

PREACHING THE BASICS

BY
JOHN STACY

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INTRODUCTION

In preparing the material for **GOD'S MESSAGE FOR MAN TODAY**, we found that there would be enough for two volumes. We are therefore sending forth Volume II with every confidence that if you have read Volume I you will also want to read this one.

Since writing the Introduction to Volume I, the author, John Stacy, has already returned to India for another series of meetings. This was back in February of this year. He had hoped to return again in 1982 but he has now written to say that he will be unable to come this time. That being the case, I am sure that he will be planning to come at a later date, perhaps in 1983.

In addition to his visits here, and providing the articles for these two volumes of gospel material, brother Stacy has also become one of our radio speakers over radio Sri Lanka and even now those sermons are being printed under the title, **THE ANCIENT GOSPEL**.

As you go through the lessons in this book, you will note that John has the ability to write in a clear, concise, and pointed way. Of course, above all, his lessons are scriptural, informative, timely, and needed. He writes to the Christian and to the non-Christian. The purpose is to encourage you, the reader, to receive the truth of God, to believe it, and to obey it. We pray that you will. If

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we can help you to do so, please let us know.

We want to thank brother Stacy again for all his assistance and encouragement in helping us to preach the gospel to the masses in this part of the world.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi, India
October 22, 1981

SECOND EDITION STATEMENT

This volume is equally important. Its lessons are short, simple, and scriptural. Use it in your personal work, send it to the mission field, and send it to your friends. When you sow the seed, it will surely bear fruit. May God bless you as you do so.

J. C. Choate
Winona, MS
July 8, 1985

Introduction

The lessons in this book were written over a period of nine years. They were originally articles placed in the *Tri-City Reporter*. This local newspaper was circulated throughout the cities of Dyer, Rutherford, and Kenton, Tennessee. I preached for the church in Dyer and Rutherford. These articles were used to teach primarily those who were non-members.

I do not claim originality for all these articles. Many are condensed sermons from books in my library, which I thought were worth passing on to the general public. I cannot give credit to whom credit is due but God can and will. This is what counts in the long run.

I am thrilled that J. C. Choate is willing to use these articles in his work to evangelize India and other nations round about. I pray now that they will be useful in spreading the gospel in America as well.

John Stacy
July 14, 1981

DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to Joe Davis, who serves as an elder for the Phillips Street Church of Christ in Dyersburg, Tennessee. Joe is a man who loves God, the church, and the truth. He was elder enough to tell me when I was wrong and brother enough to lift me up and encourage me to continue preaching the gospel. God bless you, Joe, and your good wife, Ann. You have both meant so much to me throughout the years.

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Learning How To Die

In many ways Christ's death is very much different from the death of all men. Yet, in many ways Christ's death should serve as an example for our own death.

In I Peter 2:21 we find, "... leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps." We then should and must imitate many things connected with the death of our Lord.

First of all, consider the fact that Jesus knew that death was the common lot of all men and that he too would die. In John 10:11 we find Jesus expressing his awareness of the physical death that awaited him when he said, "I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." Jesus never avoided thinking about his death. Jesus did not postpone preparation for his death. We, too, like Jesus, should be making preparations for the world to come while yet we live!

In the second place, Jesus prepared for death by living in constant communion with his heavenly Father. Jesus very often spent much time in fervent prayer to his Father. In Luke 6:12 we read, "He went out into the mountain to pray, and he continued all night in prayer to God." On the cross Jesus looked forward to returning to the Father. Jesus said in Luke 23:46, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." Prayer is available to us today that we might prepare for death by remaining in constant communion with the Father.

Learning How To Die

Thirdly, Christ prepared for death by learning and doing his Father's will. Jesus said in John 4:34, ". . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to accomplish his work." In John 6:38 Jesus said, "For I am come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me." Doing God's will is important preparation for the world to come. Jesus in Matthew 7:21 said, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Are we preparing for the day of our death by learning and doing the Father's will?

In the fourth place, Christ prepared for death by using God's word. Christ knew and used the scriptures. In the temptation scenes, Jesus three times uses God's word to ward off the onslaughts of the Devil. For example, when the Devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, Jesus replied in Matthew 4:4, ". . . It is written (Deuteronomy 8:3) man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." As our Lord hung on the cross we find these words in John 19:28, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things are now finished, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." The scriptures were in the mind of the dying Christ! Thus, our Lord used the scriptures to support him in life and to sustain him in death!

Let us close with Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto man once to die . . ." Are you ready for that appointment? You can be ready if you will learn from Jesus how to die!

Paradoxes Of Christianity

A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory. It seems to run against common sense. It is strange but true. The Christian religion and the Christian life seem to be contradictory to human wisdom. They just don't make sense to the non-Christian. Paul in I Corinthians 1:18 said, "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but to us who are saved it is the power of God." Let us now look at some paradoxes of the Christian faith which seem foolish to those out of Christ.

First of all, the Bible states that we must die to live! The world says, you only go around once in this life so live it up till you die. Jesus said in John 12:24, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Only in obedience to the gospel do men die to sin. In Romans 6:11 Paul said, "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus." The real shocker is seen in Jesus' statement of John 12:25, "He that loveth his life, loseth it . . ."

A second paradox is seen in the fact that we must hate in order to love God! In Luke 14:26 Jesus said, "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be my disciple." The word hate here means to love less. God must come first. Only then do we love him! We must also hate

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sin if we love God. Paul in Romans 12:9 said, “Abhor (hate) that which is evil . . .”

Thirdly, suffering for Jesus is the only way to true happiness! In James 1:2-3 we read, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations, knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience.” Christians are happy when difficult times are their lot because these trials can make us more steadfast in our relationship to God than ever before. They can burn away the dross or the impurities from our lives and make us what we ought to be as Christians.

Finally, true peace only comes when Christians are at war. We are fighting with Christ against the Devil. Paul said to Timothy in I Timothy 1:18, “This charge I commit unto thee . . . that thou mayest war a good warfare.” In I Timothy 6:12 Paul said, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life . . .” James 4:7 says, “. . . resist the Devil and he will flee from you.” Yes, if we want real peace we are going to have to place ourselves in the army of God and we are going to have to submit ourselves to the captain of our salvation. We are going to have to fight for peace!

Have you died to sin? Or are you dying in sin? Do you hate – love less – your family when you think of your relation to Christ? Do you hate sin? Are you suffering for Christ? Are you at war?

The coming of the Spirit upon the disciples empowered them to speak the various languages of the people

Paradoxes of Christianity

who were in Jerusalem at that time. Their message was simple. They told the people that the Christ whom they had crucified was alive, even as their prophets had foretold. A deep sense of guilt came over them, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

They could not undo what they had done, but Peter told them they could repent, turn in Godly sorrow from their unbelief and opposition to Christ and be baptized. On the first day of Pentecost, their numbers increased by "about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

The Unchanging Christ

The New Testament book of Hebrews was written sometime between 65-69 A. D. The decade of the sixties was a period of great political and religious difficulty. The Jews and the Romans were at each others' throats with the Jews doing all they could to encourage the Romans to persecute Christians. It is out of this background that we find Hebrews 13:8 which says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yea and forever." Christ never changes! What a comforting thought to those who are Christians! As we consider the fact that Christ does not change, let us observe these lessons.

First of all, note the fact that Christ changes not in his attitude towards religious error. In Matthew 15:3 Jesus said, "Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God, because of your traditions?" In Mark 7:8 Jesus said, "Ye leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men." In Mark 7:13 he said the Pharisees were, "making void the word of God by their tradition." In Mark 7:7 Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." Christ's attitude towards error will not change at the judgment. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Secondly, consider the fact that Christ changes not

The Unchanging Christ

in his ability to save. Jesus has never failed to do his part. When men are lost it is always the fault of men! In John 5:40 Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Jesus was able to save the worst of men in the first century. Paul in I Timothy 1:15 said, "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." If Christ was able to save a man like Paul, then he can save any man now!

In the third place, Christ changes not in his interest in saving the lost. In II Peter 3:9 Peter says, "For the Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Fourthly, Christ changes not in his faithfulness. Mothers forget their children sometimes. Husbands and wives forget each other. But Christ is always true to those who love him. Paul in II Timothy 2:13 said, "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful, for he cannot deny himself." Christ will always keep his promises!

In the fifth place, Christ changes not in his plan of salvation. Matthew 28:19-20 says, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." These statements apply all the way to the end of the world! They are to remain unchanged because Christ is unchanging!

The Unchanging Christ

Finally, Christ changes not in his attitude toward neglect. In Matthew 23:23 we read, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith, but these ye ought to have done and not to have left the others undone." On the day of judgment he will say as we find recorded in Matthew 25:45, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

Who's Who In Hell

Most of us can remember that in our high school yearbooks there was a section entitled, "Who's Who." The same holds true with most college yearbooks. There is a book entitled, "Who's Who in America." In it are the outstanding men and women in various fields of endeavor. But I wonder how many of you know that the Devil has a list of who will be who in hell! In Revelation 21:8 we find this list, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Now a cursory glance at these groups of people might cause us to think that we certainly won't be on the Devil's list. But look again!

First, the apostle John lists the "fearful." The word here means the "coward." In the latter part of the first century Christians were put to the test through severe persecutions. Many were forced to call Caesar Lord and God and thus deny Christ. Paul said in II Timothy 2:12, "If we endure with him we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us." There were many cowards among the early Christians who would not stand up for Christ. The Christian life is likened unto a battle in the scriptures with Christians being the soldiers. In II Timothy 2:3, 4 Paul said, "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ, for no soldier in service entangleth

Who's Who In Hell

himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath enrolled him to be a soldier." Friends, Jesus wants all who would follow him to be with him on the front lines in the thick of the fight, he wants his people out of the grandstands and into the arena! Where are you?

Secondly, we find the "unbelieving" listed. This word means, "faithless." Certainly this refers to the pagan or non-believer. But it also applies to faithless Christians. These are described by Paul in II Timothy 3:5, as holding a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. When Jesus says get into the arena and fight, they say we can't. They have no faith in Christ. Does this describe you?

The third word is "abominable." This word means "defiled." John said in Revelation 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defileth." Jesus said in James 1:27, "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this . . . that a man keep himself unspotted from the world." Are your garments free from sin?

The fourth word is "murderers." You say you would never kill anyone. But in I John 3:15 John said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Do you hate someone?

The fifth word is "fornication." This word refers to sexual relations outside of marriage. You say you would never be guilty of this. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to

Who's Who In Hell

lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.”

The sixth word is “sorcerers.” This word means “one who misuses drugs and one who practices magic.” With all of the drug selling and addiction today we must conclude that many still fall into this category.

The seventh word is “idolatry.” Many who claim to be Christians are still falling down to idols. Paul in Colossians 3:5 said that, “. . . covetousness is idolatry.” Yes, idolatry is still with us in the form of covetousness. Are you an idolater?

The last word is “liars.” Solomon said in Proverbs 12:22, “Lying lips are an abomination.” Not only can we lie with our tongues, but we can lie with our lives. In Titus 1:16 we read, “They profess that they know God but by their works they deny him . . .” Are you a liar?

All of these groups of people are high on the Devil's list and will spend their eternity in hell!

The Sin Of Covetousness

The word "covetousness" means, "to fix the desire upon, hence to long for and to lust." This lust and evil desire often leads people to commit a crime to obtain that which they want! It is a shame to think of the many who have prostituted themselves for silver. Jesus in Luke 12:15 said, ". . . take heed and keep yourselves from covetousness for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Why should we be concerned about covetousness?

First of all, covetousness steals God from our hearts! In Psalm 12:3 we read, ". . . and the covetous renounceth, yea, revileth God." In Colossians 3:5 Paul said, "put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth . . . and covetousness which is idolatry." In America today many worship at the shrine of idolatry!

Secondly, covetousness steals discrimination from the mind! This lust for things warps the minds and the souls of countless millions every day that we live. In Luke 12:19, 20 we read about the rich farmer whose mind had lost a true sense of what is valuable and we see the tragic results. Note these verses, "And I will say to my soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, but God said unto him, thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee, and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?"

The Sin of Covetousness

Covetousness, in the third place, will steal service from your life! In Luke 16, we read of a certain rich man who had a beggar laid at his gate full of sores. The beggar wanted only the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. But the rich man was too busy with his goods. They both died. The rich man's fate is recorded in Luke 16:24, "And he cried and said, Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame." There are many Christians who should be giving liberally of their time, talent, and money. But they are so covetous they will not! They rob themselves and God of much needed service in this sin-filled world. As far as money goes, too many professed Christians don't have enough faith in God! David in Psalm 37:25 said, "I have been young, and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." DO YOU BELIEVE THAT READER? THEN WHY ARE YOU SO STINGY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE?

Finally, covetousness will steal Christ from the souls of men! In Matthew 19 we read the story of a man who came to Jesus for eternal life. In Matthew 19:21-22 we find Jesus' answer, ". . . if thou wouldest be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me. But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he was one that had great possessions." Are you turning your back on Jesus for a small part of this world's goods?

An Analysis Of Backsliding

The word "backsliding" is used sixteen times in the Old Testament. It means "to err, to turn away, and to turn back." The nation of Israel had entered into a covenant relationship with God but broke God's covenant with them by turning away from it. Those who are Christians today often break the covenant we make with Christ when we obey the gospel. There are many reasons that God's people are backsliding today. Some lapse into religious error, some fall into unbelief, others are guilty of immorality or neglect. Backsliding is a spiritual disease. Let us now analyze it as such. There are certain symptoms that precede backsliding.

First, there is a lack of joy in the Christian's life. Yet, the Bible says in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice."

