for others. This characteristic makes the Lord loom large in the eyes of those who believe not. This same quality, prominently featured in the lives of the Lord's people, will open many hearts to the truth.

**Do you care?**

## Words

“Talk is cheap” so say some. Not so, said Jesus. The Lord’s emphatic words were, *“every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”* (Matthew 12:36,37).

“What a man says doesn’t count,” is a remark sometimes heard, but from Jesus comes the unhesitating teaching that men live and die by their words.

The tongue can bless or blight. The children of Israel wept for Moses thirty days after he was dead, but think how they treated him when he was alive! They made his life a hardship by their incessant murmuring and complaining. How often is this experience repeated. People find fault with family and friends while neglecting to say words of appreciation and gratitude. After our loved ones are dead we lavish their memories with words of praise. Henry Ward Beecher said: “Do not keep the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead.”

Truly, our speech betrays us. Our words tell what we are. May God help us to be revealed as a people of love, compassion, appreciation and truth.

## Here and Now

Psychologist William Marston asked three thousand people, "What are you living for?" The surprising results of the survey revealed that 94 percent of those surveyed were merely enduring the present moment while waiting for the future. They were waiting for something to happen...waiting for next year...waiting for a better time...waiting for tomorrow. What most do not realize is that all they will ever have is the present...today. Yesterday is past; tomorrow is a dream; now is the only reality. Try as they may, no one can live in rewind or fast-forward; we can remember the past; dream of tomorrow, but we must live in the present.

The plain and undeniable fact is that today is the only guaranteed time. Allow no one and no thing to ruin the day you have. Our world is saturated with perils, problems and perplexities over which we have only limited control. But we can always control how we react and respond to unwelcome negative circumstances.

The Psalmist said, *"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"* (Psalm 118:24). The apostle of love declared, *"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). John also wrote, *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4).



## How Much are You Worth?

During the Presidency of General U.S. Grant, a visiting dignitary from China asked famous people whom he met while touring America, "What are you worth?" The Chinese visitor, one of the wealthiest men in his own country, thought he was paying a compliment to people by inquiring about their financial standing. However, the day has been long past when intelligent people judge an individual's worth on the basis of their bank account.

At the outbreak of the American Civil War, the North vainly tried to enlist the services of Robert E. Lee. General Scott stated that Lee was worth fifty thousand men in battle. How many of us are as valuable as such a large number of people? Lee's value was not in his financial clout, but in his strategic abilities and expertise in the art of warfare.

**Who we are and what we believe are more important considerations than dollars and cents in determining value. It is possible to be financially prosperous and morally bankrupt. Such an individual is not worth very much. In Luke 12:15, Jesus taught *"a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* Are you able to grasp true sources of enrichment? True values in life are the things worth living for and dying for. Any person without these things will not make much difference to the world's welfare.**

## Saints in Unseemly Places

Paul closed his Phillippian letter from Rome by saying, “*All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household*” (Philippians 4:22). Christians in the imperial family! We can easily imagine what the family life of a debased Nero was like. The immorality of Nero’s world was worse than the ungodliness of our own time. If it was possible to be a saint in ancient Rome then it’s possible to be a saint in modern day America.

God’s people in times past lived godly lives in the midst of unbelievably corrupt environments. In the days prior to the Great Deluge, Enoch maintained a level of holiness such that he “*walked with God*” (Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5). The world of Enoch was so degraded that a sin-hating Jehovah eventually decreed its destruction. But in a world of almost universal moral darkness Enoch’s bright light of goodness shone clearly. In spite of all the evil forces arrayed for his undoing, Noah lived true to God and managed the salvation of his family (Genesis 6:9).

**Down through the years, courageous men and women, living in depraved conditions have shown that it is possible to be in the world but not of the world. The one who did this best of all was Christ. The life of one who lives in imitation of Him will be as a current of fresh air in a sin-stenched atmosphere. Let the Lord’s people everywhere live as bright and shining lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15).**

## Doing the Best Things in the Worst of Times

In an old English church building, a memorial table bears this inscription:

“In the year 1653, when all sacred things throughout the nation were either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet, founded this church, whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in the worst times and hoped them in the most calamitous.”

English history verified how turbulent the times were. A civil war had resulted in the king being beheaded. The country was torn by strife and dissension; the atmosphere reeked with hatred; the overall outlook for the times was dark indeed. In such a dismal day, Sir Robert Shirley decided to act and do something constructive...he built a church building! Then, as now, the worst of times demand the best of deeds! Who better to do the best of things than Christians?! If you are bothered and disturbed over the crisis of the times and the conditions of our day, throw all your influence with all your might on the side for right. Cast your lot with individuals that are trying to make a difference for good.