Secondly, there is irregularity in attendance to worship services. David in Psalm 122:1 said, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." Can you say that?

Thirdly, there is divided interest. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters." Yet, many are trying to serve the Devil and Christ at the same time!

A fourth symptom of backsliding is indulgence in those sins given up in obedience to the gospel!

What are the causes of backsliding? First, for many it is association with the wrong type of friend. Paul in

An Analysis of Backsliding

I Corinthians 15:33 said, "Evil companionships corrupt good morals."

Secondly, for others it may be a lack of faith. Many are strong when with other Christians but weak when separated from them. These need to say with Jesus' disciples, "Lord increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

In the third place, inactivity causes backsliding. Backsliding is not a sudden thing. It happens gradually over a period of time. It starts with the neglect of daily prayer and Bible reading. It progresses by the missing of a few services and then like wild fire, it can't be stopped! Yet in James 4:17 we read, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin."

Now let us notice the dangers of backsliding. First, it makes us unfit. Jesus in Luke 9:62 said, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Secondly, your name will be blotted out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5).

Thirdly, everybody loses. The body of Christ loses a member. The Lord loses a worker. The family of God loses a member. The community loses some good influence. The child loses the proper example of parents. Certainly the biggest loss of all is your own soul!

Thus far we have looked at the symptoms, causes and dangers of backsliding. The next question that must be asked is, what is the cure? The cure is found in Jesus' letter to the church at Ephesus. In Revelation 2:5 he

An Analysis of Backsliding

said, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Repentance is the sure cure!

The Value Of A Soul

We live in an age which values the body over the soul. This is an age of heart transplant and surgery. This is an age when everything is geared to the comfort of the body. All of this emphasis on the body has caused man to neglect his soul. Man is being blinded by the Devil to the value of his soul. Paul in II Corinthians 4:4 said, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." The Devil or god of this world is doing all that he can to keep the world from being aware of the gospel emphasis on the value of a soul.

The value of a soul can first be seen in the fact that God-made it. In Genesis 1:27 we find, "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." The fact that man is made in the image of God sets him apart from all other creation. Often people long to possess something by a master craftsman. They spend great sums of money for an antique created a couple hundred years ago. Yet, few realize that their soul was made in the image of God by the master craftsman of all the universe for all eternity!

Secondly, the Bible places more value on the soul than it does the body. Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy

The Value Of A Soul

both body and soul in hell.” Paul in I Timothy 4:8 said, “Bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things.”

Thirdly, the Lord says the soul is worth more than all the world. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Even if you had all the world it would never satisfy. Solomon had all he wanted of this world’s goods and said in Ecclesiastes 12:13, as he came to the end of life, “Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man.”

In the fourth place, the fact that Jesus died for your soul ought to make you see its value. God didn’t wait until man would cry out for a Saviour. God took the first step and sought man out and offered him a way out of the horror of sin.

Have you ever thought of what it must have been like for Jesus to have come to earth, breaking for the first time in all eternity his fellowship with his heavenly Father? Jesus in Luke 19:10 said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost.” Christ’s death shows that no soul is unimportant!

Finally, note the fact that we are urged to commit our souls to God. This urging is prompted by example and teaching. Peter said of Jesus in I Peter 2:23, “But committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” On the cross Jesus said in Luke 23:46, “Father, into thy

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hands I commend my spirit.” Peter again in I Peter 4:19 said, “Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God, commit their souls in well doing unto a faithful creator.”

In conclusion, let us not forget Solomon’s statement in Ecclesiastes 12:7, “And the dust returneth to the earth as it was and the spirit unto God who gave it.” The very fact that your soul will return to God is proof of the value of your soul. The fact that God is preparing a home for redeemed souls and the fact that God will cast lost souls into a place prepared for the Devil and his angels ought to impress even further the importance of the stewardship of our souls.

What Will You Do With Jesus?

In Matthew 27:22 Pilate asked one of the most soul-searching questions in history. He said: “. . . what then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?” The time came in his life to do something with Jesus. This is a question that no responsible human being can escape. If you do the wrong thing with Jesus you will lose all that is worth while in life and eternal life in the hereafter. If you do the right thing with Jesus you will have things that are beyond human value in this life and eternal life beyond the grave.

We might ask ourselves, what depends upon what we do with Jesus? Whether you are accepted or rejected by God will depend on what you do with Jesus in this life. In John 3:16 we read, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Those who reject Christ will be rejected by the Father. Another thing that depends on what we do with Jesus is what Jesus describes in John 14:6 when he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Christ can provide a way of life, truth to guide you in that way, and an entrance to the Father. Thus, your acceptance or rejection by God, a way of life, and an entrance to the Father, will depend on what you do with Jesus.

There are some things that all men will do with

What Will You Do With Jesus?

Jesus whether they know it or not or whether they like it or not. You will either accept Christ or reject him. Jesus said in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken the same will judge him in the last day." We will either let him in our hearts or drive him out. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and openeth the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him and he with me." We must either confess him or deny him. In Matthew 10:32-33, "Everyone who shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven."

Perhaps looking at what other people in the Bible did with Jesus will help you to make your decision.

Judas betrayed him. There are many people like Judas who have sold Jesus down the road for a few of the Devil's trinkets.

Peter, in Mark 14 denied Jesus three times. Many deny Jesus by compromising Christian principles and by failing to obey him.

Pilate, in Matthew 27 tried to remain neutral. But let it be known by all who read this article that you cannot be neutral with Jesus. Neutrality is rejection! Pilate did everything he could to get Jesus off his hands and to avoid making a decision in answer to his own question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" Are you a Judas or a Peter,

What Will You Do With Jesus?

or will you be a Paul? (See Acts 22:1-16).

Paul in II Corinthians 5:10 tells us that all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Will you stand before Jesus unprepared because you failed to do the right thing with him?

Come, Lord Jesus

The Devil through sin has deceived men into believing that life will just go rolling on as usual forever! The average man on the street gives very little thought to the fact that Christ is coming again. The average religious person lives like the man on the street, despite the repeated warnings of the Bible relative to the imminence of the second coming of Christ. Jesus in Matthew 24:36 said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." In Matthew 25:44 Christ said, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh." In Matthew 25:13 Jesus said, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." The early church lived in constant expectation of the second coming of Christ. As one studies the Bible he is impressed by their attitudes toward the second coming. These are attitudes that must be recaptured today. We must always be aware of the fact that Jesus could return at any time! Let us now note some attitudes toward the second coming.

First of all, the early Christians were looking for Christ's return! Paul in I Thessalonians 5:2 said, "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." In verse 6 he said, "So then let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." As Paul wrote to Titus he said, "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of

Come Lord Jesus

the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Are you looking for Christ to return?

Secondly, these Christians desired Christ’s coming! Paul in I Corinthians 16:22 said, “. . . *maranatha*.” This word means, “Our Lord come!” John, the apostle, in Revelation 22:20 said, “. . . come Lord Jesus.” Do we wish Jesus would return today? Do we pray for his second coming? If you knew Christ were coming again today, would you make some changes? There will be two attitudes toward his second coming. In Revelation 1:7 we read, “Behold he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him and they that have pierced him, and all of the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of him, even so, Amen.” As Paul spoke of the second coming to the church at Thessalonica he said in I Thessalonians 4:18, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” How will you view the second coming of Christ?

Theistic Evolution

One of the greatest dangers to the Christian faith is the wide-ranging acceptance of the Bible-believing people who have accepted theistic evolution.

What is theistic evolution? It is "the view that man's body came by evolution, but that God later infused the animal body with a soul to make it human."

There are many people who say, "Well, could not God have used evolution to create man?" Why all the argument? What does the Bible say? Does it indicate in any way that God used evolution? Are there any arguments that would prove theistic evolution wrong?

Let us now examine some scriptural arguments against theistic evolution. In Genesis 1:1 we read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The word "created" is *bara* in the Hebrew language and means "created from nothing." Yet, the evolutionist says that matter was and is eternal! Those who hold to theistic evolution usually interpret the days of creation as geological ages. They have to so that they may have the millions and billions of years science says is necessary for evolution. Yet, in Genesis chapters one through three the word day is *yom*. In the Hebrew language it is used hundreds of times in the Old Testament and almost always it is used in a literal sense!

In Exodus 20:11 we read, "For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that in

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them is, and rested the seventh day . . .” Now notice carefully Exodus 31:16 where Moses said, “Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.” The point is, the Sabbath day was not a geological age, it was a literal twenty-four hour day as the other six days of creation were. The writer, Moses, clearly uses the word day to refer to a twenty-four hour day! Further, the Sabbath day was a day set aside to commemorate the fact that God had finished creation. In Genesis 2:1 Moses said, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them!”

The evolutionist teaches that creation is not finished, that everything is moving forward in the evolutionary process!

Genesis 3:9-13 relates the fall of man. From that point onward man and all creation have degenerated. Everything has been going down. The whole creation has been affected by the curse of sin, and this is Bible teaching! Yet, the evolutionist teaches that all will be progressively better and that sin is but man’s stumbling forward in the evolutionary process. The evolutionist denies the fall of man, thus he denies the need for Christ! The truth is, the theory of theistic evolution is unscriptural, anti-Biblical, and anti-Christ!

These are just a few of the scriptural arguments that can be presented against this false doctrine. A recent religious survey indicated that 98% of young men now

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preparing to preach believe in evolution! Bible believing people had better be on the alert and see to it that the Biblical creation is taught or there will be no meaning to the Christian faith!

If we say Genesis is a myth, or if we try to explain away this account of creation, what about the rest of the Bible? Theistic evolution is a church killer and thus is a soul killer. Don't allow yourself to be deceived by this doctrine of the Devil!

Is Christ Your Lord?

In Matthew 15:8 Jesus said, "This people honoreth me with their lips but their heart is far from me." Jesus could see through the hypocrisy of his day and he knows our real relationship to him today! Millions today recognize Jesus as the Son of God and as the Messiah, but do they recognize him as Lord over their lives? Do you? Be honest when you answer that question. Peter said in I Peter 3:15, "But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord . . ." Have you done this? Well, let's see if we have. The word for Lord in the original language is the word *kurios* and it is used in four basic ways in the New Testament. Let us use these meanings as a basis of determining our relationship with Jesus.

First of all, the word Lord is used to denote ownership. If Christ is your Lord you will recognize his ownership in your life. In I Corinthians 6:19, 20 Paul said, "Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God and that ye are not your own, ye were bought with a price. Glorify God therefore in your body." The truth is, if we are Christians we do not belong to ourselves; we are but stewards of our Lord. Now how do you use your body? Do you recognize Christ's ownership? If not, Christ is not your Lord!

The second use of the word Lord is found in the master-slave relationship. If Christ is our master, he is our Lord. Who is your master? Jesus, in Matthew 6:24 said,

Is Christ Your Lord?

“No man can serve two masters, for he will either love the one and hate the other or he will hold to one and despise the other, ye cannot serve God and mammon.” You are serving Christ or mammon. Do we see ourselves as slaves for Christ, as his servants? Paul in II Corinthians 4:5 said, “. . . and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” If you do not recognize Christ as your master and yourself as his slave, he is not your Lord!

The word Lord is also used to describe kings. Is Christ king in your life? In Revelation 1:6 John said, “and he made us to be a kingdom . . .” As Christians we make up Christ’s kingdom or church. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . .” Certainly in that command is included the constant submission to and recognition of Christ as King. If he is not your king, he is not your Lord.

Finally, the word Lord is used as a title of respect. Do you really respect the Lord? In I Corinthians 10:31 Paul said, “. . . do all to the glory of God.” If you respect the Lord you will do this. In Colossians 3:17 Paul said, “. . . do all in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .” If you respect him you will do only what Christ has authorized. Jesus said, “If ye love me ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). If you don’t respect him, he is not your Lord.

The Demands Of Discipleship

We are living in a very demanding age. We are facing more and more demands on the job, in school, and in the home than ever before. Christians should also beware that there are demands to discipleship! Before we could even have the right to become disciples God had to meet the demand of offering a perfect sacrifice for our sins. This sacrifice is described by Peter in I Peter 1:19, "But with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The word "disciple" means a "learner or a follower." If we are to be disciples of Christ, certain demands must be met. Let us now see what the Bible says they are.

First, we are to be fishers of men. Jesus, as he called Andrew and Peter to discipleship said, ". . . come ye after me and I will make you fishers of men." If you are not fishing for men, you are unemployed!

Secondly, discipleship demands that we become Christ-like. In Matthew 10:25 Jesus said, "It is enough that the disciple be as his master . . ." What have you been doing to make yourself Christ-like?

Thirdly, there will be conflict if you are a disciple. In Luke 14:26 Jesus said, "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." We are to love our

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families less than Christ! This will always bring conflict.

Fourth, a disciple must take up his cross. In Matthew 10:38 Jesus said, "He that doth not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." When a man in first century times was seen bearing his cross it was a sign he was about to be crucified! If you bear your cross you will do as Paul said in Galatians 5:24, "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."

In the fifth place, a disciple must be a learner. In Luke 11:1 we read, ". . . one of his disciples said, Lord, teach us to pray . . ." You see, they wanted to learn! How different it is from many today!

Again Jesus said in John 8:31, "If ye abide in my word, then truly, are ye my disciples."

Sixth, a disciple must be a fruitbearer. In John 15:8 Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples."

Seventh, a disciple is one who loves the brethren. In John 13:35 Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another."

Yes, discipleship is demanding. These demands can and must be met. If we fail, the mouth of hell will swallow us up for all eternity!

The Sunday Morning Christian

Many people who wear the name of Christ attend only one service a week, the Sunday morning worship service. The fact that many people do this in all good conscience is indicative of the fact that the Devil is hard at work.

We must say with Paul in II Corinthians 2:11, “. . . We are not ignorant of his (Devil) devices.” Sad to say is the fact that too many people have been tricked by the Devil. The Sunday morning Christian is a failure in every sense of the word and deprives himself of much needed aid that will help him live the Christian life.

What does the Sunday morning Christian miss? First, he misses INFORMATION. Through Bible classes and sermons the Christian can obtain more knowledge. We must have more knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the Christian misses ASSOCIATION. Jesus in Matthew 18:20 says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” We miss association with Jesus! Children and their parents naturally like to be in one another’s company and it is natural for God’s children to want to be with one another and in the presence of our heavenly Father! Well, isn’t it? We also need to be present that we might associate with the unsaved. They need our presence and our example.

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Thirdly, the Sunday morning Christian misses **INSPIRATION**. We need something to lift up our spirits. Jesus said in Luke 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In worship we can get our spiritual batteries recharged to enable us to go out and face the world another week.

Fourthly, the Sunday morning Christian misses **PROVOCATION**. We very often do many things that we know we should not do. Thus, we need to be provoked or stimulated to live up to what we already know to be the truth. Hebrews 10:24 says, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."

Fifthly, the Sunday morning Christian misses **EDIFICATION**. Paul in I Corinthians 14:12 said, ". . . seek that ye may abound unto edifying." To edify is to build up. We have an obligation to other Christians which says that we must help to build them up spiritually.

In the sixth place, we need **IMMUNIZATION**. John says in I John 5:19, ". . . the whole world lieth in wickedness." The world is infested with sin and it is often hard to live for Christ. Thus, let us state that we can and do inject ourselves with Jesus at every service and our injection will help us to fight off the deadly cancer of sin.

Finally, we need **JUBILATION**. The Sunday morning Christian misses this. David in Psalm 122:1 said, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." There is nothing more miserable than the

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so-called Christian who feels that it is his “duty” to come to at least one service a week. Hebrews 10:25 says, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is . . .!”

Things That Hinder Prayer

It is only natural that man should want to keep in touch with God noting as Paul said in Acts 17:25, "Seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath and all things." The poet Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." If this is true say many, why doesn't God answer my prayers? The reason is simple. There are some things that hinder our prayers. Let me point out though, that these hindrances have been put there by man and not God! Let us now look at some things that hinder our prayers.

First, our prayers are hindered by a failure to ask! In James 4:2 we read, ". . . ye have not because ye ask not." God's promises are like uncashed checks, they are of no value unless we grasp them and use them. What a shame it is that so many cut themselves off from so many blessings simply because of a failure to go to God in prayer! It is time that all men recognize that there are some problems of life that only prayer can solve.

Secondly, prayers are hindered because of doubt. In James the first chapter we find the subject of wisdom being discussed in the early verses. In verses 5 and 6 we read, "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . but let him ask in faith, nothing doubting . . ." Jesus in Matthew 21:22 said, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Thus,

Things That Hinder Prayer

I think we can see from these verses that the prayer of doubt is not acceptable but that we are to pray with faith. Many are like the woman who prayed for the Lord to remove a tree from her backyard one night. When she woke up the next morning she said, "See, I told you it would be there!"

Thirdly, husband-wife relationships hinder prayer. In I Peter 3:7 Peter said, "Ye husbands in like manner dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered." We cannot treat each other just any way, other than the Bible declares, and expect God to hear our prayers!

Fourthly, sin in our lives hinders our prayers. In Proverbs 28:9 the wise man said, "He that turneth away his ear from the hearing of the law, even his prayer is an abomination." In I Peter 3:12 we read, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Fifth, and last, we must recognize that some things will not be given in answer to prayer alone! There is no need to pray for knowledge if we are not going to study the Bible! There is no need to pray that God's will be done on earth if we are not going to do it! There is no need to pray that God will help the needy and the widow if we are not going to do it! There is no need to pray that

Things That Hinder Prayer

you will be saved unless you heed Philippians 2:12, which says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Imitating Christ

The Bible emphasizes the need for all Christians to imitate Christ. In John 13:15 Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you."

If we imitate Christ, we will first of all be humble like Christ. The word humility means to be free from pride, to be lowly of mind, modest, submissive and meek. Jesus in Matthew 11:29 said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." James stated very plainly in James 4:6, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Let us at all times strive to be humble.

Secondly, Jesus was holy. The word holy means to be separated and consecrated to God. It carries with it the idea of being clean or pure in a spiritual sense. In Acts 4: 27 Luke describes Jesus as ". . . thy holy servant Jesus . . ." Peter writes in I Peter 1:15, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

Someone once said that if Shakespeare were to come into a room men would stand, but if Jesus came into a room men would kneel. This statement truly points to the holiness of Jesus.

Finally, in imitating Jesus, we would want to be forgiving as Jesus was. Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:12 by saying, "And forgive us our debts, as

Imitating Christ

we forgive our debtors.” On the cross Jesus cried out in Luke 23:34, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Paul in Ephesians 4:32 said, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.” We must always be ready to forgive. Have you been imitating Christ?

The Sabbath Day

No man ever kept the Sabbath before it was commanded of the Jews in Exodus 20:10. In this text Moses said, "But the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is in thy gates." Even then it was not required of any of the nations around them. It was required only of those who were delivered from bondage. Deuteronomy 5:15 says, "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by outstretched arm: therefore Jehovah thy God COMMANDED THEE TO KEEP THE SABBATH DAY." For roughly 2,500 years after creation there is no mention of any Sabbath day. This covenant was not made with the forefathers of the Jews but rather the descendants of Israel. In Deuteronomy 5:3 we read, "Jehovah made not this covenant with our fathers, BUT WITH US EVEN ALL OF US HERE ALIVE THIS DAY."

The Sabbath day was the seventh day of the week. Deuteronomy 5:14 says, "But the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God . . ." This verse also tell us that it was a day of rest for the Jews. It was a memorial day in which they should remember their deliverance from Egypt as stated in Deuteronomy 5:15 above. We know that

The Sabbath Day

Israel broke her covenant with God and God foretold the coming of a new covenant and the time when there would be no more Sabbaths. Jeremiah 31:31 says, "Behold the days come saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . ." In Hosea 2:11 God said, "I will also cause her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her SABBATHS . . ." Christ took away the law of Moses on the cross. Colossians 2:14 says, "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." In verse 16 of this same chapter Paul said, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink or in respect of a feast day or a new moon, or a SABBATH DAY."

Our memorial day is the Lord's day. John in Revelation 1:10 said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This is his resurrection day. This day is the first day of the week. In memory of his resurrection and not our delivery out of Egypt, Christ's church partakes of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). We are also commanded to lay by in store (treasury) as we have prospered (this is not tithing) on the first day of the week. Sunday is not the Christian's Sabbath! The Sabbath was never changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week. The Sabbath day was abolished! The Sabbath day was never binding on the Gentiles (non-Jews) and neither is it binding on the church of Jesus Christ.

Saved Before Baptism? - Part I

There is no more important question than, "What must I do to be saved?" In answer to this question we can turn only to God's word. Let us state that the theory that a person is saved at the moment he believes in Christ cannot be justified from the scriptures! Why is it impossible for a person to be saved by faith only? This theory is false because the Bible shows that faith without further acts of obedience will not save. James 2:24 says, "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and **NOT ONLY BY FAITH.**" James 2:26 says, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith without works is dead being alone." The disobedient do not have the right to call Jesus, Lord! In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" Only those who do God's will shall be saved. Jesus in Matthew 7:21 said, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Secondly, note that faith only cannot save because the Bible shows that one can be a believer and still be lost! See John 12:42, "Nevertheless even of the rulers, many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it lest they be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the glory that is of men, more than the glory that is of God." In John 8:30 John says, "As he spake these

Saved Before Baptism - Part I

words, many believed on him.” Now to these believers Jesus said, “Ye are of your father the Devil . . .” (John 8:44). In James 2:19 we read, “Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe and shudder.” The demons believe; will they be saved? Surely, reader you know the answer!

In the third place, faith only salvation is proven false when we see from the Bible that other acts of obedience are necessary to salvation. One must HEAR the gospel. Romans 10:14 says, “. . . how shall they believe on him, whom they have not heard . . .?” In Acts 18:8 we read, “And many of the Corinthians HEARING, BELIEVED AND WERE BAPTIZED.” Thus, hearing must precede faith.

One must REPENT of his sins to be saved. In Acts 17:30, “. . . But now he commandeth men, that they should ALL EVERYWHERE REPENT.” One must also CONFESS Jesus as Lord. In Romans 10:9-10, “Because if THOU SHALT CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH Jesus as Lord . . . thou shalt be saved . . . and WITH THE MOUTH CONFESSION IS MADE UNTO SALVATION.”

Finally, one must be baptized (immersed in water). Peter, in Acts 2:38 said, “Repent ye, and BE BAPTIZED EVERYONE OF YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Ananias the preacher said to Saul in Damascus, “Arise and BE BAPTIZED AND WASH AWAY THY SINS CALLING ON

Saved Before Baptism - Part I

THE NAME OF THE LORD.” Peter speaking of baptism in I Peter 3:21 says, “which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism . . .” Consider these statements from God’s word, prayerfully. More to follow.

Saved Before Baptism? - Part II

In our last lesson we demonstrated from the Bible that we are not saved before baptism by showing that faith without further acts of obedience will not save (James 2:24-26; Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23). Secondly, it was shown from the Bible that people can be believers and still not be saved (John 12:42, 43; James 2:19). In the third place, it was clearly demonstrated that other acts of obedience were needed besides faith (Romans 10:13-14; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21).

Today let us examine the basic errors of those who hold to the doctrine of salvation by faith only.

First, they read only a PART of what the Bible teaches about being saved. They ignore such passages as Acts 11:18, "Then hath God also to the Gentile granted repentance unto life." Certainly we see that repentance is just as necessary as faith! Ignored also is Romans 10:9-10, "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." We must confess our faith if we are to be saved!

Finally, such passages as Acts 2:38 are brushed aside. Peter said, "Repent ye, and BE BAPTIZED everyone of you UNTO THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS...."

Saved Before Baptism - Part II

If the preposition “for or unto” means “because of”, why haven’t the scholars of the world so rendered it? How can men overlook a passage such as Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and WASH AWAY THY SINS, calling on the name of the Lord.”

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” They claim this passage has nothing to say about baptism. Using this same line of reasoning, one could argue that faith is not necessary to salvation when a passage mentioned only repentance! In I Peter 3:21 we read, “Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism . . .” There is nothing here but baptism. Are we to assume that baptism alone saves us? Absolutely not!

Finally, these who advocate faith only salvation fail to interpret properly the passages that they do use. John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1; all teach we are saved by faith. But they DO NOT teach that we are saved by a DEAD FAITH (James 2:26). Let us search the Bible and take all that the Bible has to say on salvation, then and only then will we see that faith only is not a Biblical doctrine for salvation.

False Conceptions Of God

In I Kings 20:28 we read, "Thus saith Jehovah, because the Syrians have said that Jehovah is a god of the hills, but he is not a god of the valleys, therefore, will I deliver this great multitude into thy hand, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah."

The Syrians thought of Jehovah as just another idol. The Syrians had different gods for different things in life. For example, they had a god of rain and a god for sunshine. They believed that Jehovah then could only work in the hills but not in the valleys. Thus, the Syrians tried to allure Israel down into a valley for battle. The Syrians believed they would win, because Israel could get no help from their God who was limited in his sphere of activity.

We, too, have misconceptions of God and in many ways are not much different than the Syrians. We often limit God to certain circumstances and areas in our lives. To illustrate this fact, note first of all that God is a God of sickness but not a God of health. We think of God when we are sick but what about the times when we are well? Do we not think that God can help us when we are well? We need God more when we are well than when we are sick for Jesus in John 15:5 said, ". . . for without me ye can do nothing."

Secondly, God is often a God of hard times but not a God of prosperity. When men are faced with poverty

False Conceptions of God

they turn to God for help. But what about the times when we are prosperous? We need God even more when all is well materially. Man has a tendency to forget God when all is well. Deuteronomy 8:17-18 says, "And lest thou say in thy heart, my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth . . . , but thou shalt remember Jehovah thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Let us all remember this!

Thirdly, God is a Sunday morning God to some but not a Sunday night God. We all recognize the need to express our love and appreciation to God on Sunday morning. But is our God a different God on Sunday night? Is he any less deserving of our praise on Sunday night? All day Sunday is the Lord's day. It is not our day to do what we want to! Acts 20:7 says, "And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow, and prolonged his speech until midnight." Here is an example of Christians meeting Sunday night!

Fourthly, our God to many is a Sunday God but not a week-day God! Are we as careful during the week with our speech, dress, and the general conduct of our lives as we are on Sunday? Does our God just expect and demand good behavior on Sunday? Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 3:2, "Ye are our epistles, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." We are to be living examples at all times for all men.

False Conceptions of God

Finally, our God is often a God of death but not a God of life. Oh, how we want God when death will soon come. We want God's help and comfort. But what about our desire to have God with us while we are living? Surely God should be desired while we live. II Peter 1:3 says, "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness . . ."

We see here that God has given man all that he needs to make him complete and happy. Do you have some misconception of God?

The Almost Christian

In Acts 26:27-28 we read, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know thou believest. And Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The life of King Agrippa shows that there is such a thing as being almost a Christian! This rejection of the gospel of Christ was the saddest mistake he ever made. Let us take a look at what is implied in being almost, but not altogether a Christian.