In Philippians Paul charged, *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Philippians 2:15). When all around you grows dark, let the light of your Christian life shine ever so brightly.

## Are You Still on the Bottle?

Are you still on the bottle? Not the beer bottle or the whisky bottle (although those are bottles to be avoided); but I mean the milk bottle. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he stated, "*I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but...as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able*" (1 Corinthians 3:1,2). The Corinthians were rebuked for their lack of spiritual growth and development. They simply and sadly had not grown in their spiritual life. They had time and opportunity but the Corinthians remained in a state of spiritual immaturity — religious babies! They should have been walking and taking solid food but they were still on the bottle.

There are too many like the Corinthians in the Lord's church today. They must always be taught but they never teach. They complain at the mere thought of some inconvenience or hardship. They never encourage others but must always be exhorted themselves. They never seem to be able to deal with the deeper spiritual problems that require much practical wisdom and understanding.

The writer of Hebrews said, "*When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of god; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat*" (Hebrews 5:12). Does this explain why there is always a teacher shortage in the church? Let every child of God labor to be a well-seasoned, keen-minded soul, capable of declaring the gospel. Let us get off the bottle!

# Humility

Many years ago it was not uncommon for individuals to close letters and correspondence with “very humbly yours”, or “Your humble servant” or some other such phrasing which emphasized the humility of the writer.

In today’s world, however, such wording is scarcely seen. Humility has become an unpopular virtue with most individuals. We have become a society of publicity seekers and self-servers. Such attitudes were not characteristic of Christ. The Lord “*made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant...He humbled Himself...*” (Philippians 2:7,8). The Lord did not call attention to Himself. Isaiah said, “*He shall not cry, nor lift up; neither shall any man hear his voice in the street*” (Isaiah 42:2).

Christians will pattern their lives after Christ and do the best they can in any given set of circumstances; they then let their deeds and achievements speak for themselves. Though everyone appreciates the praise of others, yet, we should not go around seeking accolades from our peers. Neither do Christians become insecure and disturbed if they are overlooked when commendations are given.

It is a great matter to desire genuine virtues, but, it is just as great to desire to conceal them.

## Brothers and Others

The lives of many people are hemmed in by the narrow boundaries of their own selfishness. The early disciples were interested not only in themselves but also in others. Jesus commanded the gospel be preached not only in Jerusalem but also in Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). The gospel of salvation is never to be changed into the gospel of selfishness.

There was a short-sighted old man who prayed:

“Lord, bless me and my wife,  
My son John and his wife,  
Us four and no more.”

He was as bad as the old batchelor who made the prayer:

“Lord, bless only me,  
That’s as far as I can see.”

Petty people with such pitiful attitudes do actually exist. Though they may profess to be religious, yet, they have never gotten off the lowest level of spirituality. At best they achieve only a veneer of true religion.

The Lord taught that a lack of concern for others was reprehensible. In the story of the Good Samaritan the priest and the Levite demonstrated a hard-heartedness that made them poor examples of their faith (Luke 10:25-37).

# Courage

In the year 404 a monk by the name Telemachus travelled to Rome and was shocked beyond measure at the cruelty of the gladiatorial contests. Telemachus leaped over the railing of the Coliseum and tried to stop the gladiators from hacking themselves to pieces by repeated cries of “In the name of Christ, stop!” The little monk stood his ground and refused to move. Shortly he was slain by the gladiators who continued their fight standing over his dead body. But the little monk’s sacrifice was not in vain as the consciences of the Roman populace were stirred and Emperor Honorius soon decreed the bloody combat games be forever abolished.

The spirit of courage, exemplified by Telemachus, needs to be alive today as modern Christians struggle against deeply entrenched evils such as injustice, indifference and immorality.

The Lord’s church is a fellowship of courageous souls who have banded together to grapple with wickedness and all unrighteousness. The church of Christ was not established by cowards nor has it been preserved by cowards. Let God’s people be lionhearted and bold, neither fearing the frowns nor courting the favors of the world. Severe trials and tribulations will only serve to increase our fortitude. God *“Hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Only by being courageous can we swim against the world’s current and move in the direction of God.

## America the Religious?

The U.S. News and World Report of April 4, 1994, carried a front page article dealing with religion in America. A leading statement said: “A new U.S. News poll suggests, in fact, that at the end of the 20th century, the wealthiest, most powerful and best educated country on earth is still one of the most religious.” While the article contained some good and encouraging news, yet, the idea of America being a strongly religious nation flies in the face of certain contradictory facts:

1. Abortion is viewed by millions in our country as a preferred method of birth control. Millions upon millions of 20th century society Americans see nothing at all wrong with millions upon millions of infants slaughtered each year in abortion mills. There have been approximately 31 million abortions since Row vs. Wade in 1973.

2. Though forty percent of Americans say they attend church services every week yet modern preaching can hardly be said to be on the cutting edge of moral issues. A worship service may last an hour or two but the average American spends over seven hours per day watching television. Television is a media where many religious values are ridiculed and reviled.

3. Since 1990, more than 90,000 Americans have been killed at the hands of their fellow citizens — nearly twice as many Americans that died in the nine years of the Vietnam war.

**We must ask if religion, as professed by Americans, has a significant and serious influence on life. If genuine conviction is measured more by deeds than words, then there is much to be doubted in our nation’s alleged religious inclination.**



## Looking Unto Jesus

Hebrews 12:2 teaches we are to be “*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*” Jesus was of like passions with us. He came to earth, not in a celestial form, but in a flesh and blood form (Hebrews 2:14).

Though the Lord lived a life of trial and tribulation, His existence was a series of victories. When tempted of the Devil, He was victorious; when betrayed by a friend, He was victorious; when denied by an apostle, He was victorious; when tried before Pilate, He was victorious; when crucified at Calvary, He was victorious!

Christians are to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Since the Lord is ahead of us and leads the way, He is able to direct us in perplexity; support us in distress; and deliver us in danger.

The difficulties of Christ were far greater than ours, yet, He endured all. He overcame all. He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 1:3).

To all who faithfully follow God’s Son, He will say at last, “*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*” As we look unto Jesus, we also can be victorious over every tribulation of life.

## Believe and Be Saved

Jesus commanded His apostles to sound forth words of salvation into all the world. In Mark 16:16, the Lord spoke these words, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" Faith is the instrument of procurement of salvation and baptism (immersion in water) is faith in action.

The importance of the declaration of Mark 16:16 is seen in the dignity of the speaker, including his infallible knowledge, awesome power and unimpeachable veracity.

The word "damned" speaks the awful consequence of rejecting the Saviour's words. The unbeliever eventually knows everlasting punishment. There is nothing more.

Honest souls will have no difficulty comprehending the Lord's plan of pardon. Wise souls will simply "trust and obey." What will you do?

## Threefold Salvation

There are three aspects to the great salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Christians are saved:

1. **From the practice of sin.** Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). In Romans 6:1,2 Paul wrote:

*“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”*

For the child of God, sin hath no more dominion.

2. **From the power of sin.** Though the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23; James 1:15) yet, because of Calvary, *“If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1 John 2:1). If the power of sin be realized, the practice of sin can be broken.

3. **From the presence of sin.** Paul wrote of the day of liberation from even the presence of sin in Phillipians 3:20,21:

*“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself.”*

Heaven's fair shore will be inhabited by a sin free people in a sin free environment (Revelation 22:1-5).

## Be an Encourager

One writer has stated: “One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement...It is easy to laugh at men’s ideals; it is easy to pour cold water on their enthusiasm; it is easy to discourage others. The world is full of discouragers. We have a Christian duty to encourage one another. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word.”

A brother was struggling with a serious physical malady. An elderly sister encouraged him by saying, “My brother, you’ll get over it.” In time he did. That sister in Christ will never know how much good those few words did.

A youthful preacher was discouraged over his lack of accomplishment in his labors. The young man had hoped to preach to hundreds but only a handful came. An elder lifted his hopes by saying, “Son, don’t feel badly. I know a man who had only twelve followers and He did all right!” Proverbs 15:23 says, “*A word spoken in due season, how good it is.*”

It is human nature to get discouraged. It is divine nature to give encouragement. Be an encourager!

## Paul's Victory

Hardship, sickness and difficulty are often unwelcomed intrusions in life. But even if we are faced with obstacles and struggles in the fulfilling of our plans and the achievement of our goals, God promises all things can work for our good, if we love Him (Romans 8:28).

Paul's own experiences demonstrate the proof of the truth. For a long time Paul had desired to visit the Imperial City of Rome and preach the gospel at the very heart of the empire. The time came when he reached Rome, but not exactly as he planned. Instead of as a free traveller, he went as a prisoner, awaiting trial and eventual death.