First of all, who is the almost Christian? Some believe that because they are born in a so-called Christian land they are by natural birth Christians. How utterly foreign to the Bible! Jesus said in John 3:3, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God." This new birth is of course a spiritual rebirth. Others believe they are Christians because they have decided in their minds that Christianity is the true religion as it stands in contrast with the pagan religions of Buddhism, Islam, Shintoism, Confucianism, and the multitudes of other world religions.

Just because I decide that I believe that democracy is superior to communism does not make me an American citizen. I must put my beliefs into practice and I must try to defend democracy from the evils of communism. Just because men decide that Christianity is true is no sign that they are Christians! Others think they are Christians because they practice the moral standards of Christianity.

The Almost Christian

My friend, you can be moral and lose your soul! Do you think you can, by your morality, save your soul? Paul said in Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." We are not able to earn our salvation. We are saved by the grace of God.

Cornelius, a Gentile soldier in Acts 10:1-4, was a religious and a moral man, yet God sent Peter to, "...speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved . . ." (Acts 11:14). Others partially obey the Lord's commands and think that they are Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Jesus in Luke 6:46 said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" Many people do some things but leave undone other things that will complete their obedience to the gospel.

Finally, the almost Christian is the one who intends to obey the gospel some day. Paul in II Corinthians 6:2 said, ". . . behold now is the day of salvation." The road to hell will be paved with the intentions of men to become Christians. Are you an almost Christian? Why do people remain "almost Christians"?

First of all, some people are unaware of the fact that they are lost! This includes many religious people who practice man-made doctrines and who partially obey the Bible. Paul in Romans 3:23 said, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

The Almost Christian

Secondly, others remain almost Christians because they are afraid of ridicule. Many are afraid of what family and friends will say. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." The Christian life is a life of denial. This means that we can and should be willing to bear the reproach of others.

Other people, in the third place, love the things of this world too much to become Christians. In I John 2:15 John said, "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world."

Fourthly, some people are almost Christians because they rely on sincerity. It does not make any difference what you believe as long as you are sincere. Yet, Peter in I Peter 1:22 said, "Seeing that ye have purified your souls in obedience to the truth . . ." Truth alone will free our souls from sin (John 8:32).

In the fifth place, many do not want to change churches. Yet, the Bible teaches that there is one church. Paul in Ephesians 4:4 said, "There is one body . . ." In Ephesians 1:22-23 we find out what that body is. Paul said, "And hath given him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." In Ephesians 4:5 Paul said, "there is one faith . . ." Friends, denominational Christianity which divides professed followers of Christ is not scriptural!

When a man learns that there is only one church he will want to make sure he is in it. How do you know

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what church that is, you may say? Friends, the Bible gives a complete description of the church of Christ. Does the church of which you are a member fit the Bible description? If not, you are not in the church of Christ! You must be in Christ's church if you are to be saved, for Paul in Ephesians 5:25 said, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." Christ died to save the church! In Ephesians 5:23 Paul says that Christ is, "saviour of the body." The body of Christ is the church of Christ.

The Lord's Supper - Part I

In I Corinthians 11:20 Paul said, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." The Lord's supper mentioned in the above text was instituted by Jesus as he ate the Passover meal on the night he was betrayed by Judas (I Corinthians 11:23). There has been a great deal of misunderstanding about the Lord's supper and there are a lot of questions in the minds of many people about it. It shall be the purpose of this series of lessons to clear up the misunderstanding and to try to answer some questions that many have on their minds.

First of all, what is the purpose of the Lord's supper? The Lord's supper serves as a memorial feast. In Luke 22:19 Jesus said, ". . . this do in remembrance of me." Memorials are natural. We in America celebrate July the 4th and we have a Memorial Day. Our ceremonies are filled with tombstones that serve as a memorial that someone has lived and died. In like manner, the Lord's supper is a monument or a memorial. Those who partake of this memorial allow their minds to go back to Gethsemane and its cruel mob. We think of Jesus before Annas, Herod, and Pilate. We remember those spikes driven into his hands and feet by the Roman soldiers. We think of the spear that pierced the Saviour's side from which poured forth the water and the blood indicating that death had taken place. We think of the untold

The Lord's Supper - Part I

suffering and of the incomprehensible power of the blood of Christ.

The Lord's supper also serves as a proclamation. In I Corinthians 11:26 we read, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death until he comes." Everyone cannot proclaim the gospel in a public way but every time we partake of the Lord's supper we proclaim that we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord and that he is coming again.

Finally, the Lord's supper serves as spiritual nourishment. In John 6:53-55 we read, ". . . I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed." The greatest gifts of God are physical and spiritual. To live physically we must have air, water, sunshine, exercise. If a man doesn't have these things he will die. We as souls, made in the image of God, must eat the flesh of the Son of man and we must drink his blood or our souls will be separated forever from God!

The Lord's Supper - Part II

In the first lesson in this series we examined the question, "what is the purpose of the Lord's supper?" We observed that it served as a memorial service, a proclamation, and a vital source of spiritual nourishment.

A second question that needs to be raised about the Lord's supper is, "what are the elements to be used in observance of this sacred feast?"

The first item is the bread. In Matthew 26:26 we read, "And as they were eating Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to his disciples and said, take, eat; this is my body." Really, there could not have been any better symbol of the body of Jesus than the pale and lifeless unleavened bread. Bread is a grain that has been harvested, crushed, and baked.

The second item or element which composes the Lord's supper is the cup or fruit of the vine. In Matthew 26:28 we read, "And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins." Since Jesus is the vine and his disciples are the branches, what better element could have been chosen to represent his blood? (John 15:1, 5).

A third question that needs to be discussed is, "who shall partake of the Lord's supper?" First, note the fact that the Lord's table is in his kingdom. In Luke 22:29-30 we read, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom even as my

The Lord's Supper - Part II

Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom . . .” In Mark 14:25 we read, “Verily, I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” John tells us that we must be reborn if we are to enter the kingdom. In John 3:3 Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In John 3:5 we read, “Verily, verily, I say unto you except one be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Thus only spiritually reborn people who are in the kingdom can partake of the Lord's supper. One not in the Lord's kingdom can no more eat at the Lord's table than you could eat at my table if you were not in my home. Thus, true Christianity does not practice open and closed communion, but self-examination!

The Baptism Of Christ - Part I

The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public ministry. All four of the gospels give an account of Christ's baptism. This should impress us with the importance of this topic! We shall refer to Matthew 3:13-17 as a text in this lesson.

As we consider this topic we should note first of all that Jesus voluntarily submitted himself to baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. Why?

First, Jesus in Matthew 3:15 said to John, "... for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness..." In Psalm 119:172 David said, "All thy commandments are righteousness..." Jesus' baptism was to fulfill a command of his Father! This is taught in John 6:38 when Christ said, "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me."

In the second place, Jesus was baptized to set an example for all men! Paul in I Thessalonians 1:6 said, "And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord." If they imitated the Lord they were baptized as Christ was. In setting an example, Jesus demonstrated his concern for the commandments of his Father. Jesus stated in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me..."

Jesus also in setting an example became one who practiced what he preached. Jesus did have a lot to say about baptism. He said in John 3:5, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,

The Baptism of Christ - Part I

he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” He also said in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

Jesus was also baptized to be identified as the Messiah. In John 1:31 we read the words of John the Baptist who said, “And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest unto Israel, for this cause came I baptizing.”

Finally, Jesus was baptized to please his Father. In Matthew 3:17 we read, “. . . this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” Have you ever noticed that only after the baptism of Jesus did God voice his public approval of his Son? This should have a message for us as to how important it is in the sight of God!

The Baptism Of Christ - Part II

In the first lesson on the baptism of Jesus we stated the fact that Jesus voluntarily submitted to baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. We also gave four reasons for the baptism of Jesus and they were as follows: to fulfill all righteousness, to set an example for all time, to identify himself as the Messiah, and finally, to please his heavenly Father.

Now let us take a closer look at the baptism which Jesus submitted to. First of all, John's baptism which took place before the cross demanded belief in Christ before baptism. In Acts 19:4 we read, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is on Jesus." Baptism this side of the cross also requires belief before baptism. Mark 16:16 says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . ."

John's baptism, in the second place, required repentance before it could be administered. In Matthew 3:8 John said, "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance." The same requirement is to be obeyed this side of the cross. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Note, in the third place, that John's baptism had to be preceded by a confession. In Matthew 3:6 we read,

The Baptism of Jesus - Part II

“And they were baptized of him in the river Jordan confessing their sins.”

Now this side of the cross a confession must still be made, but it is not a confession of sins! This confession is one that expresses one’s belief that Christ is the Son of God. In Romans 10:9, 10 we read, “Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” In the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:36-37 we read, “See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip answered and 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.”

Fourthly, note if you will that John’s baptism was for the remission of sins. In Mark 1:4 we read, “And John came who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins.” This side of the cross God’s plan has not changed. Ananias the preacher said to Saul in Damascus in Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord.”

In closing, note the differences between John’s baptism and the baptism administered by the Lord’s apostles. John’s baptism offered no Holy Spirit. Apostolic baptism did (Acts 2:38). John did not baptize into any name.

The Baptism of Jesus - Part II

Apostolic baptism did (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38). John's baptism was to prepare people for entrance into the kingdom to come. In Luke 1:17 it is said of John, ". . . to make ready for the Lord, a people prepared for him." This side of the cross baptism puts people into the church (John 3:5; Acts 2:38, 41, 47; I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27).

Baptism And The Blood Of Jesus

Churches of Christ have often been accused of teaching water salvation because of their teaching on baptism. Churches of Christ do not believe that water takes away anything. Water has no power to take away sins. Churches of Christ teach that the blood of Jesus Christ is the only cleansing agent God has made available to man for the cleansing of his soul. The question for all men is how do I come in contact with the blood of Jesus which is the only cleansing agent?

Let the Bible speak! In Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins." This passage tells us WHAT washes away our sins. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, ". . . repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins . . ." Now this passage tells us WHEN sins are taken away. In Hebrews 9:14 Paul wrote, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Again this verse tells us WHAT purges our conscience.

But, WHEN is our conscience purged? Note I Peter 3:21, "Which also after a true likeness doth now also save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience towards God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Baptism and the Blood of Jesus

Notice that only after baptism do we possess a good conscience and this is because baptism puts us in contact with the cleansing blood.

Finally, observe Revelation 1:5, "Unto him that loved us and loosed us from our sins by his blood." Here we see **WHAT** it is that frees us from sin. In Acts 22:16 Paul was told by the preacher Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This verse tells us **WHEN** sins are taken away. It is not difficult to see that baptism puts us in contact with the blood of Christ when we consider Romans 6:3 where Paul said, "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Baptism puts us into the death of Christ and Christ shed his blood in his death! Have you come in contact with the blood of Christ?

The Conversion Of The Ethiopian Eunuch

The steps that all men must take to become Christians are given by Jesus in what is called the great commission found in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:46. Matthew's account tells us that men must be taught and baptized. Mark's account says that men must believe and be baptized to be saved. Luke's account links repentance with remission of sins.

The conversion example we shall consider will illustrate the great commission at work. There is power in example to make plain and to stimulate others to action. God knew this and gave us a book of examples of conversions. There are ten cases of Biblical conversion in the Acts of the Apostles. Our text for this example is Acts 8:26-39.

First, in this conversion notice the role the angel played. In Acts 8:26 we read, "But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, arise, and go toward the south . . ."

Why didn't the angel go to the lost man from Ethiopia? This conversion took place in the age of miracles but this man was not converted by miracles. The angel spoke only to Philip and then only to bring the preacher and the prospect together!

God depends on men to preach and teach the lost. "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21).

The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Men are converted through the preaching of the gospel and not through miracles today! The purpose of miracles is clearly seen in Mark 16:20, "The Lord working with them, confirming the word by the signs that followed." Paul in II Corinthians 5:7 said, "For we walk by faith and not by sight."

Secondly, note the role of the Holy Spirit in this man's conversion. In Acts 8:29 we read, "And the Spirit said unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot." Notice, if you will, that the Spirit spoke only to the preacher Philip and not to the lost man! The Spirit only worked to bring the preacher and the lost man together. The Spirit did not tell the preacher what to say. He left it up to Philip.

Now let's state loud and clear that the Holy Spirit plays a role in our conversion. Jesus said in John 3:5, ". . . except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." But the question is how does the Holy Spirit work in conversion? The answer is seen in this conversion. The Holy Spirit works through the preaching of the word. James said in James 1:21, "Receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls."

Thirdly, observe what the preacher did in this man's conversion. In Acts 8:35 we read, "And Philip opened his mouth and beginning from that same scripture, preached unto him Jesus." Philip did not preach philosophy, politics, a social gospel, or theology; he preached the word

The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

of the living God. The theme of his preaching was Jesus. Acts 8:12 tells us some things that may have been included in the preaching of Jesus.

Now, let us note what the man from Ethiopia did to become a Christian.

First, he heard Christ preached in verse 35. Paul in Romans 10:17 says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

Secondly, the man asked a question in verse 36, ". . . behold 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."

In the third place, we know this man repented of his sins, though the word repentance is not once found in our text. The word "repentance" means, "a change of will that leads to a change of life." Did this man evidence a change of will and a desire to change his life? Certainly! Paul in Acts 17:30 said, "And the times of this ignorance God once overlooked, but now God hath commanded all men every where to repent . . ." This included the man from Ethiopia.

In the fourth place, this man made the good confession. He confessed his faith in Christ in verse 37. Paul in Romans 10:10 said, ". . . with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." See also Matthew 10:32-33 and I Timothy 6:12 on the good confession.

Finally, verse 38 says, "And he commanded the

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chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” This man was immersed in water as soon as water was found.