Paul spent his prison time writing letters to churches and friends. Ever since then multiplied millions of people have turned to the Bible and found comfort and strength in his messages of faith and hope. Paul shows that no experience is a calamity in itself. Failure, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. The attitude in which we confront defeat determines the result it has in our lives. *"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ..."* (2 Corinthians 2:14).

## Failure and Success

Nathaniel Hawthorne had the ambition to be a writer. He had managed to publish a few magazine articles but it seemed impossible for him to make a living with his writing. Through the influence of a friend he secured a job in the Boston custom house. After two years, Hawthorne lost his job and dejectedly went home a jobless 37 year old failure with no prospects for the future.

Mrs. Hawthorne had a different view of things and encouraged her husband by saying, "Now you can write your book." Hawthorne put his hand to the task and wrote one the greatest of all novels, **The Scarlet Letter**. From the ashes of disaster can spring the roses of success.

Many are not able to turn defeat into victory unless they receive encouragement from others. Isaiah 50:4, "*The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.*" One of the finest services you can render to others is to lend them words of encouragement to inspire them onward and to keep them from losing faith in themselves.

# Time, Time, Time

An old British preacher pointed out there are three kinds of time:

There is clock time, the time of civilized man. This time is determined by the calendar and watch. This time is a continuous straight line; it is the time of history and the succession of events.

There is natural time. This is the time of the seasons and the circling world.

Finally, there is God's time. There are no clocks in heaven, no straight line of events, nor seasons. Heaven is truly the land of fadeless day; no yesterday, no today, no tomorrow. An old African saying is, "God's time is best." So it is!

How good to stop the bustle and hurry of our daily lives and reflect that someday we will see time through God's eyes.

# Heart Religion

Since only a religion of the heart has value, let us see what the Bible includes as part of heart religion. According to the Holy Scriptures heart religion is:

1. **Heart-felt.** With the heart man loves (Matthew 22:37) and desires (Romans 10:1). Good feelings by themselves are not an indication that one is right with God but if one is right with God good feeling will result. Rejoicing (a feeling) comes after obedience (Acts 8:36-39). In religion we feel good because we are right, but we are not right with God just because we feel good.

2. **Heart-thought.** The heart thinks (Proverbs 23:7); understands (Matthew 13:15) and believes (Romans 10:10). True Christianity involves the intellect.

3. **Heart-acted.** True heart religion results in obedience to God's commands (Romans 6:16,17). This includes baptism into Christ (Romans 6:4).

There is a great difference in heart religion and "holler" religion. Is your religion from the heart?



# Hope

“I am dead, there is no hope for me.” These words were spoken by Charles Manson on December 26, 1969, as he stood before Judge William Keene in Los Angeles, California. Manson was answering questions about the senseless slaying of seven persons, including the famous movie star, Sharon Tate.

Regrettably, the pitiful cry of Manson is the lamentation of multiplied millions all over this sin-blasted planet called earth. Men and women live all around us without love, faith and optimism. Their lives are a mixture of broken hearts, crushed spirits and, worst of all, empty souls.

Dr. R. McNair said, “Hope is the medicine I use more than any other. Hope can cure nearly everything.” Another physician pointed out, “If you lead a person to believe there’s no hope, you drive another nail in his coffin.”

The message of the gospel of Christ is hope for a despairing world. The Bible message is:

1. *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).
2. *“Let not your heart be troubled”* (John 14:1).
3. *“All things work together for good to them that love God”* (Romans 8:28).

If you are going through an emotional earthquake with much of your joy and stability threatened, if all around you is grief and loss, if you are in the dark valley of disappointment — then God’s Word to you is a word of hope!

Remember, *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27). Remember, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). Remember when we are right with God wondrous things become possibilities. With Christ, we have the right to be hopeful about our lives.

# The Captain of Our Salvation

On one of his ocean voyages to the South Sea Islands, Robert Louis Stevenson related that a terrible storm arose and the passengers feared the ship would be lost. One of the men finally went to the upper deck, braving the wind and the rain, to see the captain quietly pacing the bridge. With undisturbed face, the captain issued orders for the handling of the ship. The man made his way back to the other worried passengers huddled together and said: "I have seen the captain's face and all is well."

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 we read: "*The love of Christ compels us.*" The words used here literally mean, "holds together." Christ is the "super-glue" that holds our lives together so we can be whole persons — pure, honest, upright — persons of integrity.

Amid all the sorrows and strifes, and anxieties and confusions of our times, and amid all uneasiness over what may lie ahead, we take heart to face life courageously by centering our heart's devotion and life's desire upon the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

Jesus is the Revealed, the Redeeming, the Risen, the Reigning and the Returning Lord whose example runs like a golden beam of glimmering light, piercing the darkness of uncertainty that often surrounds us.

Hebrews 12:2 says we are to be "*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*" We arise from our knees to take hold of our responsibilities with calmer minds and fresh courage. Mary James wrote:

"Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,  
I've lost sight of all beside.  
So enchained my spirit's vision,  
Looking at the Crucified."

Christians can be calm and controlled knowing the Captain is at the helm.

## Take Time to be Holy

This is the age of the speed-demon. The world is too much with us and we are too much with it. We need moments of peaceful prayer and quiet meditation, yet, it seems those precious moments are snatched from us by the hurried demands of modern life. We have appointments to make, meetings to attend, and schedules to keep. Frantically, we rush from event to event and fill our lives with good things to the exclusion of those things that are best. What of study, prayer and meditation?

The hurried, hectic and haphazard life may speak well of our ability to be active but what of our ability to be spiritual? An observer of human nature once said that “no man can live worthily who does not catch a vision of the thing he is to be and of the God who made him.” We need time to be silent and to stop and think. Can God be revealed to a hasty heart and stampeding spirit?

The prophet said: *“But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him”* (Habakkuk 2:20).

Jesus said: *“In your patience possess ye your souls”* (Luke 21:19).

**Because empty activity can never be a substitute for deep spiritual values, we need to escape “the tyranny of the urgent” and feed more frequently on the green pastures of the Sacred Page. Does God often seem remote and distant? Then stop, pray and study — so you can catch up to Him.**

## A Good Sample

Every man's life is an unspoken sermon. Thus, every man's life conveys a message of some kind. The life we live, (actions as well as attitudes) serves as a sample of the Christianity we believe in. When you visit a mall or supermarket, you often find salespeople offering free samples of various products. Through the mail you may have received samples of toothpaste, shampoo or soap. The manufacturers of these products hope that when you try these samples you will like them and want to try more — for a price. Actual samples of the product are the most convincing way to persuade consumers to buy more.

In religion, nothing is more convincing than a sample of the real thing. The sample that you present in your life makes an impression that is convincing to others.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul commended the Thessalonians for the example they gave in their *“work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope.”*

In 1 Timothy 4:12 Paul's words of exhortation to Timothy were *“be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”*

Paul himself was a splendid example of conviction and dedication to the cause of the gospel. He stood for Christ no matter what the consequences. He was beaten, stoned, starved and left for dead. He endured imprisonment, shipwreck and countless other sufferings (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). However, at the close of his life, Paul was able to say *“I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7).

Let us never underestimate the high importance of a holy example. Consider Paul. Won't you be such an example of Christianity as he?

## This Fleeting Life

To a small child, a lifetime on earth must seem like an eternity. The minutes and hours pass by quickly enough but the months and years seem to go on forever. Then one day childhood years are over and the early portion of life is past before the mind can grasp it.

Years of labor and toil go by with a rush and a whirl and gray hairs are scattered upon the head.

One day you find yourself contemplating that most of those you had known and mingled your life with now rest patiently in the silent City of the Dead.

Everything changes. The pavement we walk upon crumbles; the cars we ride in wear and rust away and nature's verdant glory turns brown. The prophet said, "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of God shall stand forever*" (Isaiah 40:8).

It is disheartening to know of the nature of this fleeting life. Job said "*man that is born of woman is of few days...*" (Job 14:1). The poet said, "Brief life is our portion here." The day comes when other men live in our houses, work at our jobs and sit in our pews. You and I shall be far away.

It is comforting to realize the permanent nature of spiritual things. God's Word endureth forever (Matthew 24:35); the Kingdom of God (church) shall last forever (Daniel 2:44); the soul of man shall endure forever (Matthew 25:46). All else perishes. Only God and the things of God will remain. How important it is to make every decision of life with the betterment of eternal things foremost in mind.

With these thoughts, you begin to understand what the writer meant when he wrote:

"Change and decay in all around I see,  
thou that changest not, abide with me."

## Never Lose Heart

How sound is the counsel of Christ. In Luke 18:1, Jesus said that men ought “*not to faint.*” To “faint” means to lose heart. A young man despaired of living and sought to exit this world at the end of a rope. However, the rope broke! A few months later the young man was asked how things were going. He replied, “I’m on top of the world.”

A little boy was leading his sister up a mountain path. The girl complained, “the path is too rocky and bumpy.” The brother replied, “Sure, the bumps are what you climb on.”