Why? If baptism is non-essential as some teach, why didn't they wait? They didn't wait because Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . .” In Acts 16:33 in the conversion of the Philippian jailor we read, “And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.” Why the rush if baptism is non-essential?

In closing, notice verse 39 which says of the man converted, “. . . for he went on his way rejoicing.” When did he rejoice? Only after he had been immersed! This is a Bible example of conversion, penned by Luke who was guided by the Holy Spirit. Does your conversion match this one?

The Conversion Of Paul

One account of Paul's conversion is found in Acts 22:1-16. This text will be used in the main to discuss Paul's conversion. There are some valuable lessons to be learned from this study.

First, note that ancestry means nothing in religious matters. Acts 22:3 says, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia . . ." In Romans 2:11 Paul later said, "God is no respecter of persons." The point here is that we are not saved by the faith and obedience of our parents. The fact that Paul's family were Jews did not stop him from becoming a New Testament Christian.

Secondly, observe that having a great religious teacher will not necessarily save one. Acts 22:3 says, ". . . but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our Fathers . . ." He was taught the laws of his ancestors in a strict manner but this did not save him.

In the third place, **BEING RELIGIOUS, EVEN SINCERE AND ZEALOUS, IS NOT ENOUGH TO SAVE!** Acts 22:3 says, ". . . being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day." In Galatians 1:13 Paul said, ". . . how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it, and I advanced in the Jew's religion beyond many of mine own age among my own countrymen, being exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." **PAUL'S SINCERITY DID NOT TURN ERROR**

The Conversion of Paul

INTO TRUTH. IN SPITE OF ZEAL, SINCERITY, AND CONSCIENTIOUS ACTIVITY, PAUL WAS STILL LOST! When Paul was blinded on the Damascus road he said in Acts 22:10, “. . . what shall I do Lord?” NOTE AT THIS POINT PAUL NOW BELIEVES IN CHRIST. YET, THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE TO DO. Continuing, Acts 22:10, “. . . arise, and go into Damascus and it shall be told thee all things of which are appointed for thee to do.” What was Paul, a believer, and one who had repented, as his three days of fasting in Acts 9 tells us, told to do? In Acts 22:16, Ananias the preacher said to Paul, “AND WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED, AND WASH AWAY THY SINS, CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.” Have you obeyed the same plan of salvation that Paul did? There is no other!

The Importance Of Baptism

Ye have heard it said that the mode of baptism is not important. You can be sprinkled, poured, or immersed. Is this true? Consider first of all the fact that the word "baptize" is not an English word. It is a transliteration. This simply means that it is a Greek word spelled with English letters. The word *baptizo* in the Greek language means, "to baptize, to dip, to immerse, to overwhelm, and to submerge." The word for "sprinkle" in the Bible is *rhantizo*. The word for "pour" in the Bible is *cheo*. In the Septuagint, which was a copy of the Old Testament in the Greek language written a couple of hundred years before the establishment of Christianity, we have a passage, Leviticus 14:15-16, which contains all three of the above words and shows how they are to be used. Verse 15 tells of oil poured (*cheo*), dipping (*baptizo*) of the priest's finger, sprinkling (*rhantizo*) of the oil with his finger seven times before Jehovah. From this reference we can tell that the word "baptism" was used to refer to immersion! The Bible is extremely plain that immersion is the correct form of baptism. Notice Romans 6:4-5, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we become united with him in the likeness of his resurrection . . ." Note also Romans 6:17-18, "But thanks be to God that, whereas ye

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were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered, and being made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness.”

The point is that immersion was a teaching to be taught and received in the church at Rome and when obeyed it freed them from sin. Romans 6:6 says, “Knowing this that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should be no longer in bondage to sin.” Friends, the old man of sin in this verse was buried in the watery grave of baptism and when men arise out of this grave they are new creatures in Christ. See also Colossians 2:12 and I Corinthians 10:1-3 which teach beyond any doubt that the correct form of baptism is immersion. Search the scriptures, friends, for the truth. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

The Kind Of Music God Likes

In John 4:23, 24 Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him, God is Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." From these words of Jesus we see that there is such a thing as true worship. We see also the importance of worshipping God in truth. In the last couple of weeks we have been discussing the type of music God has commanded to be used in worship to him. Many think this is not important but in light of the above verses there are some who need to reconsider this attitude.

Consider these important facts about vocal music. The Bible commands us to speak in song (Ephesians 5:19). The voice can. The instrument cannot. We are to teach in song (Colossians 3:16). The voice can. The instrument cannot. We are to sing with the spirit (I Corinthians 14:15). The voice can. The instrument cannot. We are to sing praise (Hebrews 2:12). The voice can. The instrument cannot. We are to offer sacrifice continually to God with the fruit of our lips (Hebrews 13:15). The voice can. The instrument cannot.

We must remember the words of John who said in II John 9, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teachings of Christ hath not God, but he that abideth in the teachings of Christ, the same hath both the Father and the Son." Can we abide in the teachings of Christ and praise God with any other instrument than the human heart?

Should We Observe Easter?

Ye have heard it said that we should observe Easter. Easter is a mixture of paganism, Judaism, and Christianity. The name Easter is derived from an Anglo-Saxon goddess, Eastre of Esrera, to whom sacrifice was offered in April. There is no authority in the Bible for this special day. The word "Easter" does appear one time in the King James Bible in Acts 12:4. Here it is the translation of the Greek word *pascha*. This word is found twenty-eight times and it is translated "passover." In Acts 12:1-4 we see that it was out of respect for the Passover that Herod waited about releasing Peter from prison. Herod was opposed to the Christian movement. If it had been a "Christian holiday" he would have had no respect for it. The festival of Pasch held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast but was not instituted by Christ, nor was it connected with Lent. From this Pasch the Pagan festival of Easter was quite distinct and was introduced into the apostate Western religion, as part of an attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity.

Jesus teaches that worship must be, ". . . in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Since the word "Easter" is not in our Bibles, we cannot practice it and worship God in truth! Christians remember the resurrection of Christ every Lord's day by partaking the Lord's supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:17-34). We are also reminded of his resurrection every time there is a

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baptism (Romans 6:3-6). Remember II John 9, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God, but he that abideth in the teaching of Christ, the same hath both the Father and the Son." In light of this verse can we celebrate Easter and yet possess Christ?

Is The Church Of Christ A Denomination?

Ye have heard it said the Church of Christ is a denomination. Yet, the church of Jesus Christ cannot be part of the church. Webster defines a denomination as a sect, a group of people with particular religious beliefs that have broken off from the parent church! Thus, a denomination could not be the whole church! Jesus said in Matthew 16:18: "I will build my church . . ." The word "church" is always spoken of to refer to the universal church or local congregations of the same church. Never is it used as a denomination! The word "sect" is used nine times in the New Testament and always in a bad sense.

An ancient wheat seed was found by archaeologists in a Pharaoh's tomb. It retained its life and when replanted reproduced what had been planted two thousand years ago, wheat. So, the pure seed of the kingdom, which is the word of God, when sown in the hearts of men will produce the church of the first century, not a man-made institution! New Testament Christians were found in India who never heard of Churches of Christ. They just practiced what they read in their Bibles; nothing more and nothing less! This has never happened to a denomination and never will because too many doctrines are practiced among them that are not centered in the Bible. For years people have taught John 15:1-6 to mean the fact that church is divided up into branches but the word

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branch is used to describe men, not churches! There is but one church and the Bible declares it plainly. Paul said in Ephesians 4:4-5, "There is one body . . . one faith . . ." The body is the church. Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body the church . . ." Friends, I beg you to search the scriptures for the truth about Christ's church. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Christian Unity

Ye have heard it said that there must be Christian unity today. This is certainly true. But most denominations really want and are getting only religious union, not unity! First century Christianity was a united religion. Denominations did not exist at this time. Christianity got along without them then and it can do so today! Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21, "Neither for these only do I pray but for them also that believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, Father, as thou art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." That prayer of Jesus must be put into practice today. In I Corinthians 1:10 Paul said, "Now I beseech you brethren through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." God does not sanction religious division! Paul in Ephesians 4:4-6 gives God's only platform for religious unity, "There is one body (or church - Colossians 1:18), and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith (not many as advocated today), one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." If the world today would obey these truths there would be no religious division in the world today or ever! Paul in Romans 16:17 said, "I beseech you, brethren, mark

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them that are causing divisions and stumbling among you, contrary to the doctrine that ye have learned and turn away from them.” Note the truth that division is contrary to the doctrine of the Bible.

Can You Prove Anything By The Bible?

You have often heard it said that you can prove anything by the Bible. Is this true?

This doctrine is an insult to God! If this doctrine is true, how do you account for it? Truth is not contradictory! Jesus said, “. . . thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The basis for this idea is found in the conflicting ideas in religion today. Many times people have been guilty of taking passages out of their context and making them mean what they want them to mean. Peter, speaking of some of Paul’s writings in II Peter 3:16 said, “. . . in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other scriptures to their own destruction.”

When two religious doctrines contradict one another the Bible is not at fault, but those who wrest the scriptures! Let’s not blame God for man’s errors! In I Corinthians 14:33 Paul said, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace . . .” God does not sanction the multitude of contradictory beliefs that are present in the religious world about us. That should be evident from the above verse.

The truth is, friends, there is a system of Christian truth that must be preached and all else is error and meaningless. Paul in Galatians 1:7-8 says, “Which is not another but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ, but though we or an angel

Can You Prove Anything By The Bible?

from heaven preach unto you any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

We cannot preach or teach anything other than what was taught in the first century church. We must remember Peter’s admonition in II Peter 1:20, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation.” We must let the Bible explain itself and it will. There is no room for man-made doctrines and creeds. The Bible is all sufficient. If we will remember this, we will know that you cannot prove just anything by the Bible!

The Standard Of Religious Authority

One basic reason for religious division is the fact that men differ as to the true standard of religious authority. Ye have heard it said that the church is the authority in religion. Yet, Peter addressing Christians said in I Peter 2:5, "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house . . ." We see here that Christians who are mere men make up the church. How can fallible men be the source of religious authority today? Ye have heard it said that tradition is to be authority. In Matthew 15:6 Jesus said, ". . . ye have made void the word of God by your tradition." Men today observe Christmas as a religious holiday not by God's word but by tradition! Ye have heard it said that councils of men can make and change church laws. In Matthew 15:9 Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." Ye have heard it said that man must rely on his conscience as authority. Paul relied on his conscience before becoming a Christian and said in Acts 26:9, "I verily thought within myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." We cannot rely on our conscience. So many people think as long as they are sincere religiously that this is all that matters. This is not true! Jesus Christ is the only authority in religion we have today. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." God the Father said in Matthew 17:5,

The Standard of Religious Authority

“ . . . this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” Paul in Ephesians 1:22, 23 said, “And hath given him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” In Colossians 1:18 Paul said, “He is head of the body, the church.” Jesus has made his will known through his words that were written by his apostles and disciples. He said to the twelve in Matthew 10:40, “He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” Thus, to accept what the apostles have given us is to accept the authority of Christ. Thus, God’s word is the only true authority religiously today. If men would obey it Christianity would again be as it was in the first century.

Are The Ten Commandments Still Binding?

Ye have heard it said that we are still under the Ten Commandments today. The Old Testament is still binding on us, say most religious groups. Yet, in Hebrews 7:12 we read, "For the priesthood being changed there is made of necessity a change also of the law." If Christ is our high priest today, and he is, we are no longer subject to the law of Moses! Some say that the "ceremonial" part of the law was abolished but the "moral" law or the Ten Commandments are still binding. But the Bible makes no distinction between the moral and ceremonial law! In Luke 2:21-24 we find that an offering for cleansing is called both the law of God and the law of Moses. Paul in Romans 7:4 said, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ . . ." In Galatians 2:21 Paul wrote, "I do not frustrate the grace of God. For if righteousness cometh by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). We are now answerable to Jesus (John 12:48). We are no longer under the laws of Moses. We are under the " . . . law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Remember this important verse found in Deuteronomy 5:3, "Jehovah made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day." THE OLD TESTAMENT OR COVENANT WAS MADE WITH THOSE JEWS PRESENT WHEN MOSES SPOKE THESE

Are The Ten Commandments Still Binding?

WORDS. THEREFORE, WE CANNOT BE SUBJECT TO AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO PARTIES THAT DID NOT INCLUDE US ANY MORE THAN YOU CAN BE SUBJECT TO A CONTRACT MADE BETWEEN TWO OTHER PEOPLE. In Romans 2:16 Paul said, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL, by Jesus Christ." We will not be judged by the Old Testament or the Ten Commandments.

We Believe The Old Testament

Ye have heard it said that churches of Christ do not believe in the Old Testament. This is not true. Let us note that there are two extremes seen in use of the Old Testament. Some insist that the Old Testament is equally as binding as the New Testament. They say we must consult both to know what to do to be saved. Those who hold to this view think churches of Christ don't respect the Old Testament. The other extreme holds that we have no need whatsoever for the Old Testament today. Some think it is ridiculous to study it. They say the Old Testament has been abolished; why study it if we are saved by the New Testament? Let us in the next few lessons examine the truth on these matters from God's word.

First of all, let us note that the Old Testament laws have been abolished. In Romans 7:4 Paul said, ". . . ye also were made dead to the LAW through the body of Christ." In Galatians 3:19 Paul said, "What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, TILL the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made." The seed was Christ as is seen in Galatians 3:16. Notice further in Galatians 3:24-25, "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor." Ephesians 2:15 says, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances . . ." Colossians 2:14 says,

We Believe The Old Testament

“Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he hath taken it out of the way nailing it to the cross.” In verse 16 of this chapter he said, “Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon or a sabbath day.” Verse 17 continues, “which are a shadow of the things to come . . .” In Galatians 5:4 Paul said, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the LAW, ye are fallen away from grace.” The entire book of Hebrews is proof positive that the Old Testament laws are no longer binding because a New Testament has come into being with the death of Jesus on the cross.

No Tongues Today

Ye have heard it said that men can speak in tongues today like many first century Christians. Those who believe this doctrine use Mark 16:17-18. They refer to verse 17 where the statement is found, “. . . they shall speak with new tongues.” But notice the other signs that follow. Will they claim and prove that they have these also? Will they cast out devils? Will they take up serpents? Will they drink any deadly thing? Will they lay hands on the sick and recover them? If they take one sign, why not take them all!

In I Corinthians 12:28 there is a list of spiritual gifts which some use to prove tongue speaking today. The gifts listed are: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. We know there are no apostles today. If one in this list is no longer with us, how can we say that the rest of these gifts are still present today? What are “helps” and “governments?” If we take one of these gifts, are we not to take them all?

On the day of Pentecost in Acts two, in Samaria in Acts eight, in Caesarea in Acts ten, and in Ephesus in Acts nineteen, the ability to speak in tongues fell on them from above or from the laying on of the apostles' hands. The important thing to notice is the fact that the ability to speak in tongues was bestowed on whole groups and not on individuals as some claim today! In all the above

No Tongues Today

instances of tongue speaking let it be known that it came to them without their asking. No where did men ever pray for this gift. Note further that the Holy Spirit in Acts eight came AFTER the conversion of the Samaritans but in Acts ten it came DURING their conversion. There was and is no pattern in receiving the Holy Spirit and miraculous gifts.

The Holy Spirit In Conversion

Ye have heard it said that men are saved only when the Holy Spirit operates directly on their heart. That all conversions are directed and completed by the power of the Holy Spirit, cannot be denied. The real questions to ask and answer is how the Holy Spirit operates in conversion.

The teaching of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion is based on the false doctrine of total depravity. This doctrine says that man is born a sinner and can do nothing to save himself without a miraculous act. The Bible plainly declares that men are converted by the preaching of the word of God. Only when men hear, and by their own free will choose to believe and obey, will men be saved. In James 1:18 we read, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth . . ." God's word is the seed sown in the hearts of men that makes it possible to be reborn spiritually. In verse 21 of this chapter James says, ". . . receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls." How is that word implanted in the heart? Paul in I Corinthians 1:21 said, ". . . it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The word is implanted through preaching the gospel. Even in the case of Cornelius, who received the Holy Spirit baptism, Peter in relating Cornelius' conversion, said in Acts 11:14, "Who shall speak unto thee WORDS,

The Holy Spirit In Conversion

whereby thou shalt be saved . . .”

If there was direct operation of the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the spoken word, God would become a respecter of persons. How also would we be judged by the word of God on judgment day? Why would we need to preach the gospel at all if our salvation rested in the hands of God and his Holy Spirit? This doctrine also violates man’s freedom of choice. Romans 1:16 says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation . . .”

Observations On Tongue Speaking

It is claimed by some today that men still speak in tongues. Let us examine the Bible to see if this is still possible. First, look at the various lists of spiritual gifts and let us make some observations concerning tongue speaking. In I Corinthians 12:28-30 the gift of speaking in tongues is last. In Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11-12 the gift of speaking in tongues is not even mentioned. In I Corinthians 14:6-8 Paul shows that the gift of prophecy is superior to that of speaking in tongues. In verses 14-19 of this chapter Paul shows that worship that is understood is to be preferred. In verses 20-25 Paul shows that an undue exaltation of tongues is a sign of spiritual immaturity. In verse 31 Paul says there is a more excellent way than these spiritual gifts and in I Corinthians 13:1 he tells them that way is LOVE.

Some say today that speaking in tongues is a sign of having received Holy Spirit baptism. But if this is true then we have a physical sign proving a spiritual evidence in our lives. But the Bible is clear that spiritual evidences will be present when a spiritual change has taken place. If we have received the Holy Spirit we will bear his fruits as stated in Galatians 5:22-23!

Further, it appears to many that those who are looking for the gift of speaking in tongues and other miraculous gifts seem to have a greater concern for these things than for the Holy Spirit himself. The emphasis

Observations on Tongue Speaking

some have placed on the Holy Spirit lowers the Christ who was crucified for the sins of the world and who is to be lifted up before all men that men might be drawn to him.

The Essentiality Of The Church

Ye have heard it said that the church has absolutely nothing to do with one's salvation. Let us state that God does the saving and not the church. But the question is, can one enjoy salvation without being in the church which Christ built? What saith the scriptures?

First, the essentiality and importance of the church is seen in Christ's attitude towards it. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul said, "Husbands love your wives even as CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT." Also in Acts 20:28 we read, ". . . the church of the Lord which he hath purchased with his own blood." FRIENDS, ANYTHING THAT JESUS SHED HIS BLOOD FOR IS IMPORTANT! Now remember Paul said in Philippians 2:5, "Have this mind (disposition or attitude) which also was in Christ Jesus." We are to love the church just as much as Christ did. If Jesus died to purchase the church, it follows that you and I had better be in his church if we are to be saved.

Secondly, note that a person cannot be IN CHRIST without being in his church! Christ is the head, the church is his body. In Colossians 1:18 Paul said, "And he is head of the body, the church." Christians are members of that body. Paul in I Corinthians 12:27 said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." One cannot be joined to the head without being a member of the body! How do you get into Christ? Paul

The Essentiality of the Church

said in Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." **WE ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST!** Remember Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:3, ". . . who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." **ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS ARE IN CHRIST AND TO BE IN CHRIST IS TO BE IN HIS BODY THE CHURCH!**

The Only Ones Right

Ye have heard it said that the church of Christ thinks they are right and everyone else is wrong. This was the sort of argument that bothered Martin Luther when he was put on trial at Worms, Germany in the 1500's. This is just a trick used to keep down those who seek to restore first century Christianity to the twentieth century. If men do not believe they are right religiously they should change. Paul in Romans 14:23 said, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you practice something religiously, and don't believe it is right, and yet continue to do it, you are living in sin! We in churches of Christ are imperfect and do make mistakes in areas of opinion. But we do believe that the Bible is right and everyone else who opposes it is wrong! Note the fact that two people cannot both be right when contradictory doctrines are taught! Either the earth is flat or it is not flat. Baptism is either essential or it is non-essential. How can we tell what is right?

Not by human wisdom. Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not within man that walketh to direct his own footsteps." Not by numbers. There are more Hindus than Christians. We can tell what is right by the Bible. Paul in II Timothy 3:16-17 said, "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."

The Only Ones Right

The truth is, friends, most people have let their preacher do their religious thinking for them. They have never studied the Bible enough to know whether they are practicing the type of religion the Bible conveys. I beg you to search the scriptures for denominational Christianity you see about you today. You will soon see it does not follow the Bible pattern. If you are not going to follow the Bible, friends, there is no hope!

Just Another Denomination

Ye have heard it said that churches of Christ are just another denomination. In another lesson we showed that we are non-denominational in name and creed. We also are non-denominational in worship.

We meet on the Lord's day for worship. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them . . ." (Acts 20:7). Note also I Corinthians 16:1-2 and Revelation 1:10.

We pray to God in harmony with Acts 2:42; I Thesalonians 5:17; I Corinthians 14:15.

We sing without an instrument. Why? Because there is no New Testament command, example, or inference! See I Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; 13:15.

We partake of the Lord's supper every first day of the week. Why? Acts 20:7, shown above, shows us the purpose of their meeting on the first day of the week. Note I Corinthians 11:20, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." Paul here is rebuking them for partaking the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner but also infers that they took of the supper when they came together.

We give of our means as we have been prospered (I Corinthians 16:1-2).

Just Another Denomination

Finally, the Bible is taught and preached in harmony with Acts 2:42 and II Timothy 4:2.

We are non-denominational from the standpoint of organization. We have no ecclesiastical organization, no popes, cardinals, archbishops, nor church councils. We have no clergy, synod, conference, association, or assembly. Each church on a local basis is independent or autonomous. Each church has its plurality of elders and deacons (Acts 20:17; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5; I Timothy 3:8-13). Elders are also known in the Bible as bishops, pastors, overseers, and presbyters. Search the scriptures on these matters for they do matter!

We Are Not A Denomination

Ye have heard it said that the church of Christ is just another denomination. In Romans 16:16-17 we read, “. . . all the churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you brethren, mark them that are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and turn away from them.” The phrase “churches of Christ” does not refer to the different denominations but to congregations of the same name, faith, worship, and practice. How then is the church of Christ not a denomination?

First, it is not denominational in name. It wears the name of Christ. In I Peter 4:16 Peter said, “But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him GLORIFY GOD IN THIS NAME.” Any Bible name such as disciple, saint, priest, and brethren can and is accepted by churches of Christ to describe its members. Churches of Christ also can be called by any Bible name such as the church, Ephesians 3:10; church of God, I Corinthians 1:2; church of the Lord, Acts 20:28; or church of the first-born, Hebrews 12:23.

Secondly, the church of Christ is non-denominational in creed. It has no creed book, no discipline book, no confession of faith. It has Christ as its only creed. Jesus said in John 8:24, “. . . except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” The Bible is our all-sufficient guide. “All scripture is given by inspiration

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of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17). In II Peter 1:3 we are told, “Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . .” Jesus commended the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:8, “I know thy works, . . . thou didst keep my word and didst not deny my name.” Jesus will still commend those who keep his name and his word.

Baptism And Salvation

Ye have heard it said that baptism has nothing to do with the salvation of your souls. Baptism is just an “outward sign of an inward grace.” Or perhaps you have been baptized by a preacher who baptized you saying that you are being immersed because, “God for Christ’s sake hath pardoned your sins.” Friends, these words are not to be found in the Bible. What does the Bible say about the design of baptism?

Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” You can’t argue with Christ! Peter on Pentecost said in Acts 2:38, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of your sins . . .” If the word “for”, as some claim, means “because of”, why haven’t the scholarship of the world changed it in our major versions? You can’t argue with Peter; he spoke under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Ananias told Paul, who was in Damascus, in Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized, wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord.” How much plainer could a verse be? In this verse Ananias tells us WHEN our sins are washed away. He does not tell us WHAT washed away our sins. In Revelation 1:5 John said, “Unto him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood.” Friends, water cannot take away

Baptism and Salvation

sins. In I Peter 3:21 Peter said, “Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, **EVEN BAPTISM**, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh . . .” Baptism is the final step to salvation. It alone never saves. But preceded by faith, repentance, and confession, it will put a man into contact with the blood of Jesus that takes away the sins of men. If you haven’t been immersed for the proper purpose, do not delay. You can’t argue with God’s word. The doctrines of men will not save!

The Thief On The Cross

Ye have heard it said the thief on the cross was saved without baptism, therefore, baptism is not part of God's plan of salvation.

First of all, it cannot be proved that the thief had not been baptized. He knew enough to ask Christ about the kingdom. He respected Christ enough to rebuke the other thief for his irreverent attitude. In Luke 7:29-30, we find all kinds of people, including the publicans, being baptized by John. Only the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected baptism.

Secondly, while Jesus was alive he had the power to forgive sins on earth. See Matthew 9:6. But when Jesus died and gave his blood on the cross, the New Covenant was ushered in. Note Hebrews 9:14-15, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant . . ." In verse 17 Paul says, "For a testament is of force where there hath been death, for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth." These verses simply tell us that Jesus and the thief lived and died under the Old Testament laws! Those of us living this side of the cross are under the New Testament or covenant and this means that we are under new laws in regard to our salvation. Study the book of Hebrews for the fact that we are

The Thief on the Cross

no longer bound by the laws of Moses. If we are, why do we not worship on Saturday, the Sabbath? Why do we not worship God by burning incense and offering animal sacrifices?

We Must Sing

Ye have heard it said that it doesn't make any difference as to what kind of music is used in worship to God. Is this doctrine centered in the Bible? We all know that there are two types of music - vocal and instrumental. Yet, I wonder how many know that there is not one passage of scripture to authorize the use of instrumental music in the worship of the church!

The following are all the New Testament verses on music and worship: "And when they had SANG a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30). "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and SINGING hymns unto God" (Acts 16:25). "I will sing unto thy name" (Romans 15:9). "I will SING with the spirit and with the understanding" (I Corinthians 14:15). "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, SINGING and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. SINGING with grace in your hearts unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). "In the midst of the congregation will I SING thy praise" (Hebrews 2:12). "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him SING praise" (James 5:13). "They SANG a new song . . . they SANG as it were a new song . . . they SING the song of Moses and the Lamb" (Revelation 5:9; 14:3;

We Must Sing

15:3). These verses contain everything said about the music used by early Christians.

Is this matter of church music important? When we remember the worship of Cain, Nadab and Abihu, and others, we see God's attitude toward scriptural worship. In John 4:24 Jesus said, "God is a Spirit and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in TRUTH." We must search the scriptures and ask ourselves if instrumental worship is authorized by God in worship and if it isn't, it must be rejected as unscriptural! More on this topic next time.

Any Kind Of Music?

Ye have heard it said that any kind of music is acceptable to God in worship. Last time we listed every scripture in the New Testament on the subject of music and every one of them mentioned only vocal music.

Those who use instrumental music must go to the Old Testament. Yet in Galatians 5:4 Paul said, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." Paul simply said to the Christians in Galatia that those who wanted to go back to the law of Moses had cut themselves off from Christ and had fallen from grace! If it was true then, why is it not going to be the same today for those who go back to the old law?