Humanity is so designed that without trouble our best never comes out. If no hardship; there is no hardihood. If no fight; there is no fortitude. If no pain; there is no patience. We may not prefer or like that kind of world, but that is the kind of world we live in.

Such being so, it is always too soon to quit. Jesus also said, “*He that endureth to the end shall be saved*” (Matthew 10:22).

## A Remarkable Woman

A wise man said: “Woman is the salvation or destruction of the family. She carries its destiny in the folds of her mantle.”

In London one can find the final resting place of Susannah Wesley. The more we learn of Susannah Wesley’s life, the greater is our sense of admiration for her. She was an effective mother and home-builder. Daughter of a preacher, wife of a preacher, and mother of preachers in an era when preaching brought zealous antagonism and persecution. She had nineteen children and gave each of them an hour of religious instruction each week. Somehow she conveyed to her offspring a love for the Bible and ignited in them the fire of spiritual devotion.

Across the street from Susannah’s burial place is a magnificent memorial to her illustrious son, John Wesley, one of the leading religious reformers in history.

**Susannah Wesley and her family did not understand New Testament Christianity as we as members of the Church of Christ do, but her life is an outstanding testimony to the fact that mothers (and fathers) today can raise up godly children and light the fire of faith in their hearts and instill in their offspring a love and appreciation for spiritual values. This can be done in spite of all the unholy and immoral influences about us.**

# The Wizard of Oz Syndrome

In the classic tale *The Wizard of Oz*, a young lady named Dorothy was told to follow the yellow brick road which would lead her to the great and mighty Wizard of Oz, who could send her home again. In the expectation of having all her fears relieved and all her hopes realized, Dorothy travelled down the yellow brick road — but at the last — the Wizard was a fake and the yellow brick road was misleading.

Unfortunately, the world of today is filled with souls who are searching for a God like the Wizard was supposed to be. They look for churches and religious groups who will serve as their yellow brick road. In the end, they suffer the multiple heartache of disillusionment, discouragement and deception.

On May 3, 1993 U.S. News and World Report ran a story captioned “The Final Days of Ranch Apocalypse.” It was the story of David Koresh and the fall of the ranch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas. This and other stories reminds us that religious deception is as much a part of the 20th century as it was in the 1st century.

Bible warnings about false teachers are in abundance:

*“Little children, let no man deceive you”* (1 John 3:7).

*“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1).

The church at Ephesus was commended because they had *“tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars”* (Revelation 2:2).

Paul the apostle admonished early believers to *“prove all things; hold fast to that which is good”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

It is good to be reminded that truth is to be held in importance above all things. Jesus said only the truth will set us free (John 8:32). It is also essential to place our confidence in the strong cord of God’s Word (John 17:17) and not in the teachings of men which are but ropes of sand.



# Abraham and God

Among the greatest names in the roll call of faithful saints down through the ages, the name of Abraham must surely rank high on the list. Abraham's distinction lies in the fact that Abraham listened to God, loved God and leaned upon God.

## Abraham Listened to God

In Genesis 22:1, God spoke the patriarch's name and Abraham replied, "*Behold, here I am.*"

God proceeded to tell Abraham an awful thing. God does not always speak to us the things we like to hear. Very likely, any other command from the Lord would have been desired instead. The Lord, however, often calls upon His people for unpleasant tasks.

## Abraham Loved God

Abraham's love was so great that when God told him to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice, that faithful servant of God did as he was asked, without argument, excuse or delay. Abraham attained the victory of faith over the temptation to disobey what amounted to the hardest test of his life (Genesis 22:2-5). In anguish of soul, Abraham travelled to the place God designated. The great servant of the Lord erected an altar and put wood for the fire in place. Abraham proceeded to stretch forth his hand to slay Isaac. This was no bluff job, no pretension. But, the angel of the Lord spoke and stayed the man of faith's hand and Isaac was spared (Genesis 22:9-11).

Abraham's faith was tried and tested and proven to be solid and strong. Actions do speak louder than words! Instead of Isaac, a ram became the sacrifice (Genesis 22:12,13). God makes a way for those who listen to Him.

## Abraham Leaned Upon God

While we want God to listen to us when we pray, it is equally important for us to listen to Him. If we don't stop and listen, we may never know God's will for our lives. Our faith will go untested and an untested faith is not worth having. As Abraham listened, loved and leaned on God so we must do the same. Leaning upon the Lord allows Him to do for us all the things we cannot do for ourselves. We need to appreciate a life of living, active and obedient faith and the hope such a life gives us for the world which is to come.