Many in the religious world do not know that Christians are no longer under the law of Moses. In Colossians 2:14 Paul said, "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 his cross." Paul is simply saying that the law of Moses was abolished at the cross. In Hebrews 8:6 Paul said, ". . . by how much also is he the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises."

Christians today are subject to the New Testament only. See Romans 15:4 for the value of the Old Testament to Christians. If you take instrumental music because David used it, you are also going to have to take

Any Kind of Music

animal sacrifices, the observance of feast days, worship on Saturday, the practice of polygamy, the burning of incense, and much more. It would be inconsistent to take one item and leave the rest! If instrumental music is used because some believe it is used in heaven, then marriage must be dissolved because marriage will no longer exist in heaven. Will you study out this subject in a prayerful manner?

The Right To Be Wrong

Ye have heard it said that men have the right to be wrong religiously. This is a trick of the Devil! You have the civil right to choose the religion of your choice. This is what the constitution says. But are we going to be judged by the constitution? No! Jesus, in John 12:48 said, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I spake, the same will judge him in the last day." If you have the right to be wrong in religion, about what is it that you have the right to be wrong? Do you have the right to be wrong about faith in God? No! In Hebrews 11:6, "... for without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him ...". Do you have the right to be wrong about faith in Christ? No! John 8:24 says, "... except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Do you have the right to be wrong about obeying the gospel? No! Jesus is described in Hebrews 5:9 as, "... the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Do you have the right to be wrong about repentance? No! Acts 17:37 says, "And now God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent ...". Do you have the right to be wrong about confessing Christ? No! "For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," said Paul in Romans 10:10. Do you have the right to be wrong about baptism? No! Peter in Acts 2:38 said, "... and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your

The Right to be Wrong

sins . . .” Ananias said to Paul in Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Do you have the right to be wrong about the church? No! Paul in Ephesians 4:4 says there is, “One body . . .” Paul in Colossians 1:18 tells us what that body is when he says, “And he is head of the body, the church.” Remember the word of John in II John 9, “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God, but he that abideth in the teaching of Christ the same hath both the Father and the Son.”

Can You Fall From Grace?

Ye have heard it said that you cannot fall from grace. Is this doctrine taught in the scriptures? Let's notice the Hebrew letter. In Hebrews 2:1 we read, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to things that we have heard, lest haply we DRIFT AWAY FROM THEM." In verse 3 the writer says, "How shall we escape if we NEGLECT SO GREAT A SALVATION . . ." If we drift away from the Bible and Christ, we are lost, friends! Notice Hebrews 3:12, "Take heed brethren, lest haply there shall be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in FALLING AWAY from the living God." This verse is written to Christians who could through a lack of faith fall away. How much plainer could it be? In the next verse he says, "But exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called today, lest ye be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Christians need to beware of the hardening of their hearts by sin. Does anyone believe that the person with a hardened heart will be saved? Hebrews 4:11 says, Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man FALL after the same example of disobedience." The writer warns Christians that as the Israelites were kept out of Canaan by their disobedience so Christians can miss heaven! Hebrews 12:5 says, "Looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God." This verse needs no more comment.

Can You Fall From Grace?

Finally, I ask you to read Galatians 5:4, “**YE ARE SEVERED FROM CHRIST, YE WHO WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW; YE ARE FALLEN AWAY FROM GRACE.**” Friend, for your own soul’s interest, study this issue out from the scriptures.

Miracles Have Ceased

Ye have heard it said that men are speaking in tongues and performing miracles today. What saith the scriptures? Notice Ephesians 4:7-14. These verses relate the following facts. They tell us WHEN spiritual gifts were given in verse 8. TO WHOM these gifts were given is found in verse 11. WHY these gifts were given is found in verse 12. HOW LONG THEY WERE TO LAST is found in verse 13. Notice also the word TILL here. TILL the unity of faith is achieved. TILL unity of the knowledge of the Son of God is achieved. TILL we reach a perfect or mature man. Does it not seem obvious that miraculous gifts were to last only until the church had complete revelation of God's will and until it matured spiritually? Surely friends this is the truth.

In a court of law there are witnesses needed to establish the facts in a particular case. After these facts are recorded there is no longer any need for witnesses. The Christian faith had its witnesses — preaching confirmed by miracles and the facts of Christianity have already been placed in written testimony — the New Testament. Therefore, we no longer have any need of the miraculous! In II Corinthians 5:7 Paul said, "For we walk by faith and not by sight." This verse is true and it says beyond any doubt we no longer need speaking in tongues or any other miraculous gift.

Pride - The Soul Killer

The sin of pride must be distinguished from self-respect. Certainly the Bible teaches self-respect. Paul in Ephesians 5:29 said, "No man ever hated his flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church." We should love and care for our own bodies. Christianity is a religion of the body and the soul. In I Timothy 4:12 Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth . . ." Whether we are young or old, we are to respect ourselves.

Let us begin by asking first of all, of what are we proud? Some are proud of their social standing. This makes them better than men from other races and even many of their own race. Yet, Peter said in Acts 10:34-35, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

We are proud of our intellectual attainments. Jeremiah 9:23 says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom . . ." Yet, on the other side of the coin there are people who are proud of their lack of intellectual attainment. They often brag of their accomplishments in spite of a lack of education.

We are proud of our wealth. Few know of Deuteronomy 8:18 where God said, "But thou shalt remember Jehovah thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth . . ." Again, strangely enough, there are people who are proud of their poverty. They look down their

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noses at the rich and think that every rich man is a crook!

Finally, we are proud of our spiritual attainments. Many say, as did the Pharisee in Luke 18:11, “. . . I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men . . .” The folly here is that we don’t measure our goodness by Christ, but by the standards of other men.

All should be aware of the result of pride. Pride brings failure. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goeth before destruction . . .” Pride brings misery. The proud man never believes he gets what he deserves. Pride prevents friendship. Proverbs 13:10 says, “By pride cometh only contention . . .” No one wants the contentious man for a friend. Finally, pride brings shame. Solomon said, “When pride cometh then cometh shame” (Proverbs 11:2).

We can avoid pride by doing what the writer said in Hebrews 12:1-2, “. . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus who is the author and the perfecter of our faith . . .” If we will look to Jesus and follow his example, pride will no longer trouble our souls.

Lying - The Soul Killer

For some reason or other it seems that people have in their own minds divided sins into two different categories: big sins and little sins. The big sins are murder, adultery, drunkenness, and blasphemy. Lying is a sin that falls into the small sin category! Yet, in Proverbs 6:16-19 we find seven things which God hates. In verse 17 we find God hates, "a lying tongue." This verse alone should teach the fact that lying will damn a soul to hell just as quick as any of the so-called big sins! We should thus keep these thoughts in mind about lying, the soul killer.

First of all, do not invent a lie! Lying identifies one with the devil. In John 8:44 we read, "... for he is a liar and father thereof." We should never try to create a false impression. A half-truth is a lie! So many are guilty of giving false impressions and spreading half-truths that a man is no longer able to be taken at his word!

In the second place, do not receive a lie! In Mark 4:24 Jesus said, "... take heed what ye hear." I wonder how many of us check up on what we have heard from others? We may have heard a lie! The warning in Leviticus 19:16 still needs to be heeded today. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people..." Again Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, 37, "And I say unto you, that every idle word that men 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

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condemned.” These are very sobering words, don’t you agree?

Thirdly, be afraid to lie. Paul in Galatians 6:7 said, “. . . for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” In Acts 5, a man and his wife named Ananias and Sapphira, lied to the Holy Spirit and both died on the spot! This gives us all a good indication of God’s attitude towards lying! What the liar will reap is clearly pointed out in Revelation 21:8, “. . . all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Have you been an inventor of lies, a receiver of lies, a spreader of lies? Don’t lie to yourself and to your God when you answer this question! God hates a lying tongue.

Dancing - The Soul Killer

God does not want to deprive men from pleasurable activities as long as they are right and good for man. Some people get the idea that you can't have fun as a Christian. That is not true! Dancing is very much a part of the modern day world and needs to be discussed in light of the Bible.

First of all, let us note that the Bible conveys two kinds of dancing. The first is illustrated when the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea into the land of Canaan. In Exodus 15:20 we read, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." Thus, we see that there was a type of dancing permitted by God among his people. But this dancing was always of a religious nature! The other type of dancing is illustrated in Exodus 32:19, "And it came to pass, as soon as he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf and dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." Moses had been on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments when he found the people of God in idolatry. Dancing is associated with evil in general and idolatry in particular in this context.

Some observations about dancing need to be made as observed in the Bible. First, it was not a regular event for God's people to dance. It was done only on special

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occasions! Secondly, it was done in the day time! Thirdly, it was never done for pleasure but always for religious devotion! Finally, God's people always danced alone. The only exceptions to this are four references: Exodus 32:1-21; I Samuel 30:16-17; Job 21:11-15; and Matthew 14:1-7. These references have nothing to do with the people of God.

Certainly dancing violates some scriptures such as Galatians 5:19-21. In verse 19 Paul lists as a work of the flesh, "lasciviousness," which means, "Lustful, ungodly movements of the body, unchaste handling of males and females." In verse 21 he lists "revellings" which means, "all night partying with drinking and dancing." Also in verse 21 he lists, "and the such like." In Romans 12:2 Paul said, "And be not fashioned according to this world . . ." Yet those who engage in dancing have allowed themselves to be fashioned into the mold of the world. What about you?

Promiscuity - The Soul Killer

Webster defines "promiscuity" as: "indiscriminate mingling of persons, morals, etc." We are in the midst of a morals revolution that could well be called the "sex-poison!" We have sown the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind, in a rich, permissive, and sex-saturated society. The storm center is the college campus where the morals revolution is being acted out.

To show the alarming proportions of this problem, a leading group of educators in Alabama colleges and universities estimated that 83 percent of their students had been immoral and that 49 percent of their high school students were in the same position. What is true in Alabama must be true in other states.

The false psychology of Sigmund Freud and others has swept the college campuses and has had a tremendous effect upon the behavior of students. Freud's philosophy of sex boils down to this: repressed sex is bad and expressed sex is good. Those who agreed with Freud, as many in the academic world do, scorn the idea of moral purity and consider God and the Bible as old-fashioned. One Yale senior said, "Premarital sex does not mean the downfall of society, at least not the kind of society that we are trying to build." In the last few years we have seen the kind of society this type of person wants to build and it makes us sick. It would turn America into another Sodom and Gomorrah! Those of us who don't

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want this had better speak up and take some positive action before its too late.

What can we do to stop premarital sex for young and old alike? First, we can stand up for Biblical morality and see that it is taught in the churches and in the homes. These verses must be taught and lived by: Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." In I Corinthians 6:13 Paul said, "... but the body is not for fornication but for the Lord ..." In verse 18 Paul says, "Flee fornication ..." In Galatians 5:19 Paul says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness ..." All of these are sins which abuse God's law of sex. Then in verse 21 of the same chapter he continues by saying, "... that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." In Ephesians 5:5 we read, "For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." I Thessalonians 5:21, "Abstain from every form of evil," said Paul. The Hebrew writer in Hebrews 13:4 said, "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

In the second place, we can stop premarital sex by letting our will be known concerning the type of television programs and movies we will have in the community. The same thing is true with the sale of sex magazines and novels in our community. Often the only reason evil runs wild in a community is because the good, moral, and decent people in the community will do and say nothing. Am I talking about you, friend?

Immodesty - The Soul Killer

“It is significant that there are noticeably more sexual assaults on women in the summer months when the wearing of shorts, bathing suits, etc., is at its peak, than during any other season,” says J. Edgar Hoover. The truth is, today the women who formerly dressed like Mother Hubbard are now dressing like her cupboard! I am asking women to seriously consider what is to be said in this article. I believe that it is morally wrong from a Biblical standpoint to dress in an immodest fashion. Women, generally, are probably unaware of the moral destruction caused by the way they dress. Young girls, especially, are not fully aware of the power they have over the minds of young men. There are many in the world who think that an article of this kind is “old-fashioned.” Yet, these remarks are needed today as much as ever because God’s will and laws of purity have never changed and must be obeyed if we are going to stay out of hell! Let us now look at some Biblical principles that need to be considered concerning immodesty.

In Matthew 5:27, 28 Jesus said, “Ye have heard it said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” We can commit adultery in our minds, is the teaching of this passage! It is my conviction that the woman who is immodestly dressed is just as guilty of

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adultery, if she has caused a man to commit mental adultery, as if she had been engaged in the physical act of adultery!

I believe that those who wear shorts, halters, swim suits, and other forms of immodest clothing had better soberly re-evaluate their clothing in light of these words. In Luke 17:12 Jesus said, “. . . it is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him, through whom they come, it were better for him to have a millstone hanged about his neck, and that he was cast into the sea . . .” Have you been guilty of causing someone to stumble by your manner of dressing?

The truth is, ladies, that many women who are raped and assaulted ask for it and they have reaped what they have sown! In I Timothy 2:9 Paul said, “In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel . . .” You husbands and fathers who read this article can stop some of this immodesty if you will. Will you? You wives and mothers can do the same. Will you? Church leaders, how long will you wink at this sin? School officials, will you do your part in stopping immodest dress in our schools? In the name of common sense, aren't you tired of this so-called “new morality” which is nothing more than the old filth and sin of the past? Then, let's get busy and fight this problem from every possible angle. Your happiness and eternal welfare are involved. Immodesty is a soul killer.

Selfishness - The Soul Killer

Selfishness has been defined as, "concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself, seeking one's advantage, pleasure, and well-being without regard for others." Tertullian once said that he who lives only to benefit self, confers on the world a benefit when he dies. Is he right? We should all be concerned with the sin of selfishness for we all know some who are selfish and if we will admit it perhaps we are selfish! Paul said in II Timothy 3:1-2, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come and men shall be lovers of self . . ." Are we living in the last days?

Selfishness is dangerous because it is linked with a multitude of other sins. In I Kings 21 we find that Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, had Naboth killed so that Ahab's selfish desire could be satisfied. Thus, selfishness is often linked with murder. This sin is often linked with pride. In III John 9 we read, "I wrote somewhat to the church but Diotrephes who loveth the preeminence among them receiveth us not." Here was a man who wanted the limelight. He was so selfish that he had to be the big-wheel. Do you know anybody like that in church circles? Selfishness is also linked with failure in church attendance. People say, "I needed to sleep." "My" company came or "I" have to work to make a living on Sunday. Yet, the writer says in Hebrews 10:25, "Forsake not the assembling of

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yourselves together as the manner of some is . . .” Covetousness reeks with selfishness. A young man came to Jesus wishing to obtain eternal life and Jesus in Matthew 19:21 said, “. . . if thou wouldest be perfect, go and sell that which thou hast and give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come and follow me.” In the next verse we are told that he went away sorrowfully for he had much of this world’s goods. One reason why church members won’t turn loose of their money is selfishness! We also see this sin in immodesty. Many girls say today, “Mother, I don’t have an indecent thing to wear!” Paul said, “In like manner that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel . . .” The truth is, girls, that immodest clothing is often worn because girls want somebody to look at them. It is selfishness! Selfishness is also linked with sins which harm the body. “I” drink because it makes “me” feel good. “I” smoke because it relaxes “me.” Yet, Paul in Romans 6:12 said, “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies that ye should obey the lusts thereof.”

Finally, selfishness keeps others from teaching the lost the gospel of Christ. Paul in II Timothy 2:24 said, “The Lord’s servant must be . . . apt to teach.” Yet, we say “I” have no time. Yes, what time you have is used on self! Don’t let selfishness damn your soul!

Social Drinking - The Soul Killer

One of the biggest lies the Devil has ever put over on some so-called Christians concerns social drinking. The social drinker says that the Bible only condemns the use of strong drink and drunkenness. It doesn't make any difference if you take a can of beer, a cocktail, or small amount of alcohol every once in a while. Many so-called followers of Christ reason like this and engage in the consumption of alcohol. If I am talking about you, friend, I want you to consider the true facts about this issue.

First of all, we must determine what strong drink is as it is used in the scriptures. Wine in Bible days through the process of natural fermentation contained only 14% alcohol content. This is compared to 50% alcoholic content of liquors sold in America today! There is no evidence that people in Biblical days had any knowledge of freezing or distilling that is used today to raise the alcoholic content of beverages.

Secondly, the social drinker says that in John the second chapter Jesus turned water into wine so what's wrong with a drink now and then? Notice verse 10 which says that Jesus produced new wine. Even in Palestine when fermentation on a natural basis took place very quickly, it took a day and a half to begin natural fermentation. We know that in Biblical times grape juice was often boiled before fermentation took place into what is called defrutum which was in turn stored in jars and became like butter.

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Thirdly, some say, “Well, Paul in I Timothy 5:23 said, ‘Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.’” Those who have made a study of medical language as used in the Bible say this wine was a thick unfermented syrup, used for digestive problems.

Consider also friends that 0.05% of alcohol in the blood makes a man legally drunk in many of our states and in many foreign countries! Alcohol, contrary to popular belief, is not a stimulant but a depressant! It puts the brain to sleep. Less than 1% of alcohol begins the processes which loosen the inhibitions, self-control, weakens the will power, impairs judgment, disturbs balance, brings loss of color and distance perception and many other things controlled by the brain. Seeing that less than one percent of alcohol in the blood can have measured effects on the brain, just when does a person become drunk? Where do you draw the line? Just how many hairs make a beard? In the name of common sense, parents, teachers, and religious leaders, how long are we going to let this doctrine of the Devil go unchallenged? We need more Daniels who, “. . . purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the Kings’ dainties and with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8).

Sloth - The Soul Killer

The word sloth as it is used in the Bible means, "sluggish, loitering, lazy, indulging in ease and avoiding exertion." The slothful person is first of all a lazy person. There are some people who want to work from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p. m. with an hour off for lunch! In other words, they don't want to work at all!

Yet, in Genesis 2:15 we read, "And Jehovah God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." God put man to work at the beginning of time. In II Thessalonians 3:10 Paul said, "If any will not work neither let him eat!" The Bible condemns the slothful man who will not work to provide himself and his family a living. Yet, in connection with this sin is there not such a sin as spiritual slothfulness?

There are many lazy Christians who will not work. They sing the song that says "toiling on" but they have never toiled for Christ and they know it! In Matthew 9:37, 38 we read, "Then said he to his disciples the harvest indeed is plenteous but the laborers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth reapers into his harvest." The reapers are few because of slothfulness.

Secondly, the slothful person is the one who engages in matters of secondary importance. One man was going to spend his life to find out if hedgehogs made any other noise than a snort! We so often neglect the

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important for the urgent. We say we are busy, but at what? We go to ball games but not Wednesday night Bible study. We eat with grandma Sunday and miss the services of the church which provide us with an opportunity to eat with the Lord in communion; and we miss the food needed for spiritual growth provided by Bible school and preaching. When a person doesn't come to the table and eat he is sick. If he does not eat he will die. The same thing is true spiritually. How often we engage first of all in that which will mean nothing in eternity!

There is a curse to sloth and we need to know it. Sloth paves the way to temptation. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. It leads to mental and spiritual collapse. There is a law of nature that says that we lose what we do not use. Paul said in I Timothy 4:7, "exercise thyself unto godliness." Without exercise the body and the soul will decay. Sloth will also damn your soul. In the parable of the talent in Matthew 25, the Lord said to the one talent man in verse 26, "Thou wicked and slothful servant . . ." In verse 30 of that chapter we read, "And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There is no place for the slothful man in society or in the church.

Pornography - The Soul Killer

This article begins a series of lessons on some sins that are so prevalent in our nation and lives that they will become killers of the souls of men and nations. The first of these is pornography.

What is pornography? Webster defines it as, "writings, pictures, etc., intended to arouse sexual desire." The word has two parts, "porna" (or filth) and "grapha" meaning, "to write." Pornographic garbage with shocking bold headlines such as, "Most revealing story of illicit love," "Loaded with sex," "Intimate revealing," "filmed in sin-a-scope," is being dumped into the moral blood stream of America at alarming rates!

More than 15,000,000 copies of sex magazines are bought every month! Three billion copies of sex magazines are bought every year which is enough to fill five buildings the size of the Empire State Building! The sale of smut in America is 20 times more than all religious publications combined!

Why is the deluge of pornographic literature such a grave problem in society? First of all, it contaminates the minds of our youth. It is easy to obtain. They have easy access to "news-stand obscenity," to sex-saturated novels and sex magazines of all types.

Secondly, J. Edgar Hoover has said that there has never been a sexual offense committed where pornographic literature was not found either on the offender or in his personal belongings.

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Thirdly, pornography is dangerous to our nation's soul and our own souls because it is condemned in the Bible. In Galatians 5:19 Paul said, "Now the works of the flesh are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness . . ." In verse 21 he continued to say, ". . . they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The sins listed are all related to a misuse of sex! Those who read and who push this filth had better meditate on these words! Paul gave a young man named Timothy some good advice in I Timothy 5:22, ". . . keep thyself pure." This is still good advice, young people!

In Matthew 5:8 Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." In I Peter 2:11 we read, ". . . abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." In I Corinthians 6:13 Paul said, ". . . the body is not for fornication . . ." In verse 18 of chapter six he said further, "Flee fornication . . ." The wise man Solomon said in Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people."

What can be done about pornography? First of all, churches can and must teach the Bible standard of morality. Secondly, city officials, civic leaders, and merchants can see that this trash is kept out by standing up for righteousness by refusing to allow it to be sold here. Finally, parents, it seems to me that you will have to keep it out of the home and see to it that your children are instructed in Biblical principles of morality.

Don't allow this evil of pornography to destroy our nation, town and our souls!

Alcohol - The Soul Killer

Alcohol is the largest single factor in the death of three Americans per hour on our highways. Alcohol causes half of the 1,000 weekly automobile accidents. Over 10 percent of the adult drinking population are alcoholics. Alcohol is a chief contributor to poverty which in turn drives men to desperate and violent actions to acquire money or possessions. Alcohol is a significant contributor to the more than \$7,000,000,000 in industrial losses per year. Even a little "social drinking" can result in vast amounts of brain damage. These facts alone ought to stop many from drinking.

But now let's see what the Bible says about drinking and our souls. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," said Solomon in Proverbs 20:1. Again he said, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder" (Proverbs 23:31, 32).

The prophet Habakkuk said in Habakkuk 2:15, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him and maketh him drunken also." Isaiah said, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way . . . they err in vision and they stumble in judgment" (Isaiah 28:7). In

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Luke 21:34 we read, “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit,” said Paul.

Alcohol is a narcotic and poison; chronic alcoholism results in a deterioration of the brain. After years of continuous or periodic drinking, such people experience a slow but growing personality change. This change is always of an adverse nature. During these years the victim will often have attacks of delirium tremens, acute hallucinosis, and alcohol polynertis. Clearly then, alcohol destroys the body and soul of human beings. In Galatians 6:7, 8 Paul said, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

The fact is friends, you don't violate God's law and get by with it! What will it be for you?

Gambling - The Soul Killer

The word "gamble" means, "to play a game for money or stake, to hazard, to risk what is yours to get that which belongs to another."

The word "gamble" is not found in the Bible. This does not mean that the Bible has nothing to say about it and that is not wrong. The Bible does not have the words suicide, rape, or larceny, but it does contain principles to deal with these actions that clearly condemn them.

Gambling is perhaps as old as man. The Greeks used knucklebones with numbers on them. The Egyptians had knucklebones made of glass and shell. On the Isle of Crete gameboards have been found which were made of gold, silver, ivory, and crystal. The Romans were famous for their race tracks.

In Matthew 27:35 we find gambling at the foot of the cross in these words, "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments among them, casting lots."

Americans spend one hundred million dollars a day in gambling! This means about thirty billion dollars a year! More money is spent on gambling than on education, automobiles, and religion combined!

What does the Bible say on this subject? First, the Bible condemns the practice of gambling through the use of the word "covetousness." To covet means that one is eager to have more, especially that which belongs to another and will do anything to get it. Jesus said in Luke

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12:15, “. . . take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness, for man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Paul in Ephesians 5:4 said, “No covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Secondly, gambling is condemned through the word “stealing.” The word thief in the Bible is defined as one who takes property through cunning, trickery, and secrecy. Romans 13:9 says, “. . . thou shalt not steal . . .” Ephesians 4:28 says, “Let him that stole steal no more . . .”

Thirdly, the fact that we are to be stewards for God certainly condemns gambling. A steward is one who is given charge over his master’s goods. He is to care for them and use them for the benefit of his master. A steward recognizes that he owns nothing: we have been given all that we have. We have a body made from God’s earth. We have a soul made in God’s image and given life by God’s breath. All material blessings are God’s. Psalm 89:11 says, “The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine, the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.” When we gamble away that which we have, we are taking that which does not belong to us but to God!

Finally, gambling is wrong because it is an effort to get something for nothing! Gambling hurts the dignity of work. In II Thessalonians 3:10 Paul said, “If any will not work, neither let him eat.” God will not tolerate a

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failure to work for what we have! I Timothy 5:8 says, “But if any provideth not for his own, especially his own household, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” It is tragic to see people gamble away their livelihood to the dismay of the family. But even more tragic is the fact that men without Christ are gambling with their souls.

Are you a gambler? If so, you had better consider what God has to say about it or you will lose a lot more than you realize!

Envy - The Soul Killer

The word "envy" means, "to look upon with ill-will, to look upon with evil intent, to rejoice over the misfortunes of others." The sin of envy is rarely, if ever, confessed publicly or privately. Few recognize the dangers of this sin. Let us now see what the Bible says about it.

First, who are the envious? Christians are often envious of the sons of Satan! How often have we said that is unfair for the wicked to prosper and the Christian often struggles just to make a living. In Psalm 73: 2-3, David said, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." There are probably a lot of Davids among God's people today! Yet, if the truth were known, the wicked who prosper are really miserable. Their lives are filled with broken promises, hypocrises, and littered with ruined lives! We must realize that their prosperity is only temporary!

When we become envious, do we not insult the providence of God? Paul, in Romans 8:28 said, "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are called according to his purpose." Solomon said in Proverbs 23:17, "Let not thy heart envy sinners . . ." Hate-touched souls are envious. Mark, in recording Pilate's thoughts about the Christ

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who stood before him said in Mark 15:10, “For he perceived that for envy they delivered him up.” The rivaled are often envious. This happens in politics, business and even in the church.

James 3:16 says, “For where jealousy and faction are there is confusion and every vile deed.” Then the selfish are envious. In Romans 12:15 Paul says, “Rejoice with them that rejoice . . .” The envious person cannot do this.

Secondly, we must be aware of the curse of envy. It will, and does, destroy others: Joseph’s brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites. In Genesis 37:11 we read, “And his brothers envied him.” Because of envy they did away with this young boy!

We must also recognize its destructive powers on ourselves. Proverbs 14:30 tells us, “Envy is the rottenness of the bones.” Paul, in Galatians 5:19-21 lists envy as one of the works of the flesh that will keep one out of the kingdom of God. Don’t let envy destroy your soul.