## Failure to Thrive

“One of the worst nightmares of parents is finding out their child is not growing.” These words introduced a recent newspaper article (*The Leaf Chronicle*, Clarksville, TN., Monday, August 15, 1994) on “Failure to Thrive Syndrome.” This phenomenon, also known as FTT, afflicts approximately 5 percent of children in the United States. The article stated “The words ‘failure to thrive’ can bring on night sweats for parents anxious about the development of their children.” The article also pointed out the children in the Third World often have medical problems because of a lack of proper food and nutrients.

Unfortunately, FTT syndrome is not limited to the physical realm. It is a spiritual disaster if the soul of man does not grow and develop as it should. It is a shame that years after conversion many individuals are still weak in their faith, watery in their hope and wilted in their spiritual growth and development. They are still spiritual infants!

Paul must have felt the anxiety of a concerned parent as he reflected on the Corinthians’ failure to thrive:

*“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet are ye able. For ye are carnal; for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”*

The Hebrew writer admonished:

*“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”* (Hebrews 5:12).

The medical problem known as FTT is “fixable.” The spiritual form of the syndrome is also fixable. It is cured by frequent healthy servings of God’s word and daily prayer.

## Too Busy

First Kings 20:38-42 tells about a man who fell down on the job. Though the Old Testament passage is located in a seldom used section of the Bible, it teaches an excellent and much-needed lesson to those who never can seem to find time to do the Lord's work.

The prophet, in parable form, tells of being given an enemy prisoner to guard but the prisoner escaped. The prophet remarked to the King, *"While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone."* The King replied, *"Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people"* (1 Kings 20:42 NKJV).

The prophet was given a charge to keep but because of distractions, he let slip his responsibility. We are not prophets or worldly soldiers, but we are Christians who have been given the Lord's work to do. We have been given responsibilities and opportunities but the danger is that we will be "busy here and there" and the truly important things shall be left undone and remain neglected.

We are all busy — but busy at what?! At the tender age of twelve Jesus said, *"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"* (Luke 2:49). Whose business are you about?

**Let no one be too busy for God!**

# Judas' Mistake

Only the dead and the unborn make no mistakes. Some mistakes are minor and can easily be fixed. Others are major and carry consequences which may last for a lifetime — or an eternity. The worst mistake any man can make is to reject Christ. Judas Iscariot committed this error and found himself condemned.

## Judas' Beginning

Judas started out well. He was a close associate of the Lord, even being the treasurer for the band of apostles. He was chosen by Christ; he was given numerous opportunities; he witnessed some of the most notable and significant events in the history of the gospel, but Judas allowed the Devil to enter into him and he went out into the darkness of night to betray the Son of God (John 13:26-30).

## Judas' Character

John 12 tells us something of the character of Judas. Judas *“was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it”* (John 12:6 NKJV). Nothing is said in scripture about any noble motive Judas may have had. The only excuse for Judas was that he was covetous and greedy, and this was a poor excuse at that.

Paul wrote that *“the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10). The desire for ill-gotten gain preyed upon his mind and Judas betrayed the best friend mankind ever had.

## Judas' Price

Judas sold out the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but this was not the real price of his mistake. He received no benefits from the money and never had another minute's joy in this world or in the world to come. Judas selected suicide as the way to deal with his guilt (Acts 1:17,18). Judas Iscariot can be described as *“the man who kissed the door of heaven and went to hell.”*

Men today still betray Christ. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss; modernism accomplishes the same by speaking well of the Lord. When unbelievers say that Jesus was *“a good teacher”* or *“a good man”* and go no further in recognizing the deity of Christ, they too have betrayed the Son of God.

When we live unrighteously, we betray Him. When we refuse the counsel of His word, we betray him. If we just drift carelessly through life, we betray Him.

All the wealth in the world and all the pleasures imaginable will one day be freely and gladly traded for an opportunity to correct the mistake many are now making. Sinner, obey the gospel (Mark 16:16)!

## Lewd Literature

A few years ago, Dr. Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate stated: “Our current best sellers glow with a phosphorescent rottenness.” Dr. Harris’ words are just as true today. It is the day and age of the malicious story and sordid joke. The ageless ideals of purity and virtue have taken back seats to characteristics of a baser sort.

King David was secure on his throne but in a moment of weakness, he allowed lustful thoughts to cross the threshold of his mind. That instant of yielding to the flesh produced a result that heathen empires and enemy armies had failed to accomplish.

The words of the Lord fall with refreshing vigor upon our minds: *“Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8).

# Humble Servants

Someone has wisely said “The world’s masters are soon forgotten; the world’s servants — never!” The men and women who tower high above the horizon of the years are those who serve selflessly and sacrificially in bringing glory to God. These precious ones can be best described as humble servants of God. They labor tirelessly. They teach Bible classes, visit the sick, counsel the troubled, comfort the sorrowing, prepare food, wait tables, wash dishes, pray diligently and influence others for the gospel. All this, and more, they do for the purpose of exalting God’s name in the earth.

Though the spotlight of recognition seldom shines upon them, yet, the world would be a much less desirable place without them. Obedience is the key to being a servant. Elijah championed the cause of God atop Mt. Carmel and prayed, “*Let it be known...that thou are God in Israel, and that I am thy servant...*” He then added, “*...and I have done all these things at thy word*” (1 Kings 18:36). Not some things, or a few things, but **all things!**

Elijah’s powerful petition to God achieved in a moment what the heathen howlings of a whole day had failed to do.

On the occasion in Luke 5, Peter and the others had spent a long night fishing with no success. Jesus bade them to launch out into the deep and let down the nets for the catch of a lifetime. Simon then said, “*Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net*” (Luke 5:5). The disciples obeyed and the nets were filled to overflowing with fish!

God is honored when His word is obeyed. Robert Burns said, “They never wrought in vain who sought the Lord aright.”

Humble servants of God are the light of the world. Taking God at His word and toiling with all their strength, the ripples of their lives go out in ever widening circles of godliness. Humble servants of God don’t keep score of offenses, don’t care who gets credit and don’t get their feelings hurt due to oversights. They only say, “*We have done that which was our duty to do*” (Luke 17:10).

Are you a humble servant of God?

## Three Titanic Evils

Down through the centuries, certain worldly concepts have repeatedly emerged inflicting much detriment to human society. Though these manifestations have put on new faces and attempted various disguises and used lust and greed to allure victims, yet, these evils have always had an identity well established in the Word of God.

Some of these evils are:

1. **Materialism** — One observer said, “America is a gadget-filled paradise, suspended over a hell of insecurity!” The pursuit of riches has consumed millions of lives. The new religion in America is “I — DOLLAR — TRY.” Yet, they who have fallen under materialism’s appeal have found the emptiness that mammon leaves. Jay Gould, the American millionaire, reportedly said while dying, “I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.”

2. **Illicit Sex** — Hebrews 13:4 says, “*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*” Illicit sexual relationships are now socially acceptable. Such sexual “freedom” may find place in the minds of men but never in the Word of God.

Sexual permissiveness is largely responsible for the greatest tragedy of the 20th century — abortion! The United Nations estimates 55 million abortions are performed throughout the world annually. In America alone, each year one to two million infants are killed — more than the sum total of all American lives lost since the founding of our country 200 years ago!

3. **Divorce** — Every 24 hours in America, 6,567 couples will be married and 3,197 couples will divorce. The words “until death us do part” have been replaced by “as long as the love lasts” in the marriage ceremony. There is no doubt of a tremendous shift in attitude toward divorce.

These titanic evils remind every Christian to preach and teach anew with force and feeling that God has not changed in His attitude toward right and wrong. God’s word still declares that “*he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world...*” (Acts 17:31).

Sin is still sin. Wrong is still wrong. The need for God’s people to be “*the salt of the earth*” is now greater than ever.

# Three Titanic Truths

A lectureship speaker pointed out several lessons of permanent worth. Among the good and noble truths set forth were:

1. **God's Attitude Toward Sin Is Unchangeable.** The Lord is not "wishy-washy". His truths are eternal. Sin may manifest itself under different cloaks and be dressed up in glamour but what God has said about it in the past, is what He is saying about it in the present and will be what He says about it in the future.

The Lord declares, "*For I am the Lord, I change not...*" (Malachi 3:6).

2. **God's Capacity For Forgiveness Is Great.** "As long as there's life — there's hope!" As long as one lives, he is able to receive heaven's pardon for all past transgressions.

Man's part in obtaining forgiveness is to forsake sins and follow the Lord in living an obedient life (Acts 2:36-42). God's promise is "*though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*" (Isaiah 2:18).

3. **God's Justice Demands Judgment.** The verdict of God's Word, as well as of history, is that, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*" (Psalm 9:17). The names of civilizations such as Assyria, Babylon and Rome are merely some of the names of "cesspool" societies that mocked God.

In view of God's unchanging attitude toward sin, God's capacity and willingness to forgive sins and His declaration of certain judgment; what manner of persons ought we to be?

A person is foolish indeed to ignore or neglect these three titanic truths and repeat the blunders of the world.